Ever Seen a Devil with a Halo?

by rideswraptors

Summary

Clary Fairchild is annoying. This much, Alec Lightwood is sure of, and he's not about to change his mind. So why did he agree to go on a blind date with her friend? Because he'd obviously lost his goddamn mind.

A fic with too much fluff and hardly any plot at all.

Notes

Title from "The Beautiful & Damned" G-Eazy ft. Zoe Nash

Change in POV ; alternates between Alec and Magnus

Feel free to come and yell at me on tumblr: rideswraptors

(In case you were wondering, this thing was a whopping 542 pages and took me a little over a year to write. To be fair, I took a 5-month break. Be advised that as of 3/25/19, Part 2 is in the works...kill me now.)
Chapter 1

“I’m setting you up.”

Alec Lightwood’s fingers paused mid-word on his keyboard, not sure if he should be more confused or surprised. He cut his gaze up to the red-haired woman who had decided she was allowed to sit on his desk without moving his head an inch. His sister insisted that this look of his was “salty” and that he needed to dial it back. But Alec didn’t really have a dial. Especially not when it came to Clary Fairchild.

“How long is the jail time?” he drawled, life coming back into his fingers. He decided to focus on typing the B&E report he was filling out instead of on her annoyingly eager expression. Seriously, if he had to be around her near-constant sunniness all the time, he would stab a fork into his eye. Clarissa “Clary” Fairchild was a rookie detective in the NYPD, and she’d been assigned to partner with Alec’s adopted brother, Jace Wayland. Within a month, Clary had caused the whole department a lot more trouble than she was worth, had at least a dozen people reassigned to different precincts, good cops who had been working at the precinct for years no less and was currently fucking her partner right under the Captain’s nose. The captain who happened to be her stepfather, who therefore looked the other way so long as it didn’t affect their work. Alec sighed internally, having to admit that Jace had been more focused, more attentive to protocol, and a better overall person since working with Clary. So actually, their relationship made them work better together. That didn’t mean that Alec approved of it. Or her.

He smirked at her scowl.

“On a date, Lightwood.”

“Is there a difference?” he grumbled under his breath, backspacing over the last sentence to correct his word choice. His personal opinion of the victim really wasn’t supposed to color his report. But seriously that guy had been a dick and Alec would have tried to set his apartment on fire too, given half the chance. His partner, Lydia, agreed with him wholeheartedly. Clary kicked at him.

“Hey! It’s an olive branch, all right? Jace told me you’re not going to dinner on Sunday.” Alec let out a put-upon sigh, leaned back in his chair, crossed his arms, and glared at her. Which was as much of an invitation for her to talk as he would ever give her. She shrugged. “They say the best way to get over something is to get under someone?”

Alec arched a brow, “I’m pretty sure that’s for breakups. Are you trying to tell me that I’m breaking up with my parents?”
“Alec,” she whined, childishly bouncing her shoulders to emphasize the begging. In all fairness, it was a nice gesture. Ever since Alec had publicly come out, not only to the department but his family as well, things had been...awkward between him and his parents. His mother was furious that the “relationship” she’d always assumed he had with Lydia was a farce and his father...His father couldn’t seem to wrap his head around it even a little. Alec knew all too well how Robert Lightwood handled things he disapproved of: he made them go away. Mr. Lightwood was a former cop, who now worked in the Police Commissioner's office as a civilian. But when he was an officer, he’d been partnered with a man who was rumored to be gay. Back then, guys in the department didn’t really “come out,” so much as it was understood that they were “funny.” Alec’s father made sure the guy was kicked off the force and stuck in some dead-end security job at a mall somewhere in New Jersey. The Lightwood family name did have its perks. It was just that his parents believed he was tarnishing it. As such, he hadn’t exactly been “welcome” at Sunday Family dinners for the past few months. He’d decided recently to just stop going. It resulted in a pretty nasty voicemail from his mother. There really was no winning.

Alec deflated a little and gestured for her to continue.

She squirmed, clapping her hands together quickly. “Awesome. So the guy, Magnus--”

“What kind of name is Magnus?”

“Latin,” she snapped. “Don’t interrupt!” He lifted his hands in defeat, and she continued without prompting. “He’s amazing. Owns several businesses including that club where that murder happened a few months ago?” Alec blinked at her slowly, not entirely sure if she thought this was a plus or a minus on the guy’s spreadsheet. “Pandemonium,” she supplied, “Jace and I go there all the time. The Lightwood family name did have its perks. It was just that his parents believed he was tarnishing it. As such, he hadn’t exactly been “welcome” at Sunday Family dinners for the past few months. He’d decided recently to just stop going. It resulted in a pretty nasty voicemail from his mother. There really was no winning.

“I have not said yes to this, Fairchild.”

She smiled, shrugging her shoulders playfully, “Too bad, he already has your info.”

“Clary--”

“And will be at Mario’s on Saturday at 6.”
He frowned, “Isn’t Mario’s that really expensive, fancy place in that renovated warehouse?”

“I know you’ll be on time, but Magnus is always late, so I told him to meet you at the bar first.” Obviously, the answer was yes. Alec knew the place fairly well because it was in his neighborhood. Apparently, rich people got off on dining out in bad neighborhoods. What made her think Alec would be comfortable in a place like that?

“Clary,” he said again, trying to stop her. His repetition went ignored.

“I thought it best not to tell Jace or Izzy, but I told Lydia you had some stuff going on Saturday night, so she’ll text me if anything comes in.”

While a surprisingly thoughtful gesture, he was not at all happy with the direction of the conversation.

“Okay seriously overstepping here-!” his outburst was cut off when Clary leaned down and clapped her hands against his face roughly, squishing his cheeks forcing him to look at her.

“Listen to me, Alec,” she said quietly, with a ferocity he’d witnessed often enough in the interrogation room. “Jace adores you. So I will do triple back handsprings to get on your good side, even if that means bribing you for the rest of my life. And I will do it, too. Because gay, straight, or ace, people like me. So just accept your fate.” Alec rolled his eyes as best he could in that position and pointedly ignored the odd looks being shot their way. God, she was so fucking dramatic. “So trust me when I say that you and Magnus will hit it off because I would never even consider doing anything to make you hate me more than you already do.”

He shoved her hands off his face and rubbed his cheek, “Point taken.”

Her bright green eyes gleamed, “So you’ll go?”

“Fine.”

She straightened up to clap her hands and jump in place excitedly, “Yay! Saturday, six o’clock, Mario’s!” she barked as she skipped off to wherever she was supposed to be.
“Fine,” he grumbled back, returning his attention to his report. He stared at the screen for a long moment, trying to remember what he was going to say next.

What the fuck had he just agreed to?

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Magnus Bane sat at his desk in his apartment office, staring out the window and idly tapping his fingers on his phone. He was very seriously considering picking it up and making the call to cancel Saturday night’s plans. Very seriously. Because he didn’t do things like this.

Okay, he did, but not like this. Magnus got offers all of the time. It was pretty much standard for someone to offer up a friend, acquaintance, or “employee” as entertainment for a weekend. It would be strange if business associates or acquaintances didn’t make the offer at some point in time. He supposed they were doing it to get on his good side, to get favors or leverage, or whatever else they thought they could get. Pitfalls of operating so many lucrative businesses in the toughest city in the world. And Magnus would know, he’d lived in some of the toughest. Chicago, L.A., London, Hong Kong, Dubai, Cairo, Abidjan, Jeddah. He’d been born in Bekasi and was sent to an orphanage in Jakarta after his mother committed suicide when he was 6. He ran away when he was 10 and had been running ever since. He completed a bachelor’s degree at Melbourne and went to Harvard for his MBA, where he’d applied for US citizenship. It was a much easier process when you spoke 8 languages and had international income. Somehow, he’d landed in New York, and thrived. He blamed his CFO, Raphael, for the final move, and his best friend Catarina Loss, for his decision to stay. It wasn’t fair that she’d decided to get herself knocked up and use his goddaughter against him.

At any rate, business in New York was good. He’d broken things off with Camille in Melbourne and had remained unattached since. So, yes, he did accept most of those lovely offers of flings and whirlwind affairs, because he could keep them light and casual, and disappear from that relationship at his leisure.

Clary was different. She was a cop, of course, but she was different. She was one of the few real friends he had that wasn’t attached to his business or his past, and she wasn’t looking to get favors from Magnus no matter what anyone thought. She genuinely enjoyed his company, and always made that blond boyfriend of hers pay for drinks at Pandemonium, no matter how often he insisted that it was on the house. They’d met when she was a doe-eyed rookie officer doing her job, and now she was a doe-eyed rookie detective insisting that he just had to meet Blondie’s very hot and very gay cop brother. Magnus had interacted with Jace Wayland enough to know that he’d never want to even touch that gene pool.
“He’s adopted, Magnus. Alec is Jace’s adoptive brother. I don’t think I’ve ever met two people who were more different.”

Because of that and because it was Clary, he’d said yes. But it was Friday afternoon and Clary had texted to confirm he was still interested. That was ten minutes ago.

“Just cancel,” Raphael groaned from across the desk, tossing a heavy file onto it. “You’ll have a replacement body in your bed within an hour.”

Magnus scowled so hard it hurt, “Don’t say it like that!”

“Like what?”

“Like...like they’re pieces of meat.”

“Aren’t they?” Raphael scoffed, arching a perfectly plucked brow. His CFO wasn’t just a snarky asexual, he was an impeccably groomed asexual with keen fashion sense. Magnus supposed he’d adopted those habits in order to avoid confrontations with Magnus over his appearance.

“No,” he snapped back. “Just because they’re short-lived, doesn’t mean they’re without feeling.”

Raphael shrugged. “I suppose lust qualifies as a feeling.”

“You’re a cruel man, Raphael Santiago,” Magnus said with a pout. “And I don’t want to cancel. I don’t want to disappoint, biscuit.” At that Raphael nodded, unable to argue. He and Clary had a...complex relationship. Their dynamic was founded on one of Raphael’s not so great qualities.

“Then text her back and go. Enjoy yourself.” He got up to leave, supposedly to return to his actual office. “And maybe try not to jump into bed with him five minutes in?”

“That was one time! Why do I tell you things?”

“I don’t know, but I wish you’d stop.”
Chapter 2

Alec didn’t like to drink much. He also didn’t like eating out that much either. He liked to cook himself, and would rather end the evening by reading in bed than whatever anyone else had in mind. Not to mention, his job description included being on call 24/7 unless there were extenuating circumstances or very, very well-planned vacation days. Days. Not weeks. The job came first, always. And out in public, Alec found it difficult to relax and enjoy himself instead of analyzing the people around him. He couldn’t turn it off and on like Jace did. That’s why he worked better with Lydia, who was more rule-oriented than Jace but more relaxed than Alec. He and Jace had worked well together as beat cops, balancing each other out as they were learning the ropes. But for long hours of research and detailed work, Alec much preferred Lydia. Less stressful.

Taking a sip of his beer, Alec brought his focus back to the room, to the people around him. One woman at the bar was obviously a professional, another had been stood up and was currently getting trashed, there were two businessmen in a meeting and a regular who chatted casually with the consciously attractive bartender. Alec stiffened when someone else sat down on the stool next to him. It was 5:55, as Alec was notoriously early to everything, so obviously this person wasn’t the Magnus Bane he was expecting.

In fact, it was a blonde woman wearing far too much perfume, which was so pungent that Alec actually wrinkled his nose. Now, his sister was a fashionable woman, who spent time on her appearance, including hair, makeup, and fragrance. He and Izzy had been very close growing up, and now, so he knew what good taste was, could distinguish between a confident woman and a desperate one. This woman certainly didn’t have taste, and her confidence absolutely was skin deep. Her hair was teased up into glossy bouncing curls, her makeup done well but heavy, and her clothes were a size too tight to be comfortable. Her stilettos didn’t escape his notice either. She was leaned over so he could get a good look at her breasts, and he had to stop himself from cringing. By most standards, she was an attractive woman. And yeah, maybe Izzy would look similar to other people, but whenever Alec thought of his sister, he thought “beautiful” and “confident” not “tacky” and “aggressive.”

“What’s a gorgeous something like you doing, sitting all alone at a restaurant bar?” she asked with a sly smile on her lips. Alec cringed at her wording.

“Waiting for someone.”

“Buy me a drink?”

“I’m waiting for someone,” he repeated, mildly irritated and encroaching on annoyed. She didn’t seem to notice if her hand on his thigh was anything to go by.
“I can keep you company until she gets here. I mean, what kind of woman keeps something so pretty waiting?”

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Magnus swanned into Mario’s, remarkably only ten minutes late. Raphael had come in the car with him, having him sign document after document while he was on the phone with Richard Hyung out of Beijing. Magnus talked, signed papers, and reapplied makeup in alternation until they finally arrived at the restaurant. Raphael would have followed him all the way to the table if Magnus hadn’t locked the door after opening it, so he could slam it shut behind him, preventing Raphael from getting out before Ernesto, Magnus’ trusty driver, pulled away from the curb.

That didn’t mean he was safe, though. The staff had been informed that Magnus would be there tonight, so he was greeted by the manager and his assistants, who also had papers for Magnus to sign. They talked shop for a few minutes, and the hostess even pointed out Alec Lightwood to him (because he’d made sure the staff had his name for when he arrived, just in case). With that, Magnus’ attention was lost.

Clary had told him that Jace’s brother was attractive. Hot had been thrown into the mix on occasion, and Clary did have a good eye. But, her adjectives could use some work. He looked to be about six feet tall with black hair and darkish eyes. He had fair skin, which stood out starkly against the deep forest green button up, which he had rolled to his elbows. The rest of him was hidden by the bar, but if his profile was anything to go by…

Well, in short, Alec Lightwood was beautiful. Clary had very seriously underplayed it and Magnus was going to kick her in the shin for not preparing him properly. Because, honestly, how was he supposed to function in the face of a person that attractive? It wasn’t even fair.

Unfortunately, the whole picture was ruined by the blonde who was currently attempting to hang on him. He was gently trying to push her off, eyes wide and panicked, cheeks flushed in embarrassment. Evidently, the woman didn’t mind if her men responded to her advances like a cornered rabbit. Magnus held up a hand to his manager, with a disinterested smile.

“Elliot, I’m not here on business. We’ll talk later. Minimal disruptions tonight, if you don’t mind?”

“Of course, Mr. Bane. Your table is ready and waiting for you. Would you like your usual order?”
Eyes still locked on his date, Magnus shook his head, “No. Just send Helen over to take our order.” Helen was one of the more experienced and discreet members of their waitstaff. Magnus hired her for every event he had, and always accepted her recommendations and employee referrals. She was an artist trying to make ends meet, very sweet and very professional. Not to mention, she knew everyone who was anyone in Brooklyn.

“Absolutely, Mr. Bane.” Magnus heard him snap his fingers, and the staff dispersed. So Magnus shoved his hands into his pockets and walked over to the bar.

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He was going to die from embarrassment. He knew it. How pathetic, death by embarrassment at a restaurant bar waiting for a blind date. This was the worst. He kept telling the woman that he wasn’t interested, that he was there for a date, deftly removing her hands from his person, but she was insistent. She kept putting her hands on him. Was she drunk? High? Mentally deficient? It was getting awkward, and the bartender was watching them warily now. Alec was desperate to get out of the situation, but he didn’t want to leave and make Clary think he’d stood her friend up. He hunted thieves, murderers, and rapists on a daily basis for a living, but couldn’t manage to keep personal space around one overzealous woman. Pathetic.

“Excuse me, ma’am? I believe your table is ready,” a cool voice said from behind them. Alec whipped around, ready to hug his accidental savior, only to find himself in further distress.

Respiratory distress, actually, because the man standing there was absolutely beautiful. He wore a black admiral collared shirt, patterned with white circles and shirtsleeves rolled to his elbows and a black brocade vest which had a silk pocket square tucked in the front. His pants were tight and showed off muscular legs. He was also wearing heavy makeup and a sandalwood aftershave, Alec wanted to drown in. He had thick black eyeliner and hair spiked up artfully. And all Alec could think was that he was royally fucked. Because now he was going to sit through dinner with Clary’s friend and make an ass of himself because he would be thinking about his glorious hero who had a shocking amount of glitter on his person. Alec had worked vice in lower Manhattan for six months, so that was saying something.

The woman frowned at Alec’s hero. “That’s okay,” she said, overly sweet, “my friend and I are having a conversation.” It was dismissive at best, and even if Alec had been remotely attracted to her, that would have been a huge turn-off. There was no need to be rude to service people. Even if this particular person didn’t look like he served anybody for anything, Alec thought he belonged in magazines. Yeah, and now he wanted to punch himself in the face for even thinking that. Clary was going to hate him, and Jace was going to kill him for upsetting Clary, so he wouldn’t get to see Max graduate and Izzy marry Simon, and his mother would never speak to Jace again for letting
Clary kill her eldest, even if she didn’t like him at the moment. Was he having a panic attack? He checked. Nope. Just the normal amount of life-changing panic.

“Oh no, ma’am, I insist. As the owner, I know the table we have for you is the best and I’ve personally sent our best bottle of merlot for your enjoyment,” the man told her evenly. The owner. Great. Fortunately, he’d said enough buzz words for Alec’s leech to jump up from her seat and glob onto his rescuer, who deftly passed her to a waiter. She walked away gushing her thanks and chattering a mile a minute about who the fuck knew what. Alec was so relieved he nearly slumped onto the bar.

“Sorry about that,” the man apologized with a shrug as if he’d intruded. “Obviously my front staff need to be more discerning about who we let in.” He smiled and extended his hand, Alec thought he was going to die a little. He had such an adorable smile and his hands were stupidly soft. “I’m Magnus Bane.”

Alec’s stomach dropped. Hard.

“You’re joking,” he blurted out. Magnus, his beautiful rescuer, let out an airy chuckle as he retracted his hand, much to Alec’s disappointment. Apparently, Alec owed Clary flowers. And chocolates. And some canvases. Maybe new paints. He might even stop rolling his eyes at her in the future. Despite his inability to control his mouth or introduce himself properly, Magnus seemed amused.

“Unfortunately not. I suppose Clarissa didn’t mention I own several businesses? A few of them are restaurants, including this one. I just thought it--”

“No,” Alec interrupted, stupidly, “I mean--it’s great or whatever. Clary just said--” Alec snapped his mouth shut and swallowed hard to get ahold of himself. *Tighten up, man!* Jace’s voice shouted in his head. He looked up at to see that Magnus was still amused, but his head was tilted in curiosity.

“Good lord, what did she say?” he asked with some concern, brows raised.

“Nothing!” Alec said, attempting reassurance. He bobbed his head, “Well, she says a lot because she talks a lot, but--anyway, thank you for--” He gestured uselessly in the direction of the annoying blonde woman. Magnus smiled again, preening a little.
“All in a day’s work. Even if you weren’t my date for the evening, I probably would have done the same. I could see you needed rescuing all the way from the door.”

Alec’s brain shorted at the thought that Magnus had scoped him out from a distance, but he quickly moved past it, filing it away for later. He blushed a little.

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Magnus watched Alec stumble over his words, completely charmed and a little ashamed of himself. Usually, he preferred dates who were experienced and articulate, people who seduced with their words because they knew they were beautiful and could skip the formalities. Alec looked a little like a deer in headlights. Instead of being annoyed, Magnus found it refreshing. He was confused, however, when he raised his voice.

“Yeah,” Alec said in response, “Honestly, I’ve arrested hookers less aggressive than her.” Magnus reared his head back, confused by the increase in volume. But then Alec cut his eyes to the corner. Magnus followed to see a stunning brunette at the end of the bar who looked oddly stiff. He watched as she quickly tossed back her cocktail, put cash on the bar, and hurried past them heading for the door. Magnus, bewildered, turned back to Alec, wanting but not wanting to ask. He wordlessly pointed after the woman instead. Alec gave a cute little close-lipped smile paired with a shrug. Then he stood, hand going to his neck.

“Clary would kill me if I collared somebody tonight.”

“Magnanimous of you,” he offered back, a little in awe of the man standing in front of him. Clary really undersold his attractiveness, but she also didn’t mention how cute he was, how sweet. He swore to whatever god existed, he was going to slap that girl and then build her an art studio somewhere.

Alec shrugged again, “More like self-preservation.” He gestured toward the main room of tables. “Should we…?”

Magnus’ brain snapped back into place. “Right. Yes. We shall.” To prevent Alec from heading to the main dining area, Magnus gestured in the correct direction, guiding him to his private section. They had designed the room so that tables were arranged in five different circular areas. North, South, East, West, and Central. It helped the wait staff keep track of their patrons much easier than a purely numbered system. West was near the bathrooms, South near the door, East was near the bar and kitchen, and Central was obviously in the middle. Gorgeous tiered crystal chandeliers hung from the center of each section, giving the room plenty of light which was low enough to seem
intimate. Central was reserved for regulars or high profile patrons; West and South for reservations; East for anyone they needed to bump or the occasional walk-in. North was for Magnus’ private use upon request; mostly it was given to clients or visitors from out of town. Occasionally someone would call Magnus and ask for a spot, so he would generously guarantee them a table. It was also used for the chef’s and manager’s reservation requests. Magnus didn’t care if his manager’s sister or the chef’s wife and kids wanted a table there; he didn’t care about the “appearance” of it. He simply wanted a space set aside for business. And he did a lot of business at Mario’s.

Not wanting to completely freak Alec out, Magnus hadn’t reserved the whole area, but it was relatively quiet. As they sat down, Alec actually looked a little relieved. Clary had mentioned he wasn’t very social, but evidently, he was fairly introverted. In all fairness, he had been attacked by a horny female earlier, and Clary did say he was painfully gay. *Painfully* had been repeated a few times in the course of that conversation. Magnus was starting to get it though. Before they could even get a proper conversation going, Magnus’ phone rang. He scowled and pulled it out only to ignore the call. He shoved it back in his pocket.

“You can take that if you need to,” Alec said generously. Magnus smiled at him, reaching for the wine on the table instead. Most of his dates insisted he turn off his phone immediately.

“I absolutely cannot. For one, if I answer one call, I have to answer all of them, and then it will be a hailstorm of nonsense until well after midnight. For another,” he turned on the megawatt smile Cat said got him into the most trouble, “I wouldn’t dream of ignoring someone as pretty as you.” That smile turned into an all-out smirk when Alec nearly choked on his water.

They made their way through the usual small talk as they waited for Helen and gave her their orders. Alec was exceptionally polite to her, smiling kindly in a way that didn’t indicate flirting at all but had her glowing and flirting back all the same. Before she left, Helen caught Magnus’ eyes and meaningfully nodded her head in approval. Magnus smiled a little at that. Helen usually shoved a finger in her mouth and pretended to gag behind the backs of his dates. Okay, so most of the time she was professional. Whatever, he liked her.

“So Clary tells me you made detective in three years. Even I know that’s pretty impressive.” Magnus thought he would melt into mush when Alec blushed under his praise. Just a little bit of red at the height of his cheeks, making him looked pleased and adorable at the same time, and only from a factual statement. His eyes were hazel, Magnus realized. A little more green in good lighting. And when he moved in just the right way, Magnus could see the tip of a tattoo. Black ink. Oh shit, he was leering. Pathetic.

Alec cleared his throat, “Yeah, well, my father works in the Police Commissioner’s office, and my mother is a Deputy Assistant Director in the FBI.” Magnus nodded, lips tightly together to prevent
himself from commenting. “As far as I’m concerned, the Lightwood name made detective in two years. I’m really just starting to earn my place there.”
"..I'm really just starting to earn my place there," Alec confessed grimly. The rumors about his quick promotion hadn't escaped his notice either. He'd decided a humble attitude was best practice.

“Somehow, I doubt that,” Magnus said quietly from across the table, countering Alec’s self-disparaging comment. He said it with such sincerity that for a moment, Alec felt like they’d known each other for years. Even Jace agreed that there had been blatant favoritism at play when Alec was given the opportunity to take the promotional exam, two years earlier than was standard protocol. Jace took it the year after and obviously passed, so Alec tried not to dwell on it. Uncomfortable under Magnus’ scrutiny, Alec did what he did best, turned the conversation back to the perp. Well, Magnus wasn’t a perp, but the skill set was the same.

Magnus did a lot of the talking for the next hour, but he kept drawing Alec back in. He pulled out work stories and snippets about his family, not mention a whole host of his opinions on topics Alec never thought to think about. Still, he thought Magnus’ stories were much better. For one, they included people he wasn’t related to, alcohol-induced idiocy, and usually a spectacular wrap up. Several included monkeys or cats, of which Magnus had one: Chairman Meow.

“That is a terrible name.”

“How dare you,” he said flatly. “That is precisely why I picked it.” Magnus watched him for a long moment, before turning his attention back to his food. “Have you ever had any pets?” The question was so innocuous that Alec wouldn’t have been suspicious at all if Magnus were looking at him directly. It was a kindness, Alec realized, probably because he already knew the answer and didn’t want to give his reaction away preemptively.

“Uh no,” Alec said as evenly as possible. Not that it hadn’t been a point of contention between him and his parents for a long time. He’d brought a stray cat home once, and they immediately took it to a shelter. Left it outside, according to Jace, and didn’t bother to let anyone know they’d brought him. “But, there is this one cat who’s lived at the precinct since I was a uniform. His name’s Church. He’s, uh, mean, I guess?” Alec looked up to see Magnus’ attention completely focused on him. He cleared his throat, “I’ve kind of adopted him. He’s got food there, and I take him to the vet every once in a while. Make sure he doesn’t get fleas.”

Magnus’ expression had turned to something soft, looking at Alec with a fondness that made his heart flutter. Everyone said he was stupid for looking after that cat. Damn thing wasn’t nice to anyone. Didn’t like to be held or petted. He did brush up against Alec’s leg every once in a while, but that was the extent of their bond. Apparently, Magnus had mercy on him because he smoothly changed the subject again, acting as they hadn’t just had some weirdly intense moment.
“I threw a birthday party at Pandemonium for Chairman once,” Magnus said, giving Alec the opportunity to ask about the club instead. Alec decided to bypass the ridiculousness of throwing a rave for a cat and focused Magnus’ motivations for buying the club. Apparently, he’d loved this place in Melbourne, even lived above it for a while. He’d wanted a similar place in New York when he’d settled there. Then, Alec blurted out some questions about Australia, once he realized that’s where Magnus had studied. He looked a little dubious about answering but managed one or two questions before turning it back on Alec.

“So I assume you went to City College with Jace?” Magnus asked between bites, gesturing with his fork. “How was that?”

Alec frowned, confused by the question. Then he realized Clary must not have known, or must not have mentioned it. Magnus caught his look and seemed equally confused, and then concerned, and then was widening his eyes and looking somewhat closer to embarrassed. Actually, he looked horrified.

“I’m so sorry~~”

“No,” Alec insisted, shaking his head, “No it’s no big deal, really. Honestly...I uhm…” He paused for a moment, deliberating at how candid he should be. There were things about that time period that not even Jace and Izzy knew. He mentally shrugged, there really was no point in hiding it. It was such a long time ago, after all.

“I got into NYU, actually. Early admission. The plan was to study criminology and sociology, graduate in three years, and then join the force.” It was strange to say it out loud. He remembered laboring over those applications in silence. He hadn’t commiserated with his friends or asked for help from his parents or counselors. He hadn’t even told anyone he got in, let alone that he applied. He remembered the acceptance packets he’d had sent to a PO box. NYU. Stanford. Yale. Columbia. University of Chicago. He’d paid for the applications with the money he made apartment and pet sitting for his neighbors.

“So why didn’t you go?”

Alec smiled at the phrasing. Usually, people asked him “what happened,” as if it hadn’t been his decision. As if he hadn’t been accepted or something else more tragic in nature had occurred, maybe he’d cracked under pressure. People assumed that he regretted the decision, that he was ashamed of it. Alec shrugged sitting back in his seat, just to put some distance between them. Magnus noticed, and Alec noticed him noticing. People never liked his answer about his post-high school experiences.
“I was 16 in 2001,” he said as if the result was obvious or inevitable. “Both my parents were cops.”

“Of course,” Magnus said softly. “Jace mentioned he went into the army before he went to school. I guess I just didn’t think…” He trailed off with a shrug. He looked a little chagrined, but Alec kept talking.

“We both enlisted and went to boot camp right after graduation. Same unit, same squad. We both served in Afghanistan for our first tour.” Alec saw the moment when Magnus locked in on the “first” part of that statement. “Yeah. Mom and Dad were pissed, but they understood. I guess they thought we’d get it out of our system or whatever. Come home, get into the family business. Jace did. He did one tour, and then went home.”

Magnus nodded, “But you didn’t.”

Alec fingered his wine glass, lifting his brows ruefully, “I told him that when he got his degree, I would come home, and we’d join the force together.”

Magnus frowned, “That’s five years. You were in Afghanistan for five years?”

“Two, actually.” Then he did drink some of the wine. “Then three in Iraq. I was in Baghdad for a while, then they sent us to Al-Qa’im. It’s on the border.”

Magnus’ eyes widened, gleaming a little mischievously. “Yeah, on the border of Syria.”

Alec fought back a grin, realizing that Magnus was a world traveler and would definitely understand the implications.

“I was in Iraq.”

“Uh huh,” Magnus said with a nod. “What division did you say you were in?”

“I didn’t.”
“Uh huh.” He shrugged, wrinkling his nose casually, “And surely you’ve never been to Abu Kamal?”

Alec did actually chuckle at that. “That’s classified.”

Magnus broke, his face breaking out into the cutest smile Alec had ever seen in his life. He even leaned forward a little.

“Ohmygod, why would you tell me that?”

Alec lifted his glass and looked at him pointedly before drinking, “I told you nothing.”

“You’re insane,” Magnus whispered laughingly. Alec dared to hope that he looked a little impressed.

“Eh,” he shrugged, leaning forward again, “I trust you.” Which, as soon as the words were out of his mouth, Alec knew they were completely true. Alec had a hard time trusting anyone. He’d relied so heavily on the men in his unit, on his siblings, on his parents. Many of them had betrayed that trust. Repeatedly. But Magnus...he didn’t know much about him. Except that he was obviously wealthy and hedonistic, a bit of a playboy but very work-oriented. And Alec trusted him implicitly. Very realistically, Magnus was the only person who knew so much about Alec. Everyone else had...pieces. He’d just thrown out the missing ones onto the table for him after a nice meal and a glass of wine.

After that, Magnus grilled him about military life. His only point of reference was movies, so his knowledge base about the logistics was very misguided. He had Alec cracking up with his curiosity and wild accusations. Magnus acted like Alec knew everything about every branch of the military and demanded answers. Some of them were just, logistical in nature, like how their schedules worked in boot camp and overseas. Others were absolutely nuts, bordering on conspiracy theory. It was all very entertaining, and Alec cheerfully disappointed him with how lackluster the reality was.

“You’re lying, I know you’re lying!” Magnus insisted with feigned indignance, going so far as to slap the table.

“I am not! That’s what really happens! It’s not that interesting!”
Eventually, they moved onto mellow topics, like movies and books, which Alec found just as entertaining as the military interrogation. Alec was truly impressed at how easily Magnus could talk about anything. So much so, that Alec didn’t notice how much time had passed until he realized the restaurant was mostly empty.

“Well shit,” he said out loud by accident.

*

Magnus just smiled and followed his gaze.

“Ah, guess we lost track of time.” Helen was never going let him live it down. Ever. She was going to ask him about Alec for the rest of his life. He would be 80 and throwing a party she was waitressing at, and she would ask him. He just knew it. Hand to god, Magnus didn’t know what was wrong with him. His dates happened like this: drink, food, one more drink, bed, nightcap, cab home. That happened within the span of a couple hours. Three tops, if the sex was good. He’d just spent that, plus some, with Alec in public, talking. Real talking, too, as they were having an actual conversation about things that mattered. It was a little unnerving because Magnus had no real desire to be elsewhere. He was kind of annoyed Alec noticed the restaurant was clearing out.

Magnus waved down Helen to put everything on his tab and let her know they were leaving. Alec looked ready to argue about the tab-payment issue until his jaw clenched ruefully. Probably because he realized one meal at Mario’s cost roughly a week of his salary. Besides Magnus’ “tab” was paid off with favors, parties, and tickets to exclusive events for most of the staff. Hell, that’s why most of his employees liked him so much.

They walked side by side out into the New York air, the pleasant sounds of Brooklyn after dark washing over them. Magnus inhaled the scent, let it calm him. Of all the places he’d lived, Brooklyn was by far his favorite. Not for all the new, young kids moving in and trying to gentrify it, but for the roughness of it. The grit. It had all the facade of glamour with slime underneath, and it played to Magnus’ soul. He shoved that thought aside when Alec nudged him with an arm.

“You live around here?” he asked. If Alec were anyone else, Magnus would have interpreted that as a come on, or a prompt for an invitation. As it was, Alec was the gentlemanly type, and a cop to boot.

“A few blocks,” he answered blandly. Alec arched a brow, making Magnus laugh. “All right more
than a few.” He tossed his chin in the direction of the street. “There’s a cab.” He waved it down. “Where are you headed?” He had every intention of giving Alec the cab and waiting for Ernesto to pick him up. Alec’s smirk softened.

“I live that way.” He tossed a hand in a westerly direction. Magnus frowned.

“That way is Flatbush.”

“Yes, yes it is.”

“You--”

“Live in Flatbush. It’s actually closer to Prospect, but yeah.” Magnus was struggling to find a response to that. Alec saved him the trouble. “It was my first beat on the force, you know? I know the people, they know me. They feel a little better knowing there’s a cop nearby that they trust.”

“You are just full of surprises, Alexander.” This time, Magnus let himself revel in the blush that spread across Alec’s cheeks. Obviously, it was because of the way he’d said his name. Magnus found he liked it too, especially if that was the reaction he was going to get. With a huff through his nose and a thin smile, Alec opened the door to the cab and gestured for Magnus to get in. Magnus froze, confused.

“I can have my driver pick me up,” he said flatly.

“Yeah, or, you could take the cab that’s already here so that we don’t stand out here like sitting ducks for muggers for the next twenty minutes.”

“But you--”

“Magnus, I can walk home. It’s not that far from here.” Which meant he was living in a dive. That would have to be fixed. Magnus was startled by that thought. Bit soon, buddy. He sighed, still not totally willing to budge. That was until Alec put a hand on his shoulder and looked him square in the eye. “Seriously, take the cab.” There was real concern in his voice now, but Magnus was a little too caught up in this staring contest to be bothered with the politics of it. But then the cabbie honked, and Alec turned away to flip him off. God, he was so Brooklyn. When he turned back, Magnus reached up to press a kiss to his cheek. He could feel Alec’s sharp inhalation. He also felt
that he didn’t let it back out, holding his breath instead.

“Goodnight, Alexander.”

So he got in the cab, not wanting to get into an argument about personal safety with a Brooklyn cop. And he couldn’t help but look back as the car pulled away from the curb. Alec stood there, watching him go, and lifted a hand. Once they were far enough away, he dropped back into the seat, tipping his head back. Shit. Shit. Shit. Shit.

Magnus was a little bit in love.

*

Alec watched Magnus’ cab go, thinking that he was probably the stupidest man on the planet. It was very obvious early on that Magnus was game for anything. Alec should have suggested drinks elsewhere, or a nightcap back at Magnus’ place, or anything really. Anything to make him seem a little less boring and inexperienced. Truthfully, when it came to one night stands, Alec was far from inexperienced. That was Closeted Ex-Military Gay Man 101. That was how he functioned. But the whole dating...thing was decidedly not his forte. He could only assume that Magnus was bored out of his mind and was just humoring him. Then again, most people didn’t humor strangers for four hours. And he had kissed his cheek. And said his full name like he was some kind of angel deserving of reverence. And generally just looked at him like a feral cat after a can of tuna. It was...bewitching, and there really wasn’t a better word for it.

Alec shuddered and tried to shake the feeling off. Didn’t work. The uncomfortably warm feeling settled into his gut and defiantly took up residence there. Damn it, he should have kissed him. In an attempt to shake off his utter stupidity, he walked briskly in the direction of the nearest convenience store. There was a 711 right around the corner. It was funny, actually, how Brooklyn was taking shape. There were a few blocks in the downtown area with all the offices and the fancy restaurants like Mario’s, but two blocks away, the neighborhood steadily declined. Alec felt more comfortable in the declining areas. Those were people he understood, people who understood him; they had a relationship, a dynamic that was simple and overt. His relationship to wealthy people, people like his parents and the people they were friends with, that was not so simple. He shook out those thoughts too. Wasn’t half the point of the date to keep his mind off his parents?

He ducked quickly into the store to buy a few water bottles and a box of chocolate protein bars. He chatted with the store manager, Abed, who had been there every day for six years. Abed liked Alec because he’d helped reduce the amount of shoplifting in the area by making an example of one boy who had a gang of kids stealing for him. Abed caught the kid stealing and managed to keep him in the store until Alec showed up. Alec could have easily taken the stuff back and arrested the kid, probably ruining his life, but he didn’t. Instead, he’d taken the kid’s shoes and gave him two
options: he could keep whatever he stole and leave without his shoes, or return the stuff, get his shoes back, and go find a hobby. Alec wasn’t sure who was more startled by the proposition, Abed or the kid. But it worked. The kid returned the stuff, took his shoes, and, at the very least, didn’t get caught stealing again.

The 711 was a block from his building, so he was very quickly coming up on it, but he turned into the alleyway which housed his building’s dumpster.

“Rodrigo,” Alec called out brightly in greeting. The homeless man, propped up in the shelter of a loading dock sat up straight and waved him down. Alec extended one hand to shake his hand and then passed over the 711 bag. “How’s it goin’, man?”

“No complaints, officer, no complaints. Gettin’ colder though. Fall’s a-comin’.”

Alec jerked a thumb towards the street, “I’ve got your stuff when you want it, just leave a note in my box if you can’t find me.”

“Thank ya kindly, sir, but I’m good for now.”

“Just let me know, Rodrigo,” he repeated, pulling out his phone when he felt it buzz. It was a text from an unknown number. His gut twisted up in hopeful anticipation, making him feel stupider than before, but he opened it anyway.

_Had a lovely time, Alexander. Call me when you can. --Magnus_

“Oooohooohoo,” Rodrigo chuckled, “That’s some smile you got, officer. Must be some broad.”

Alec flushed but didn’t try to hide the smile. “Yeah, maybe.” He tapped out a response while jabbing a finger in the man’s direction. “You keep out of trouble, ya hear?”

Rodrigo saluted him. Alec stopped walking, stood to attention, and saluted him back. Before his wife died of cancer and the alcoholism did its work, Rodrigo Moreno had been a Major in the US Army. Sometimes he confused Alec for one of the lieutenants under his command during the Gulf War. As such, Alec often treated him like a commanding officer.
He hurried back into the building, fished out his keys, and ran up the stairs before he checked over his text again. He hadn’t sent it yet, wanting to mull over it for a moment. He wasn’t usually this self-conscious about what he said over text. They were more efficient than calls or emails, but this was different.

_Me too. I’d like to see you again. Sooner rather than later._

He pressed send and locked his door behind him. He didn’t see the point of playing coy at this point. He would say yes or let him down easy. At the very least, if Magnus blew him off, Alec would have appeased Clary and got Jace off his back about dating. Magnus’ response came not 30 seconds later.

_Lunch tomorrow?_

Alec’s face split into such a wide smile that it physically hurt. Difficult to believe or not, Magnus certainly wasn’t subtle.

_Sounds great_

_Excellent! I’ll text you tomorrow._

_Goodnight Magnus_

_Goodnight Alexander -xo_
Chapter 4

Chapter Summary

Literally just texting between Magnus and Clary.

Magnus sent a few other business-related texts that evening. Most of them were disparaging comments about interrupting his personal time or stirring up trouble outside of office hours. He canceled several appointments he had for the next day, promising preferential scheduling in the future. He wanted a few hours with Alec. *Uninterrupted*, hours. He despaired to understand that they wouldn’t be naked hours, but some contact was better than nothing. He was being...forward about the whole situation, but Alec didn’t seem to be the type to mind that kind of thing. When it was welcome, of course. He’d been just as frank with Magnus about his thoughts and feelings earlier, so there was no point in holding it back. He had a good feeling about this. Like, a feeling better than the one when he’d found Chairman on his balcony, or when he’d walked into Pandemonium for the first time. Combined. He smirked when Clary’s name flashed on the screen.

*What do you mean you HATE ME? I thought you would like him.*

*Do you not like him?*

*What happened?*

#

Magnus scowled at the triple text. Damn overeager--

*Of course I LIKE him!*

*Cute, she says.*

*Hot, she says.*

*Clarissa Fairchild, that man is fucking delectable and devastating and I was ILL-PREPARED!*

*So I hate you and your subpar descriptive abilities. Not to mention, you’ve been holding out on me. Hiding him from me. Do you hate me? Is that what this is about?*

#

*I’ve only known him six months!*
Five months and two weeks too long to be acceptable.

God ur so dramatic.
Went well then???

Magnus scoffed. Well, she says, the artist-cop asks him if the date went well.

WELL?!? WELL?
We lost track of time and he let me take the cab and dear god, have you seen his eyes?
Why didn’t you tell me about his eyes?
Did you know he takes care of a stray cat? And you didn’t say about the army. Damn embarrassing. And why didn’t you tell me that he was hilarious? Jesus christ i think i’m in love

Magnus had a spark of genius.

WHAT’S HIS TATTOO OF?

Clary didn’t respond for several long minutes. Hopefully she was confirming with Blondie the description of this tattoo. Hopefully a picture would be involved. Hopefully a shirtless Alec picture that he could blow up and hang in his office to stare at. Was that too much? He’d done weirder things concerning less deserving people. Clary’s answer was...disappointing at best.

Magnus, you’re doing that thing where you babble incoherently. Understood 0%
Glad you hit it off.
Alec doesn’t have a tat that I know of.
When are you seeing him again?

Lunch tomorrow.
MAGNUS OH MY GOD

FUCK YOU I KNOW
I had an opening and I took it.

THAT’S WHAT HE SAID THAT’S WHAT HE SAID

Why am I friends with you?

XOXOXOXOXO
Alec and magnus sittin in a tree 😎

Keep it up and I won’t tell you what happens tomorrow.

*zips lips*

Damn right.
Chapter 5

Chapter Summary

Lydia!

Alec reluctantly dragged himself out of bed Sunday morning at six. No matter what, he tried to keep a consistent sleep schedule. That wasn’t always possible, especially if he had a night tour or if there was a stakeout on the books. But any sort of consistency was good to hold onto. In a city that didn’t sleep, crime didn’t either, so neither did its cops. Alec just wished it wasn’t such a pain in the ass to sleep in. After the army, he’d never been able to sleep longer than four hours at a time. A Sunday on-call was the perfect time to sleep however late he wanted. But his body just wouldn’t stay asleep. So six o’clock, it was.

Fortunately, he had plenty to think about during his run. A lot of cops used the precinct gym for their workouts, but Alec preferred to run through the neighborhood. He liked to think that it kept him grounded. He’d watched too many good cops burn out because they started thinking of civilians as animals. Alec did his best to avoid that mentality, but it was tough. It was tough when you saw the worst people could do, and all your friends wanted to complain and kvetch about how awful everything was. Alec wasn’t Mr. Positivity by any means; he just thought a good cop needed perspective. You needed to know where the other guy was coming from to figure out how he got the to worst-case-scenario.

But he wasn’t thinking about any of that as he jogged through the morning streets. He was thinking about Magnus. He was thinking about how brown his eyes were, how cute his smile was, how nice his voice sounded. Alec honestly thought he could listen to Magnus talk and never get sick of it. He got sick of Jace’s and Izzy’s voices all the time, and he loved them. So it was a new feeling. Not to mention, he was so primped and put together that Alec had the nearly irresistible urge to wreck him. Which was insane because they’d only known each other a few hours.

Literally hours, and Magnus was already jumping at the chance to see him again. He hadn’t been expecting that. A lot of Alec’s previous “dates” had played that 3-day rule game, which he’d only figured out in retrospect because of Izzy. Alec had just assumed they weren’t interested, moved on, and then got extremely confused when they texted a week later. It truly boggled the mind. Magnus didn’t seem to be playing at anything. He’d been fairly direct and responsive. So Alec just let himself focus on that. And if the idea of tugging on Magnus’ hair while his mouth was preoccupied elsewhere on Alec’s anatomy flitted through Alec’s mind during his post-run shower, well, no one needed to know.

Eight o’clock on a Sunday was a surprisingly busy time for most precincts. That’s when all the family members and friends showed up to bail out their loved one. The drunk tank was always
fullest. Occasionally, they had some in holding cells for more serious offenses. Regardless, the place was busy. Alec made his way over to his desk, coffees for him and Lydia in hand, and slumped into his chair. He should have taken another shower to calm himself down. He passed over Lydia’s coffee, only to realize she was staring at him. Oh lovely.

“What?” he asked evenly, trying not to snap. She said if he was going to be snappy with her, then he was going to spend the next six stakeouts in silence. Which was painful, so he was trying to adhere to her standards.

“Clary covered for you last night,” she said blankly. Honestly, Alec was surprised Lydia hadn’t demanded details from him before this.

“Yes, she did.”

She shrugged before responding, “Any particular reason why?”

“You want me to explain the inner workings of Clary’s mind to you? Isn’t that more Jace’s department?”

Lydia narrowed her eyes at him, not at all convinced. But Alec was a practiced liar. He’d been lying to people for most of his life about very obvious things, so it wasn’t exactly hard to hide small things. Then again, Lydia was his partner, and not dramatic like his siblings. And, they’d gotten pretty close. If this thing with Magnus went anywhere...He clasped his hands together on his desk and leaned forward to whisper.

“I had a date.”

Lydia’s reaction was almost negligible. Like she was trying not to scare him off. Thank fuck she knew him so well.

“He’s a friend of Clary’s,” he continued. That did pull a stronger reaction from her, but she kept quiet. He waved her off. “It was actually pretty great.”

Lydia pulled her lips in and mirrored his body positioning. Sometimes this happened when they were going over a case. Lydia said it was the closest thing they had to a Vulcan Mind Meld. Whatever the hell that meant.
“So are you going to see him again?” she asked very quietly with no tone in her voice. He smiled and she clapped a hand over her mouth theatrically, eyes gleaming, like that answer was totally unexpected and out of character. Maybe it was.

“For lunch, today actually.”

She straightened up, intrigued. “Oh my god,” she said, impressed.

“I know, right?”

“Who asked, him or you?”

“I asked generally. He asked specifically.”

She dropped down to the desk again. “Oh my god.”

“I know.”

“Well what the f are you doing here?” she asked, looking frazzled now.

“I intended to work today anyway, and besides I need to distract myself.”

Lydia nodded sharply, going from gossip to business in less than a second. She shifted through the files on her desk, selected a thicker one and handed it over to him.

“Carjackings in the Heights. That ought to keep you plenty occupied.”

“You are a saint. I will shoot anyone who says otherwise.”
“Drastic,” she responded, focusing on logging into her computer, “but appreciated.”

With that, Alec settled in to focus on work. He tried to sort out the details of each individual case to make connections. Some seemed to be random, some were tagged by a gang, but all of the cars were the same make and model. Probably going to the same chop shop then. Leaving such a noticeable pattern was a huge risk, so they either had some promise of protection or the pay off outweighed the risk. But sometimes, the last step of initiation into these gangs was to get picked up for a felony, do some jail time. The “test” was to see if they’d crack under pressure, to see if they’d snitch. They’d discovered that these guys were fed false leads to keep gang activity safe, but if word spread about those leads, there was no safe place for the ex-initiate. The cars were all the same make and model, so those were easy enough instructions for an initiate to follow. They were all jacked at different times of day in the same neighborhood, so it was entirely possible it was one guy doing it. Witness reports were stupidly unreliable in cases like these, and none of them matched anyway. So that theory was quickly circling the drain…His phone buzzed and Magnus’ name flashed on the screen.

_We did dinner at mine, so we should do lunch at yours. That okay?_

Alec smiled just a little too widely reading it, catching Lydia’s attention. She lifted her brows in curiosity, but he ignored her and spun his chair to the side so she couldn’t fully see his face or his phone.

_Sure. Not that I ever recommend eating in a police station._

_We could meet somewhere else?_

_Nah, it’s cool. I’ll order food. Preferences?_

_Good god, let me spoil you!_

Alec snorted.

_You spoiled me plenty last night._

He was not stupid enough to believe that Mario’s had a reasonable price range. Even if Magnus was the owner, it was extravagant.
And didn’t that have multiple layers? Alec felt himself going beet red, thinking about the ways he’d like Magnus to spoil him. Oh, this was such a bad idea. Or maybe the best idea Alec ever had. It was looking like it was going to be both.

“Oh my god,” Lydia said quietly, “You really like this guy, don’t you?” Alec looked up at her, unable to bottle up what had come bubbling to the surface. “Dude,” she said in all seriousness.

“Help,” he said pathetically. “He’s coming here.”

“Well that’s a terrible idea,” Lydia grumbled. “We have like,” she tossed her hand, “four new people and Clary hasn’t vetted them yet.”

Alec frowned, “Vetted them for what?”

Lydia froze like a deer caught in headlights and snapped her mouth shut.

“Nothing. Everything. You know how Clary is. What’s that, Captain?” she asked in response to absolutely nothing and immediately speeding off to Garroway’s office. Well, he wasn’t going to let that one sit, but he didn’t have the energy to address it at the moment. He sighed.

When’s the last time somebody paid for you?

* 

In the passenger seat next to Ernesto as he drove, Magnus looked at Alec’s latest text and frowned. There were several issues with that question. One: How the hell did Alec get such a quick read on him? Two: Where was all that reticence and fumbling from last night? And three: He had not a damn clue as to the answer. Surely, someone had. Sometime. Maybe not recently. It certainly wasn’t a date. If anybody, it would be Raphael. His other friends had to live within their means, and Magnus liked to spoil them when he could. Especially Cat and his goddaughter, Madzie. Maybe he could text Raph and ask--no, nope, he was not going to be this ridiculous.
Fine. *But if you buy this one, I buy the next two.*

There. He got to win an argument and be suggestive at the same time. Win-win for him. Alec’s response was quick.

You buy two in a row, and I buy for a week.

Clary said “stubborn” not “dogged”

Woof

Magnus laughed out loud, drawing Ernesto’s attention for a brief moment. He didn’t feel the need to explain. He didn’t really want to share this yet. He’d only spoken to Clary out of obligation, but the details...no, he’d keep them for himself just yet. Because Alexander Lightwood was very quickly becoming his favorite thing.

*  

Alec ordered Chinese from his favorite place in the neighborhood. They had amazing Kung Pao Chicken, and Alec thought it was a crime that more people didn’t know about their dumplings. The cook, Enlai, was Alec’s neighbor, and Alec had chased off a bookie who had it out for the Enlai’s kid. As such, Enlai was always more than happy to make food for him. Always threw in some extra wantons, too. He reserved an interrogation room, which was about as much privacy as you could get in a precinct in the middle of the day.

He came back out into the bullpen only to hear a ruckus from the lobby. There were scales of “ruckus” which could occur at a police station. This ranked a 2: disruption out of curiosity. Lydia was tipped back all the way in her chair, evidently trying to get a good look at reception. Alec rolled his eyes and kicked at her chair, nearly knocking her over. She squeaked but righted herself with ease.

“Not cool!” she hissed.

“Stop gawking!” he said jabbing a finger at her.
“I am not--!” She snapped her mouth shut, chagrined. “Alec, he’s so...shiny.” Alec’s brow furrowed and he leaned to the side to catch a glance of reception. Sure enough, there was Magnus at Patty’s desk, chatting animatedly and wearing sequins. Of course. Alec looked back at her and shrugged.

“She clapped her hands together like some excited tween, looking like she was going to squeal, but kept silent. Alec crossed his arms over his chest, turning his most disapproving glare at her until she settled, looking sheepish. He knew it. All women were like this, no matter how buttoned-down and professional they seemed. “Dunno,” he said helpless, “I’m into it.”
Magnus swanned into the precinct like he owned the place. He supposed such an acquisition wasn’t entirely out of his purview. Maybe he should get Raph...nope, no, stop being crazy. He turned the full force of his charm on the ancient but lovely Patty Holt, who happened to be the receptionist. As expected, he had all the information he needed within minutes. Chatty biddies were his favorites for getting local dirt. Patty was particularly helpful because apparently, she’d been around since the 70’s and knew everyone and everything that happened inside the station. It was pretty amazing actually. She knew all the details about Clary’s relationship with Jace, down to the day they met, to their first “actual” date, and their first “sleepover.” She knew that Captain Garroway was Clary’s stepfather and that she originally was going to refuse to be under his command, but the order came from on high that she was to be placed at the 70th precinct due to her experience with Vice, which she worked in Queens while she was an officer. Patty knew that the head of forensics was having an affair with the precinct’s sketch artist, who was also sleeping with a rookie officer. She knew all about Alec, his parents, and his service record. She even told him how there had been an epic falling out six months prior when Clary was assigned as Jace’s partner because she all but forced Alec to come out to the entire precinct and his parents found out, so there was some tension there. But then, Clary bluntly used her nepotism to get all of the uniforms, detectives, and techs who made homophobic comments about Alec reassigned or fired. Now, she and Jace went through a whole routine with the newbies, pulling them into an interrogation room to determine if they had “issues” with gay people or not. Only one of them immediately put in for another transfer.

Magnus listened to all of this, wide-eyed, impressed, confused, and not entirely sure how he felt about getting his information this way. It would have been nice to hear it from Alec, but certainly he didn’t have this level of detail. And Clary hadn’t said a word about getting rid of the office homophobes, but he did know that she and Alec had a falling out about all the disruption she’d caused after that particular incident.

It was almost imperceptible, but Magnus felt a sudden shift in the air and realized he was being watched. A petite blonde woman was leaning dangerously far back in her chair, watching him intently. That is, until a foot shot out and all but upended her. Alec’s familiar shape came into view, even if Magnus couldn’t fully see him. So Magnus made quick, sincere goodbyes, and promised to give her the name of his masseuse (obviously intending to make sure said masseuse gave her a discount). Then he headed straight for the bullpen, where Alec was presumably talking with his partner. Leanne? Laura? Leah? Lila?

“Cut it out, Lydia!” he heard Alec hiss. Right, Lydia. Lydia, Lydia, Lydia. “Quit being weird.”

“I am absolutely not being weird. You’re being weird. You’re being the weirdest.”

The pair of detectives came into his full view, Alec staring Lydia down, and Lydia smiling
brightly. He wasn’t sure he wanted to know the full extent of the conversation.

“My god, that’s a face.” He turned his attention to Lydia, feigning curiosity, “Did you kill someone?” Lydia’s expression lit up like a kid in the candy store, but Magnus was far more interested in Alec’s response. He went from looking like he was going to strangle someone, to smiling brilliantly at Magnus, even his shoulders relaxed. Magnus’ insides decided to start doing cartwheels, and the possessive and predatory animal currently residing in his chest was insanely pleased. Unfortunately, Lydia cut off his view and contemplation of this development by jumping to her feet in between them and thrusting her hand out.

“Lydia Branwell, I’m Alec’s partner.”

“Ah,” Magnus answered, shaking her hand, “Magnus Bane.” She smiled like a bratty kid, indicating that she knew exactly who he was and why he was there. That animal pawed at him again, making him wonder how much and how quickly Alec had told her about him. He didn’t have time to wonder for long because Alec was physically removing Lydia from between them, and grabbing Magnus’ hand to lead him somewhere. Magnus’ brain promptly shorted out. Oh fuck, how pathetic. A boy was holding his hand and he was about to swoon like an 18th century Louisiana bride on a hot day in July. And why the hell did he get so descriptively metaphorical in situations like this?

“I’m officially on break,” Alec shouted back to her, still leading Magnus by the hand, “don’t call me. I mean it.”

Behind them, Lydia was cackling. Magnus was a bit amused himself. Clary had told him Alec was a bit grouchy, but he hadn’t seen any evidence of that until now. If that’s how he interacted with his partner, he couldn’t wait to see him with his brother and Clary, who were ten times more annoying.

“Well, that was a bit rude,” Magnus teased, bringing his free hand to cover the one he was currently holding. He knocked into Alec’s shoulder, to let him know he didn’t mind it, but Alec was smirking.

“It was for your own good, trust me.”

“Why’s that?”
“Because you gave Lydia your full name.”

“So…?”

“So she’s a cop,” Alec said, reaching out to open a door for Magnus, “and one of the best detectives we have. So in the next twenty minutes she’s going to have your criminal history, credit history, educational background, international papers, known associates and financials, and probably some of your medical history too.” He bobbed his head, ushering Magnus into what looked like an interrogation room. “But only if she’s willing to call in a few favors, which I promise you she will.”

Magnus stared at him, flabbergasted. “Well shit.”

Alec hummed, lifting his brows for emphasis. “It’s lucky you already know Jace, so that my sister stays out of it.”

Magnus frowned. “And what does your sister do again?”

“She’s a medical examiner with the army.”

Magnus sighed, how could so many people in his immediate acquaintance be so talented and yet caught up in so much violence? Dear god.

“Okay then.”

“Yeah.”

Magnus decided to turn his focus elsewhere, “Chinese?”

“Best in Brooklyn,” Alec assured him, going to sit down. Magnus scowled.

“I highly doubt that,” he shot back condescendingly. Magnus knew all the best take out in Brooklyn, as he was a terrible cook and frequently needed sustenance. There was no way in hell
Alec found a better spot in Flatbush of all places.

“Those are fighting words,” Alec said, jabbing a chopstick in his general direction. “Because I’m pretty certain that Enlai uses crack in his Kung Pao Chicken, and I absolutely refuse to bust him for it.”

“Enlai? You know the chef?”

“He’s my neighbor,” Alec said dismissively. There was a story there, Magnus just knew it. Instead of prying, he sat down at the steel table and threw a glance over to the mirror every interrogation room seemed to have. It was currently a window, so they could see into the observation side of the room. They chatted idly about Lydia and Magnus’ business meetings later. Magnus deftly avoided informing him that he’d rearranged his schedule for the next month just to accommodate this one lunch. Alec would probably be horrified and feel guilty because he was just that type of guy.

“Okay,” Magnus said eventually, after sampling everything Alec pushed over at him, “I admit that this is pretty good.”

“I told you--”

“Nope, my guy in Chinatown is better.”

“Foul lies.”

“Hand to god. I’ll take you. We can do a side by side comparison. Enlai and Mama Min can have an epic Chinese cuisine showdown.”

“While that sounds awesome, it’s also insane.”

Magnus tilted his head, actually considering it. Actually, it wasn’t a bad idea at all. He could totally set up an event like that. Rent out a ballroom, gather take out chefs from all over the city. The Bored and The Wealthy would love to indulge in such a trendy, “low brow,” event. He could tack on a silent auction, so some of the proceeds could go to the winner and the charity of their choosing…
“Oh my god, you’re already planning some huge thing for it, aren’t you?” Alec asked, his voice somewhere in the middle of accusing, fond, and impressed.

“It’s actually not a bad idea, basically pays for itself.” He went through some of his thought process out loud, with the occasional comment or question from Alec. If he set it up right, he could even have some of the food served to the general public, draw in some celebrities for optimal press. It was good business for...several of his businesses, actually. He finished the last bit of his babbling to see Alec sitting back in his chair and smiling at him, those pretty eyes of his lit up in Magnus’ direction.

“You’re really good at this, aren’t you?”

Magnus felt his cheeks warm, which was stupid because people complimented him all of the time, with better phrasing and more charm, but they never looked at him like that, so he let himself indulge in it for a moment.

“Didn’t go to Harvard for nothing,” he responded nonchalantly.

“Yeah,” Alec mused picking at his food, “somehow I don’t believe that Harvard has anything to do with it.”

They ate in silence for a long while, just enjoying each other’s company, and Magnus found that he wasn’t crawling-out-of-his-skin uncomfortable. Usually, he’d take any opportunity to fill up a silence with another person. But as stimulating as Alec was, he made Magnus feel surprisingly calm. Which was odd because he was also nervous. Alec was somewhat straight-laced, and more liberal, open-minded people had accused Magnus of being “too much.” Unsurprisingly, Alec pulled him out of his thoughts.

“So how much did Patty tell you?” Alec asked him casually. In defeat, Magnus tossed his chopsticks up so they fell on the table.

“You know, I keep forgetting that you’re a cop.”

“Detective,” Alec corrected smugly, “And it doesn’t take much deductive reasoning to figure that a good businessman can sniff out the gossip center of a workplace.”
Magnus smiled sheepishly. The backhanded compliment didn’t escape his notice.

“She told me enough.”

“About me?”

He tilted his head, “Clary mostly.” He shrugged. “I wasn’t sure how much of your personal life you wanted spread around to your co-workers, so I said I was here to visit her.”

Alec didn’t even react to that. “Everyone around here has been surprisingly cool since I came out. So,” he lifted a shoulder casually, “doesn’t really matter to me. I wouldn’t have said yes to Clary if I was that concerned about it.

“All right, so you know how I met Clary, and that she basically outed me to the entire universe.” He was being sarcastic, but there was something softly fond in his tone that made Magnus think Alec was coming around wonderfully to Clarissa’s presence in his life. “So what’s your story? How’d you meet her? Party? Club? Drunken night in Ibiza?”

“I very much regret telling you that story,” Magnus noted, sweeping up some noodles onto his chopsticks. “Anyway, I met Clarissa because of a very close friend of mine. He, uh, well, he used to have quite the penchant for trouble, and she came to his rescue. I was absurdly grateful to her, and we hit off, so we’ve been good friends ever since.” Alec was watching him with lifted brows and lips pulled in as if he was biting back commentary. “What?”

Alec immediately lifted his hands defensively, “I’ve heard over a dozen of your stories by now, and that was, by far, the least descriptive of them.”

“Cop,” Magnus sneered.

“Detective,” Alec corrected yet again with a sunny smirk. He leaned forward, putting his chin to his hand. “So how many laws did he break on the day in question?”
Magnus mentally tallied, “Two-No! Three. But only in Kansas. I still say it counts.”

“Kansas,” Alec repeated thoughtfully. “Right, so one was a decency law.”

Magnus groaned, “You don’t even live in the Midwest, how would you know that?”

“I’m going to guess another one was drug-related and the other gun-related. Maybe stolen, probably illegal and unlicensed.”

“Your speculation will never hold up in court,” Magnus deadpanned, not giving anything away. Raphael would not appreciate another cop knowing his illustrious history. He didn’t like that Magnus knew it. Alec lifted his hands in defeat once more.

“Don’t ask, don’t tell. Got it.”

“Familiar with that one, are you?” Magnus teased.

“Intimately.”

Well fuck. Magnus wasn’t sure he could handle a confident, flirtatious Alec Lightwood situated so closely to his own person. Magnus watched him, tapping the table rapidly with one finger while he considered his next move. Usually, this crap was automatic. He knew all the steps to the dance, signals were obvious, the path was clear. Everything with Alec in the immediate present was comfortable, easy, and seemingly safe. Anything beyond that? Clouded and hazy. He had no idea where to take this, no idea where this was headed, but it seemed like Alec was either in the same boat or had some plan in mind. Magnus was shockingly comfortable letting him take the lead. The realization made him sigh.

“Alexander, I have a very strong feeling that you are going to be hazardous to my health.” And sanity. Definitely his sanity. Instead of looking offended, he actually seemed pleased by that response. Full of surprises, chock fucking full of surprises.

“Well,” he said slowly, “if it makes you feel any better…” Alec sighed noisily, re-situating himself in his seat, his hand stretched out on the table and he rubbed his thumb, index, and pointer fingers
together. Nervous tick. Subtle but present. He continued.

“In less than twenty-four hours, I’ve probably told you more about me than I’ve ever told anyone in my life. Including my family.”

Magnus frowned, brows painfully drawn together, “You said you were close with your siblings--”

Alec shot him a rueful smile and shook his head, “I only came out this year. And even though we were all in the service, we don’t really talk about it. Yet another don’t ask, don’t tell policy.”

“I’m sorry to hear that.”

“Don’t be,” Alec said with too much kindness in his voice. “My point is that, uh, this is new and... weirdly intense,” Magnus snorted, making Alec grin, “for me too. And... on the off chance that I’m not shoving a foot in my mouth, I’d...really like to see where this goes.” His words came out in a quick string on a single breath, like he had to physically forced himself to get it out. Magnus kept his gaze steady on Alec, letting him say his piece in his own time, not letting his own anxiety bubble too far to the surface.

“Me too,” he answered, sounding a bit too hoarse for his own peace of mind.

“Good.”

They finished their meal and cleaned up because Alec was still on duty and Magnus had a series of meetings to get to. They chatted about their schedules for the next week, which were absurd, to be quite honest. Who knew businessmen and cops kept such similar hours?

“Look,” Alec said finally as they were headed for the door, “I don’t mind meeting up late, if that’s all that works. I just wanna see you.” Magnus paused mid-reach for the handle, and turned suddenly so that he and Alec were pressed up against each other. He felt the way Alec held his breath again, and if he wasn’t the sweetest…

Alec put a hand to his chest, preventing Magnus from stealing the kiss he very much wanted. Confused by the conflicting signals, Magnus nearly let out an undignified whine, but Alec’s whiny groan was satisfying enough.
“While that idea is fantastic, the location leaves something to be desired.”

“Huh?” Magnus followed up articulately.

Alec slumped, “I absolutely refuse to kiss you for the first time in the same room where I’ve interrogated at least a dozen, gross rapists.”

Magnus immediately took a step back, “Ah. Raincheck?”

He watched Alec’s eyes widen and flick down to his lips before going back to his eyes.

“Definitely.”

*

Alec watched Magnus go, a little starry eyed with the ghost of yet another cheek kiss plaguing him. At least his stupidity was justified in this case. No way in hell was he going to have any sort of romantic moment with Magnus in the precinct. No. He knew Clary and Jace, and dozens of other couples made use of empty rooms, closets, and abandoned halls for their clandestine meet and greets, but Alec didn’t want to sully anything Magnus-related with the perps he’d arrested over the years. The two subjects just didn’t belong in the same space in his head.

Oh, he was very much aware that many of his fellow cops were watching him with no small amount of interest, and that Lydia was smirking and ready to bounce out of her seat. However, Alec really couldn’t bring himself to care because Magnus looked back at him when he got to the door, smiled, winked, and disappeared through them. It was really only after Magnus was gone that Alec felt like he could breathe and think properly again.

He did, however, have enough in him to grab a pen and throw it at Lydia when she started humming that stupid “sitting in a tree” song. Her answering cackle was enough to let him know he was officially screwed. Just not screwed by Magnus. Not yet, anyway.
The rest of the afternoon went fairly quickly. Alec sent out a few uniforms to canvas the area in the Heights where all the carjackings took place with specific instructions not to mention they thought it was the same person. After that, he signed some of his and Lydia’s reports and then left for the evening around seven. He was not four steps away from the door when his phone starting playing Izzy’s ringtone.

“Hey Izzy, how was dinner?” He couldn’t help the snark in his voice. Not only did their mother have Sunday dinner at 4 o’clock in the afternoon, but she usually requisitioned them until well after eight. Something drastic must have happened for Izzy to get early release. And yes, he did contextualize his childhood home as a prison.

“Shut up, nerdlord. It’s so weird not having you there.” Ah, so she had left already.

“You’re calling me a nerd? Last time I checked, I’m not the one with four degrees,” he shot back, bypassing her commentary on his absence altogether. He didn’t want to comment.

“Uh huh, whatever.”

“You are such a punk. What do you want?”

“Nuh uh, broseph, it’s about what you want. Which is a heads up. AKA a warning. AKA--”

“Izzy!”

“Jace knows. Someone in the department said a very handsome glittery dude came to the precinct to have lunch with you and Clary cracked like a rotten egg. The jig is up, brother, and Jace has probably already broken into your apartment to scare you with the where have you been routine.”

“I’ve been at work,” Alec answered drollly, amused instead of annoyed. He thought he would be
more annoyed.

“With a handsome, glittery man, I know.”

He chuckled, “Thanks for the warning.”

“Not a problem. Talk soon?”

“Very soon.” He paused, trying not to feel guilty over attempting to keep one thing in his life private from people for a day. “I literally met him yesterday, Iz.”

“I know.”

“I was going to tell you at happy hour tomorrow.”

“I know.”

“I wasn’t going to tell Jace because he’s a punk, but I was gonna tell you. Actually, I really, really need to talk to you because this is beyond stupid.”

He could hear the smile in her voice now, “I know.”

“Good. Love you.”

“Love you too, nerd. Don’t kill Jay.”

“I cannot promise that and you know it.”

Jace was, in fact, already in Alec’s apartment. And he knew that because Lacy, one of the teenagers who lived in his building was out on the stoop and informed him that Jace had gone in. Jace was notorious for trying to scare Alec for some baffling reason, so he’d long ago asked some
of the kids to keep an eye out for him, just in case. Not to mention, his door was unlocked and all the lights in his apartment were off. Alec had two deadbolts and a chain, and he always left a lamp on when he was away. His brother was an idiot.

Alec slammed the door behind him and picked up a nerf ball that had ended up on the entryway table. He fiddled with his keys for a moment, pretending to settle in. But then he quickly turned on the overhead light he never used, cocking his arm back at the same time, ready to pummel Jace in the face.

Jace had pulled a chair directly across from the door and was also holding a nerf ball, arm cocked back to throw it. Alec jerked his chin warningly. His aim was so much better than Jace’s, he was a trained sniper, after all.

“Damn it Izzy!” he cursed, tossing his weapon aside petulantly. Alec chuckled and lowered his, too.

“Don’t blame her because you’re stupid.”

“Am not,” Jace pouted, slouching in his chair, arms crossed and looking disgruntled. “I’m *pissed*.”

“You’re *ridiculous*,” Alec shot back, moving to put his wallet, badge, and gun into the safe under his entertainment stand. Jace barked out a mocking laugh.

“Ha! Hilarious. I’m ridiculous for being mad that you lied to me!”

“Did not!”

“By *omission*, you heathen!” Jace snapped, jumping to his feet with a shocking amount of indignance. Alec rolled his eyes. Ever since they were kids, Jace had prided himself on being Alec’s best friend, brother, and confidante. He was one of the few people who could get Alec to do anything without complaining. Back then, that really was a feat.

“How’s Mom?” he asked blandly.
“Don’t change the subject, you son of a bitch! You went on a date. With Magnus Fucking Bane of all people! And you didn’t even tell me!”

“First of all,” Alec said standing up and going to the kitchen to make himself some tea, “your girlfriend set it up. So blame her.”

“Oh, I do--”

“Secondly, it was last night, and right up until the second before I left the apartment, I was 100% certain I was going to cancel.”

“But you didn’t. And you didn’t text me. And you didn’t tell me you were meeting for lunch today and that he kissed you--”

“On the cheek!”

“--in the middle of the precinct where Lydia probably was, so that means that both my partner and your partner knew about it before I did, and I don’t think I can even look at you right now.”

Alec dropped his tea bag into the mug of steaming hot water, and then turned to Jace, who had naturally followed him into the kitchen, and crossed his arms over his chest. He looked at his brother for a long moment, considering what to say next. There was absolutely nothing for him to feel guilty about when it came to Magnus. It was new and happening really fast, so there hadn’t been much time to tell him anyway. However, things between him and Jace had been...strained somewhat since Clary had come on the scene. Not just because Jace was constantly ditching him in his free time to hang out with her, but also because of the whole “Alec was a closeted gay man” thing. Jace obviously hadn’t cared about Alec’s sexual preference. Didn’t even blink at it. In fact, Jace immediately said that so many things made much more sense because of it. Apparently, he’d had suspicions and questions that never got answered because he figured Alec would eventually come to him if it was anything serious. True enough. But as a byproduct, there were a lot of things Alec had never told him, especially about their first tour. Especially about their years working the same beat. That Jace felt a little betrayed by it all was hardly surprising. Alec was more taken aback by how mellow he’d been about all of it. So, he could only assume that this strong, absurd reaction to a couple of dates was tied into that initial betrayed response. With a sigh, Alec handed the tea to Jace and set about making another cup. Shockingly enough, Jace took it, and sat down quietly, waiting. Who was he and what had he done with his loud, cocky brother?

“All right,” Alec said, sitting across from him. “What do you want to know?”
It really was lucky that Jace already knew so much about Magnus through Clary, so all the weird, creepily intrusive questions were bypassed. However, he did ask very specific questions about the two dates. Weirdly specific questions that made Alec think for a flash of a moment that Jace had been at Mario’s the night before with a bug planted at their table. Alec shook it off. Because of his lackadaisical attitude, his arrogance, and indifference toward rules of any kind, it was very easy to believe that Jace Wayland would be a terrible detective. He was actually one of the best when it came to understanding people and getting results. Were they occasionally suspect and unconventional? Sure, but results were results, and that’s why they had lawyers anyway. His instincts about dates were also pretty good just because before Clary he dated anything with two legs and a vagina. And not even that was strictly true. Jace had dated of variety of genderfluid people, and people at various stages of the transitioning process without a thought about it. He'd even introduced one of them to his siblings. Alec had really liked Gary. Good guy. Unfortunately, he got replaced with Stephanie, and hadn’t that been a shit show?

“Look, dude, Magnus is...an okay guy. Clary likes him or whatever.” Jace waved a dismissive hand. “But that guy has a Past. Capital P-type past, too. And he gets around. Like a lot.”

Alec smirked, humoring him for less than a second. “You used to get around and Clary still tolerates you.” He bobbled his head. “Mostly.” Jace jabbed a warning finger at him.

“I’m serious, Alec!”

“What is this? Are you worried about my virtue or something? Because trust me, that’s long gone.”

Jace slapped his hands to his face, cringing, “God I don’t wanna know.”

“Like, really long time gone. At least ten years gone--”

“There is not enough brain bleach in the world--”

“Remember “Quick Trick” Ricky?”

Jace collapsed completely onto the table, arms over his head, “I did not need to know that.”
“You are the one who started this shit show. If you buy the tickets, you gotta watch it.”

“When’s intermission?” he whined.

“Hilarious.”

Jace straightened, looking serious again. “I just want to make sure you know what you’re getting yourself into, that’s all.”

Alec nodded, thoughtfully, and stared down at his tea. He remembered having this conversation with Jace six months ago. It wasn’t such a different subject, even though Clary was a woman and a cop, to boot. He’d been worried about Jace getting in over his head, risking his career for a woman he barely knew, and getting too attached too quickly. At least Alec had been on the other side of this at one point. Then he thought about Magnus, about how sweet his smile was, how he so easily laced innuendo into every comment or opinion. He made Alec laugh without embarrassing the hell out of him, and yeah, the dude was glittery. Alec was really fixated on that point. Stupidly fixated. He must have been quiet for too long, or maybe it was the dopey grin on his face because Jace let out a low whistle.

“Dude--”

Alec looked up to see an astonished Jace Wayland, watching him like he’d just grown another head. Alec shrugged.

“Dude.”

“I know.”

“You really like him. You really like Magnus Bane.” He said it like Magnus was some kind of alien thing outside of Alec’s romantic purview.

“It’s bad, man, it’s really bad.” Alec gulped at his tea, trying to calm himself a little. “It’s been less than a day, and I just want to see him again. We haven’t even kissed. It’s stupid.”
“Dude,” Jace repeated stupidly, completely exasperating.

“Can you find a helpful comment somewhere in that ADD-squirrel brain of yours?” Alec snapped, a little irritated that he was emoting so much in front of Jace who he decidedly did not like to emote in front of.

“I’m gonna let that one slide because you are crushing hard on a glittery man with a huge...bank account, and I’ve never been more proud of you in my life.”

Alec huffed in offense, “I have three meritorious commendation ribbons, two silver stars, and a purple heart.”

Jace shrugged, crossing his arms, “Yeah, but have you ever snagged a sugar daddy before now? No. So my point stands.”

“Barely.”

“Still.”

They stared each other down for a long moment before they both broke at the same time, smiling at each other. Jace reached across the table to clap his shoulder. “I’m real happy for you, brother.”

“Thanks Jay.”

“So when is he meeting Dad? Because I want to film it and sell the rights to America’s Funniest Home Videos.”

Alec shook his head and focused on his tea.

*  

Magnus’ last appointment of the day wasn’t business at all. On the first Sunday of every month, he and his two best friends, Catarina Loss and Ragnor Fell, met up for a poker game. They played for
favors instead of money. Magnus met Ragnor during a two-week conference in London while he’d been studying in Melbourne. They’d remained in contact after that, and Ragnor had been the one to persuade Magnus into getting his MBA at Harvard and talked him into moving to New York, where he taught literature to high school students. Not as prestigious as his former position at Cambridge, but better suited to Ragnor’s personality. Catarina had been Magnus’ first neighbor in New York. Magnus had cut his finger pretty badly one night and knew Cat was a nurse, so he’d begged her to stitch him up in her apartment to spare him the humiliation of an ER visit. There was no good way to explain that you were trying to cut into a frozen cheesecake at 2 AM. They were fast friends, and she’d even named Magnus her daughter’s godfather. As such, she shamelessly used her daughter Madzie to keep Magnus in the city, claiming she needed a positive male role model in her life, and that was exactly what he’d signed up to be. Looking down at the little girl curled up in his lap asleep, he found it very hard to regret that decision.

“So, Magnus,” Ragnor drawled, tossing a card to Cat for a new one, “Santiago says you had a date this weekend.”

Cat scoffed, “Magnus has a date every weekend. Why would Raph care?”

Ragnor caught Magnus’ gaze from across the table, his cunning look appearing extremely entertained by the whole thing.

“Because apparently, he saw the gentleman in question for lunch this afternoon.”

Magnus pursed his lips, “Do you people have nothing better to do than talk about me?” He gestured uselessly, “What am I saying? Of course not.”

But they continued talking as if he hadn’t said anything at all.

“By that, I assume you mean that he went out with him Saturday night, took him home, and then took him to lunch when they managed to crawl out of bed?” Cat said teasingly. In all fairness, that was a very common occurrence in Magnus’ life.

“No!” he snapped irritably.

Cat finally acknowledged him, “Oh?”
“Apparently, our dear Magnus went home *alone* Saturday night, and then met up with his gentleman friend *again* today.”

“If you say *gentleman* in that tone one more time--”

“Well that’s quite the development,” Cat said lightly. “Maybe our Maggie is finally growing up?”

“Perish the thought,” Ragnor grumbled. The two of them turned the whole of their attention on Magnus, waiting expectantly for him to provide more details. Instead, Magnus childishly focused on rearranging the cards in his hands like he had nothing better to do in that moment.

“The one time he *doesn’t* talk…”

Magnus threw a card at Cat from the discard pile. “He’s a friend of Clary’s.”

“Oh?”

“Meaning he’s a cop,” Cat concluded.

“*Detective*,” Magnus corrected sharply. He could tease Alec all he wanted, but he wasn’t about to let anyone else diminish his accomplishments.

“Still a cop,” Ragnor, the former political activist grumbled. Ragnor had been arrested during so many protests that the Scotland Yard had started fast-tracking his arraignments just to clear out a cell for more important criminals. Sometimes they didn’t even arrest him unless he got violent. Pretty sure most of them knew Ragnor by his first name; some still sent him Christmas cards.

“And Ex-Army,” he continued, “A decorated officer, I might add.”

“And *dreamy*?!” Cat teased with a cackle. Magnus lifted his brows and darted his eyes away to hide his real response to that statement.

“Understatement,” he grumbled, not wanting to expand further than that. Of course, this garnered
their attention even more. When Magnus was attracted to someone, he wasn’t quiet about it or shy in his descriptions with his friends. He usually had a hard time shutting up about them, going so far as to fixate on some aspect of their personality and become a little obsessive about it. He’d gotten a little carried away trying to learn to play the piano when dating a musician once, and even produced a movie while with an actress. It was a mildly annoying facet of his personality that he’d done his best to curb in the past few years. That meant short-lived flings, but at least he was spared his dignity.

“Color me intrigued,” Ragnar mused, “Let’s hear it, then. What’s he like?”

Obviously, their poker game was being put on hold. Magnus sighed and set his cards aside so he could pick up Madzie. He took her to sleep in the spare bedroom where she wouldn’t be disturbed, tucked her in and kissed her forehead before returning to his friends.

He slumped into his chair and took a long sip of his drink before facing them down.

“The boy’s stunning. And I may or may not be a little in love with him,” he muttered, annoyed with himself.

“Jesus Christ, Magnus.”

“Here we go.”

Magnus held up a dismissive hand. “It’s different.”

“The last six were different, Magnus.”

He slammed the rest of his drink back and set the glass down. “Trust me, it’s different.”

“Use your words, Magnus,” Ragnar advised. “You say the same thing every time, and the results are the same every time. Convince us.” Ragnar was always a little more forgiving in these situations. More so than Cat, anyway.

Magnus flicked his eyes to Ragnar, “You met Camille.” Ragnar grunted the affirmative. “How did
you find her?”


“Which I knew from the start,” Magnus reminded him. “I thought I loved her anyway. I remember feeling desperate just to get her to look at me. I did pretty much anything to get her to like me or want me. Just one or the other because I wasn’t allowed to need both.” He felt Cat’s hand on her forearm. She was looking at him, pained, but sympathetic.

“Ancient history,” she said gently. Magnus nodded and patted her hand.

“Anyway...I always say it’s different because I constantly compare who I’m with to how I felt with her. As long as it’s not that pathetic neediness, it’s different. They’re all pretty and bored and looking for a quick fix or excitement, not expecting me to hang around and wait for them while they run off having affairs.” They were both nodding at this point. He shook off that dark feeling settling into his gut and chose to focus on that contented animal in his chest who’d reveled in the fact that Alec had texted him an hour ago to inform him that Jace knew they were seeing each other. The brightness in his chest was better than the sick dread in his gut anyway.

“So when I say that Alexander is different, I mean that he doesn’t fall into either of those categories. He’s honest and straightforward and...responsible.”

“Good god,” Ragnor said, horrified.

“I know,” Magnus said commiserating. “I wasn’t even going to go! Clary said he was a cop and pretty...regulated, and I was absolutely convinced it was going to be a wash of an evening and that I’d be bored to death…” He paused, thinking about Saturday night in glaring detail. Alec had offered up so much of his history so quickly, and between the wine and the laughter and the chivalrous cab-offering, Magnus had been stupidly swept off his feet. And then there was the blatant eye-fucking and the palpable chemistry, and the way he’d held his breath when Magnus got close like he was bracing against the anticipation. He’d known very quickly that one night with Alec in his bed was not going to be enough.

“And?!” Cat demanded impatiently, snapping Magnus back into the present. Both of his friends were staring at him wide-eyed, all but on the edge of their seats waiting. Years ago, Magnus would have cheerfully murdered someone to keep their undivided attention for this long. Now, he kind of wished they’d leave him alone to think about Alec in private.
“It wasn’t what I was expecting. It really, really wasn’t.”

*

Izzy, by far, was much more pleasant to talk to about Magnus. She actually had real commentary and legitimate questions and didn’t feel the need to refer to Magnus as “glittery,” his “sugar daddy,” or refer to the fact that as a potential partner, he would inevitably have to meet the Lightwood parents at some point in the very distant future. The alcohol definitely helped when Izzy offered sex advice though. In theory, Alec wasn’t “out of practice,” but it hadn’t really happened within the context of a relationship meant to last more than a week. Probably less.

“But Clary said Lydia said he kissed you in front of the whole precinct!” she squeaked when he confessed how hesitant he’d been to do anything during their lunch.

He scowled, “God. On the cheek, Iz. On the cheek! It’s astounding how inaccurate the gossip is in a place full of cops.”

“Sheesh, okay, so what? You’ve only been on two dates,” she said casually. He lifted his brows at her. “What?”

“Says the woman who didn’t go on more than 3 dates with a single guy for most of her life.”

She swatted at him, “Hey, that description applies to you, too! And I found my prince charming, so obviously I did okay for myself.”

“I’m not judging,” he said, dodging her violent hands. “And just so you know, Simon is decidedly not charming. Dopey and talkative, sure, but not charming.”

“Oh leave him alone,” she groused.

“Tell him to stop talking to me, and I’ll leave him alone.”

“Alec,” she whined, bouncing her body like a child. Alec and Izzy’s fiance, Simon Lewis, had never really gotten along. Simon was nice enough, and definitely tried to be friends with Alec, but
he was annoying. And kind of ditzy. And Alec really thought Izzy could do better than a musician who daylighted as an accountant. Izzy never seemed to agree on that point. Her brothers were just happy that Simon didn’t have a criminal record, an addiction of any kind, and wasn’t an outright abusive and controlling asshole like 90% of the other men Izzy had dated. She had a complicated relationship to men at best most days, and really only trusted her brothers when it came to anything. So Alec tolerated Simon, even if he was annoyingly perky and stupid about most things. He raised his hands in defeat.

“Fine. I give. Tell me about wedding plans. Have we figured out the Maryse-Sophia-Elaine-Rebecca seating arrangement debacle?”

Izzy slumped unhappily, pouting, “Not even a little.”

Alec finished his beer, needing fortification. “Explain it to me one more time.”

Alec Lightwood loved his sister quite a bit. He’d eat glass just to make her happy. So re-hashing the complications of her big, fancy traditional wedding planned by none other than their overbearing, demanding mother was peanuts. That didn’t mean he wanted to be sober for it.
Chapter 8

For Magnus, the course of the next week was brutal. Back to back meetings and conference calls, far too much time spent in Manhattan, and not enough time with Chairman Meow on the couch. Not least of all, little to no Alec. They couldn’t seem to carve out enough time to meet for longer than a cup of coffee. And that was once. On Tuesday. It was now Friday. Of course, they’d been texting on and off when they were able. There was the unfortunate complication of Alec’s shiny new case. Apparently, he’d caught onto some weird gang initiation which turned up several chop shops and money laundering and put them on the track of a huge drugs bust...well, that was the extent of what Alec could tell him anyway. Magnus didn’t deal in that kind of thing, but you couldn’t conduct business in New York without getting your hands a little dirty. No doubt some business associated with his would turn up during his investigation. And wasn’t that a joy to dwell on?

So Magnus didn’t. Instead, he dwelled on that too-short coffee date. They’d met at a coffee spot some distance from the precinct but still walking distance for Alec. He claimed that he didn’t want Jace trying to tail him. Magnus had laughed at that, but Alec’s voice was deadly serious over the phone.

“No, I’m totally serious. Izzy had this boyfriend in high school that Mom and Dad didn’t know about. We found out they were meeting up and tailed them for like...hours. So we kept doing it. We were bored. Anyway, I told Clary to text me if Jace is out of her sight for more than ten minutes.”

“Because that means he’s following you.”

“That is exactly what it means.”

Magnus had gotten there first and requisitioned a table for them, guarding a chair with his feet and ignoring the dirty looks shot at him. He ordered the coffee and skimmed through emails. There wasn’t much of interest, mostly meeting requests. People looking for handouts, some people offering leads. Magnus wasn’t really interested in expanding, just because he was slightly overwhelmed as it was. He was about to shoot off a nasty response to a particularly aggressive supplicator when he felt that odd, magnetic shift in the air. He’d felt it at the precinct, too, when he’d caught Lydia staring and Alec nearby. It was enough to catch his attention and drag it to the door, which Alec walked through.

He looked more put together than he did over the weekend. Put together in a professional sense. He wore a crisp white shirt, a gray tie and slacks, black belt and black shoes. He definitely looked standard issue, and Magnus wanted to kick himself for finding it even remotely attractive. God, his sister probably bought all of his clothes. How was this his life? Whatever, he was thankful because
whatever was under that terrible outfit was well worth the eyesore.

He knew exactly moment Alec caught sight of him because his entire face lit up and he was walking in Magnus’ direction immediately. There was something a little entrancing about the way he moved. Even though he was dodging people, threading through the other customers, he was confident, putting guiding hands to bodies to make sure they didn’t bump into each other. Magnus was a little too fixated on it in the moment, apparently, because in the next moment Alec was crowding into his space, bending down, and greeting him with a kiss like they’d been together for decades. Alec’s lips were soft and insistent, catching Magnus’ bottom lip between his own. And in that brief moment, Magnus was lost.

In the present, three days after that stunningly sweet kiss, Magnus tapped his fingers on his phone while he listened to some idiot drone on about something only Raphael would care about. He was very much tempted to cut the meeting short, seek out Alec, and drag him back to his apartment. But then Raphael would kill him, and Alec would have to arrest him, and that would be a whole tragic episode of Shakespearean proportions. Instead, he rolled his eyes at Raphael and gestured for him to speed things up or suffer the consequences. The consequences being Magnus sabotaging his hair product. His ever dutiful CFO took the hint and asked the investor on the phone to have a full report sent over so they could move onto the next item.

So Magnus went back to thinking about that kiss. Honestly, it had been plaguing him. It was the sweetest kind of torture imaginable because while it warmed him to think of it, he wasn’t entirely sure when it was going to happen again.

“Sorry,” Alec had said, still bent over and barely a breath away, “I just really needed to do that.”

And thank fuck that he had. Magnus probably would have spun his wheels in place for weeks if not for Alec’s initiative. Cheek kisses were one thing. If you asked Raphael, Magnus kissed everyone’s cheeks. So he would have been relatively content to draw that out for as long as possible, if necessary. He just honestly hadn’t expected Alec to be so keen.

Magnus had managed to pull him back in for a much longer version of that kiss. Just a sweet, dry drag of lips that didn’t escalate to anything more. Magnus may have been an exhibitionist, but he wasn’t an animal. They were in a coffee shop after all. When he was finally able to pull himself away, Alec had dragged his chair around to Magnus’ side of the table, and they’d talked for maybe a half hour. Maybe longer. But it felt shorter. They barely touched their coffee because they were too busy trying to figure out scheduling for their next date. Magnus had been about to make an extremely bold move by inviting him over to his loft for dinner and drinks when Alec’s phone had gone off. Apparently, he was needed for a phone briefing with federal agents and had to get back. Magnus hadn’t even been able to splutter out an invite before Alec was out of his chair, kissing him quickly, and out the door. It gave him fucking whiplash, truth be told. One second the kid was kissing him like it was all he could think about, and the next he was running out the door. Magnus
would have been impressed by his ability to compartmentalize if he wasn’t so goddamn annoyed by it.

Because compartmentalizing obviously wasn’t one of his many virtues.

Oh, fuck it.

“Nathaniel,” he blurted out, interrupting a three-way bickering fest without remorse, “we are going to have to continue this conversation another time.”

“We are?” Raphael asked, brow arched, his skeptical asexual ass looking highly suspicious of Magnus’ sudden outburst. He made a mental note to stop qualifying everything Raphael did as “asexual” because it really wasn’t fair of him, but he also thought it wasn’t fair that he wasn’t a sex-crazed monster like the rest of them. He supposed Raph’s pitfalls came from other vices. Whatever.

“Yes,” Magnus answered serenely, “we are. Unfortunately, another matter has come up and is time sensitive. Shall we reschedule for Monday?”

Thankfully, the leeches on the other end of the line agreed readily. For one, it was coming on nine o’clock Eastern, and they were all in American time zones. For another, no one was truly willing to piss off Magnus Bane over a trite scheduling issue. After they made their goodbyes, Magnus ended the call with a satisfying slap to the End button.

Raphael was watching him intently, hands folded in front of him on the table. Magnus scowled and flung himself back in his chair, pinching the bridge of his nose.

“What?” he asked reluctantly.

“Are you going to enlighten me as to what that was about?” he asked coolly, probably already knowing the answer. Magnus stared up at the ceiling and dropped his arm out to the side thematically.

“I haven’t had more than thirty minutes strung together to myself all week. And I know this because I’ve been counting.”
“I let you take that car to Sherman’s all by yourself.”

Magnus rolled his eyes and pointed limply at him. “That does not count. And don’t think we’re not going to have a conversation about your oddly timed disappearing acts very soon. Once I figure out a pattern, that is.”

“You’ll never figure me out, Boss.”

“Ha!”

“This about the cop?”

“No,” he answered glumly. “I just got sick of listening to the chatter. I need a night to myself. Is that too much to ask?”

“No, it isn’t,” was Raphael’s kind response. “Do you want to know what I think?”

“I don’t know, do I?”

Apparently, he took that as permission, “I think that you’ve been working yourself to the bone for the past two years.”

“Why two?”

“You know why. I know why. We don’t really need to go over the sordid details.”

“So why bring it up, then?” he snapped. Magnus felt a hand on his shoulder and looked to find Raphael standing over him with a sad but sincere expression. Magnus covered that hand with his own and sighed, immediately regretting his tone.

“We should take the day off tomorrow,” Raphael said slowly, “and on Sunday, we should get
brunch and talk about shaving down on some of our non-essential assets.”

“Just you and me?” Magnus asked hopefully.

Raphael nodded. “Yeah. We’ll even go to the old place. Stay until they kick us out.”

Magnus laughed at that. The “old place” was a greasy diner in Brownsville where they’d planned out all of their business ventures from the ground up. All of Magnus’ money had been seed money for their startups, so they’d lived on next to nothing, and worked morning, noon, and night to get things going. The staff there hated them.

“Think they still have his picture up on the wall?” Magnus mused.

“We can bring one, just in case.”

“It was easier when it was the three of us, you know.”

“I do. But I also know he’d want you to make time for yourself. Especially if it meant taking a chance on someone who meant something to you.”

Magnus straightened, blinking quickly at Raphael to make sure it was really him and not some clone.

“You’re using Will against me to encourage my sex life?” he asked, completely gobsmacked. Raphael all out laughed, clapping him on the shoulder before heading toward the door.

“No,” he answered as if Magnus was an idiot child, “I’m using our friend and business partner’s memory to remind you that there’s more to life than a quick fuck and a diversified portfolio.” He pointed at him, file folder in hand, “That, my friend, is what Will was always trying to tell you. Now that he’s gone, it’s my job.” He used the file to point at himself.

Magnus twisted up his lips, considering that. “You’re late by two years. You oughta be fired.”
Raphael smirked, “Yeah well my boss can’t even spell punctual, so I think I’m safe.” Magnus threw a pen at him. Bastard caught it. “Go home, asshole, call Alec.” With that, he was gone, performing yet another questionable disappearing act that should have concerned Magnus more than it did. As it was…

Magnus took his advice.
After Alec crashed at his desk for the third time on Friday, Lydia forced him into her car and drove him home. He’d been working overtime on this Federal case, making sure his ducks were all in a row for when it got passed off officially. Some team was flying in Saturday morning to take over, and then Alec would be back to his regular assignments. It started early Monday morning after a uniform got a detailed description about the carjacker. Turned out it was a kid, no more than fifteen, who’d been told to distract the cops while cash and product got moved further south. Apparently, he picked the same make and model of car for kicks, and the fact that they’d ended up in chop shops was his own entrepreneurial spirit. Alec was actually a little impressed, if annoyed. So Clary made some calls to her Vice buddies, and it turned out their tip got them another tip, and another, and soon they were all the way down the rabbit hole. They’d made more collars that week than they had all month, and now the Feds were coming in to see if they could round up some bigger fish. Alec had absolutely no qualms about passing that minefield off to somebody else. He had two open rape cases, a missing person, and at least three shootings that needed looking into, but Garroway was making him wait until Sunday.

“You need to sleep, Lightwood. You look like shit. Go home.”

Well, Lydia made him go home. She dropped him off around four, so he’d showered and crashed. Hard. Because the next thing he knew it was nine thirty and he had missed calls from Jace, Max, and Izzy, and two texts from Magnus. That must have been what woke him up because they were sent only minutes before.

Want to see you, if possible. Can you come over?
I can send a car.

Alec dropped his head to his pillow with a laugh. Like he really needed convincing or more convenience with an invitation like that. He would’ve walked if he had to. After their coffee date, Alec hadn’t been entirely sure where they stood, and he hadn’t gotten a chance to process the fact that they’d kissed because of work. In the few snatches of sleep he’d gotten, he’d dreamed about it. About Magnus, at least. They were fractured, but pleasant dreams, the kind you had when you knew you were dreaming but didn’t feel like opening your eyes yet. All Alec had really been able to process was that Magnus was intensely warm; his skin, his eyes, his overall person just exuded a warmth Alec wanted to sink into, and that had been the focus of those short-lived dreams.

He tapped out a response, telling him he’d grab a cab and to send his address. Then he was pulling on a clean shirt and grabbing his keys, wallet, and jacket and was out the door. It didn’t occur to him until he was in the car that he’d left his badge and gun behind, something he hadn’t done since
he was at the academy. He wasn’t that upset about it.

Magnus’ building was about as extravagant as Alec expected. Thankfully, there wasn’t a doorman standing guard, just an intricate buzzer system, which included a camera. Alec hit the buzzer and waved at the camera as it swiveled toward him. The building itself looked like renovated offices, and a glance over to the corner indicated that it was a former bank. The huge circular vault door gave that away. Everything was marble and tique and Alec had to shake off the itchy feeling of wealth. While he wouldn’t dream of placing his parents and Magnus within the same category, he couldn’t really deny that grandiose displays of wealth made him uncomfortable. The upside was that Magnus was at the end of the rabbit hole, so he studiously ignored his discomfort, got into the waiting elevator, and punched the button for the penthouse. Because yes, Alec Lightwood was officially dating someone who lived in a penthouse. Seriously, what was his life?

The elevator doors opened to reveal a small circular lobby complete with a round table with a lush display of white calla lilies, over which hung a chandelier that Alec could have used to buy his entire apartment building in cash. He got a little sidetracked looking at it until he realized the door to the apartment was wide open and Magnus was nowhere to be seen. Seriously? He stalked around the table and through the door and spotted Magnus standing in front of wall-to-wall windows which lead out to a balcony.

“Magnus!” he snapped, “You can’t just leave your door open like that!” God, it was worse than that time Izzy hid a spare key somewhere in the lobby of her building and lost track of it, or when Lydia refused to get the lock on her window changed after she took pliers to it to get it open last summer. Magnus, drink in hand, whirled around to look at him, startled and confused.

“I knew you were coming up,” he answered flatly. Which was even more annoying.

“This is Brooklyn, not the Upper East Side,” he ground out with a roll of his eyes.

“Alec…” Magnus said slowly, walking towards him. Alec jerked a thumb over his shoulder.

“Even I know a jeweler who would kill somebody for that chandelier, and that’s not even in your apartment.”

“Duly noted,” Magnus said setting his drink down without breaking his stride. Alec wasn’t really paying attention to that though, too busy thinking of all the horrible scenarios that could play out with inattentive neighbors and an open door with Magnus inside.
“Just because you’ve lived in worse places doesn’t mean you should take stupid risks like--” Alec’s brain went absolutely silent when Magnus’s lips pressed against his. Quite without his knowing, Magnus had crossed the room, reached for Alec’s shoulders, and cut off his lecture without so much as a hello. Alec responded immediately, arms going around his waist to keep them comfortably snug against each other. Kissing Magnus was like having a warm wave wash over him and settle gently without the crash. He felt like everything around them stopped for just a fraction of a second, bringing Magnus’ hot and greedy mouth into perfect focus. Before Alec could pull back and get ahold of himself, Magnus was biting down on his lower lip, causing him to gasp, which gave Magnus just enough of an opening to thrust his tongue into Alec’s mouth.

That’s when the crash came. Everything sped up very quickly, with Alec spinning them in place and crowding Magnus up against the wall, matching the ferocity of Magnus’ kiss with his own. It was a little like that dazed moment between sleeping and waking when your dreams played vividly in your head, but you could feel your sheets twisted around your feet and the way your pillow cushioned your head when it felt too heavy. Magnus wound his arms around Alec’s neck and used that momentum to angle his head and slot their mouths together more perfectly. Alec moaned into it, unable to stop himself, especially not when his hands slipped up Magnus’ shirt, seeking out that warmth he’d been dreaming about.

Eventually and unfortunately, they had to come up for air. Magnus seemed to be the reasonable one in that moment because he pulled away first, Alec biting down a whine at the loss of contact. He opened his eyes to find a starry-eyed Magnus with swollen lips, looking far too cat-got-the-cream for Alec’s peace of mind. His eyes looked golden in the low light, happy and reverent, but shaded with something else Alec couldn’t put his finger on. Maybe he just didn’t know Magnus well enough to read him, detective or not. He put it aside, choosing to slide his hands up and down Magnus’ ribs instead.

“Hi,” Alec said softly, catching his lips again.

“Hi,” Magnus answered, letting Alec press feather-light pecks to his mouth and cheeks. “Long day?”

“Longest.”

Alec’s stomach rumbled and Magnus pulled back with an unimpressed frown.

“Did you eat?”

“Yes,” was his immediate response. He lifted a skeptical brow.
“When?”

Alec shoved his tongue into his lower lip. “This morning.”

Before he could process any of it, Magnus was dragging him into the kitchen and pulling out leftover for him to choose from. It ended up being some weird mix of matar paneer, pizza, and tacos, but Alec was starving and in no position to turn down any food. Alec ate over the light pink and white marble countertop while Magnus sat on the counter next to where he ate, with his hands braced behind him and feet kicking out lackadaisically. Between bites, Alec gave him the rundown of what was going on with his case. Most detectives would hate for the feds to swoop in and get all the credit. That’s what you saw on all those tv shows anyway; jurisdictional pissing contests where the smalltown cop was spitting fire at the cocky FBI agent in a suit nicer than anything a real fed could afford. For Alec, it wasn’t like that at all. He’d done the legwork, got the ball rolling, lined up the ducks for the feds to shoot down one after another. His part was done.

He shrugged, “Stuff like this will eventually turn into some kind of RICO bust. It’s a political nightmare, which means the lowest guy on the totem pole gets kneecapped when something inevitably goes wrong.”

“Descriptive,” Magnus offered blandly.

“Sometimes literal.” He talked about an old classmate from the Academy, who insisted on following his own shitstorm of a case all the way to prosecution. A witness was murdered, scaring off the other witnesses, so it all came down to a pile of evidence which had been obtained through a questionable search of some dealer’s apartment. Lawyers called it "fruit of the poisoned tree." The case was dismissed, his classmate was first fired and then attacked by the mobster he’d tried to put away. “Guy’s in a wheelchair.”

“So what?” Magnus asked facetiously, as he snatched an olive from Alec’s plate. “You don’t want to throw yourself on the pyre for the sake of king and country?”

Alec snorted. “Not even a little.” He shrugged again. “I’ll testify if they need me to, but the hope is that they won’t need me to. I like my job right where it is,” he told him, “right in the middle of no responsibility and all the responsibility.” Magnus asked if he ever wanted to move up the chain of command, add a few more titles to his name. “I’d like to make Captain one day, sure, but that’s political, too. I don’t think I’d ever believe it wasn’t about my parents.”
Magnus was nodding to himself as Alec talked about his reasons for wanting to pass the buck on his case. It wasn’t often that you met someone who was willing to forgo credit and acclaim for the sake of practicality. Alec said he didn’t want to participate because it was risky and he didn’t want the responsibility, but there was something in the way he said it which gave Magnus pause. It wasn’t until that last statement, the comment about his parents, that he realized how little Alec valued his own talents. His parents had done quite a number on him, evidently. A hot streak of defensiveness overwhelmed him as he listened to Alec talk, memorizing his profile. How anyone could think...Magnus shook it off in favor of actually listening to Alec.

As it turned out, discussing work with Alec was easy. His previous partners hadn’t been the least interested in what he did to earn and reappropriate his wealth, especially not Camille. So the only people he’d ever talked it over with were Raphael and Will. Will was gone. And even Raphael needed a break. Alec, though, he didn’t mind the high level of detail, and he actually made a couple of good points. Magnus prided himself on being a quick study of human behavior, on understanding the intricacies of the mind. This arrogance often got him into trouble; which is exactly why Will and Raphael had been perfect business partners. They balanced him out. Everything in business was personal. All of it. You couldn’t escape it. A dollar in your pocket meant a dollar taken from a hungry kid or a sick spouse. Magnus took every venture seriously, analyzed every point, predicted and measured every outcome to minimize damage. He always took the alternative, if he could, to someone losing their job, even if it was a cocktail waitress. Siapa menabur angin, akan menuai badai.

“All right,” Magnus said finally when Alec was getting a little too excited about making his point. “No more shop talk, seriously.”

“I reserve veto rights!” he said pointing a finger at him as Magnus wandered off to get a drink. He flapped his hand dismissively.

“Fine, fine.” He was a little too focused on his drink to notice that Alec had wandered into his living room and was examining everything in sight. But once he did notice, he watched the proceedings with some amusement. Idly he thought, as he sipped his martini, that this was what it looked like when Alec showed up at a crime scene. Everything mentally inventoried, inconsistencies marked, oddities put in plastic bags for the nerdy cops to run tests on.

“That’s a srar lay,” he commented, watching Alec trace a finger down the line of the instrument. “It was a gift from a Cambodian ambassador here on business.”

Alec turned back, a wry grin on his lips, “You must have made an impression on the guy. It looks expensive.”
Magnus snorted, “She made an impression on my friend, Ragnor. I stole it from him to save all our ears.” And their sanity. Alec chuckled lightly.

“You stole it, but you keep it out like this?”

Magnus hummed, setting his drink aside yet again. “Just to remind him that he’s not quite as impervious to infatuation as he’d like everyone to believe.”

Of course, this minor story led to Alec asking after a dozen more. Magnus had quite a collection of things he’d picked up from various countries. He’d like to say they were all legitimate gains, but many were lost in poker transactions, stolen during drunken evenings he didn’t remember, or gifts from lovers he’d ghosted without remorse. Magnus sprawled out on the sofa and indulged him, answering his questions as fully as he could without exciting that cop brain of his. Not all of his previous dealings had been squeaky clean; in fact, most bordered on the right side of bad ethics, and not for lack of effort. Sometimes people just didn’t leave you another option.

Magnus found Alec’s questions exceptionally smart. Most people found his keepsakes to be cute trinkets instead of valued possessions with immense cultural implications. If Magnus ever decided to sell them in one go, he could have easily purchased Yankee Stadium. It was all inventoried and insured, the previous owners included in his records of provenance. Some thought it an insult, to steal something and display it, but most of Magnus’ colleagues and acquaintances thought it was hilarious. Those were the objects on display, though. The ones which stood most prominent in Magnus’ collection because he honestly couldn’t give a damn if they were stolen or damaged. Magnus never left what he cared about lying in the open for anyone to see.

He thought this over while watching Alec on his continuous, thorough examination of the room. He’d always thought how someone dressed was similar to how they arranged their living space. Messy people, they were always leaving themselves out in the open; open to critique and rejection, to loss. Magnus has always been neat. Put together. Poised. But right up until that moment, he’d considered those to be positive attributes. Right up until that moment he’d never considered himself to be dishonest.

“I have pictures from that trip,” he offered quickly. Too quickly because he didn’t want to overthink it and stop himself. Alec whipped around, looking thoroughly pleased, so Magnus directed him to the photo album on the top shelf of one of the bookcases. Even he had to use the step stool to get to it. With a little too much glee, he flopped onto the sofa next to Magnus and went through the photos so thoroughly that Magnus was almost positive he was being interrogated. It was cute though, that he wanted to know so much. He supposed that becoming a detective required a healthy amount of curiosity. Alec’s was overweight.
“Yeah, but who took the picture? That’s you, that’s Raphael, that’s that weird guy you mentioned…”

“Orlando.”

“That’s a city, not a name.”

“Hence the descriptor.”

“Exactly.”

“So?”

“So what?”

“So who took the picture?”

Magnus actually took a moment to look at it. Orlando had been one of their first big clients, and he’d invited them to Marseille to celebrate with him, his wife, his mistress, and his wife’s mistress. It had been a wild weekend, and Raphael appreciated none of it. So, to piss him off more, Magnus had insisted on a hundred photos of them together, even if Raphael didn’t know it was happening. He’d printed off about half of them and sent them to Raphael at random intervals for the next year to make him believe he’d been stalked. This was one of those, where Raphael’s attention was elsewhere as Magnus snuck up on him. His accomplice had gotten the perfect angle to get everyone in the shot without Raphael’s knowledge. Even Orlando’s wife’s mistress had been in on it. That picture was among Magnus’ favorites. He touched it gently with a fingertip.

“Our business partner,” he answered, throat tight, “Will Herondale.” Alec’s head rolled against the back of the sofa to look at him. Those impossibly perceptive eyes bored into him; seeing a wound that was a bit too fresh. “A story for another time.” Thankfully, Alec didn’t push it.

No, instead, he set the album aside and leaned in to kiss him. Alec’s arm slid along the back of the couch, a clear invitation. Magnus immediately curled into his side, so they were perpendicular to each other, Magnus’ head close to resting on Alec’s shoulder. When Magnus pressed in closer, tilting his head to lick against the seam of Alec’s lips, Alec’s hand pressed between his shoulder blades. There were no further points of contact. Their kiss was a steady, easy slide of lips, so
unhurried that he ached. It was exactly what he’d wanted, what he’d needed in that moment. And his poor, pathetic heart had no clue what to do with being handled so carefully.

Magnus wasn’t sure how long they stayed that way, exchanging teasing, cloying kisses, which he hadn’t done in awhile. When Magnus kissed someone, it was because sex was in progress and/or imminent. There was no heat, no intent here. Just calm, playful affection. They smiled into those kisses, hands brushing over each other, but not searching. It was light and innocent and….Alec’s phone was ringing.

He reared back immediately, mumbling an apology while he checked the message. Magnus sat up straight, all but holding his breath and trying to cover it by casually stroking over his facial hair. Nope, not really that chill about it. Watching Alec respond to that text was deja vu to Tuesday when he’d rushed out of the coffee shop, and Magnus hadn’t heard from him until late Wednesday night. Magnus wasn’t entirely sure he was ready for another intense round of whiplash.

“You have to go?” he asked quietly. It was coming on 11:30, people got murdered before midnight all of the time, right? But Alec was shaking his head and tossing his phone to the corner of the sofa, just out of reach.

“Nah, just Jace checking in. The squad wants to go out and celebrate tomorrow night after our shift.”

“Oh?”

Alec shrugged, leaning back against the sofa, turned completely toward Magnus. And he felt a stupid surge of smug self-satisfaction that work-obsessed Alexander Lightwood was ignoring his phone in favor of paying attention to him.

“We made a lot of collars this week.”

“You should celebrate,” Magnus said, mirroring Alec’s position so they were facing each other. “I mean, you helped uncover a criminal organization in a couple of days.”

“Dumb luck,” Alec reminded him, making Magnus scowl. He claimed that Lydia had randomly picked the thickest case file from the stack, and handed it to him to keep him busy before their lunch date. Then he’d randomly picked the two uniforms who had good relationships with a store owner in Brownsville, who’d gotten a good look at the carjacker. Good enough for a sketch, so
good that it turned up this kid, who was in the foster system and had been reported missing over a
year ago by his guardian. Lydia interviewed the kid, got a lead they passed to Clary, who passed it
to Vice in Queens, who knew exactly where to tug to pull up more leads.

Magnus poked him in the stomach, “Yeah, I’m not doing this with you again. You gonna go?”
Alec lifted his brows, pulling a face. “What? Why not?”

He rolled his eyes, earning him another poke to the stomach. Alec swatted his hand away.

“I have tomorrow off.”

“And?”

“And I don’t really feel like spending it with co-workers,” he confessed quietly. Oh. All the fight
went out of Magnus immediately. Alec’s face went from reluctant to expectant, making Magnus
frown. “Unless you want to come with me?”

Magnus’ stomach dropped all the way to the basement of his building. Wasn’t there some kind of
cap on how many times one handsome, sweet man could flip your world upside down in one
evening? There should have been. Magnus wanted to write a strongly worded letter to whoever was
in charge of that kind of thing.

“Magnus?”

“Um--” He shook his head to snap out of it, “I mean, yeah, sure...are you sure?”

Alec smiled, obviously confused, wrinkling his nose cutely. Noses shouldn’t be cute. It wasn’t fair.

“Why wouldn’t I be?”

Well, why wouldn’t he be? Alec certainly hadn’t said or done anything to indicate he was hesitant
about seeing him. Magnus had proposed lunch at the precinct. Alec said yes, but swept him off to a
private room. He very clearly hadn’t been upset about the cheek kiss, and showed no reluctance in
introducing him to his partner. A plus B usually equaled C, but in this case, Magnus couldn’t help
but feel skeptical about how quickly Alec was on board with all of it. He’d only been out for six months. Magnus was under the impression that he’d never been in a real relationship. There was some strain with his parents over the whole issue. He just didn’t want to be invited along out of politeness. Because Alec was the kind of person who would invite someone to be polite, and then bend over backward all evening to make that person feel comfortable. Maybe it was selfish, but he wanted to be an addition, not a burden, especially not in front of his family members.

“Look, I know it’s kind of soon—” That caught his attention. Magnus riveted his gaze back to Alec, unable to school his expression as he usually would. Which Alec immediately misinterpreted. “It’s not a big deal. You don’t have to if you don’t—”

Magnus used both hands to jerk Alec’s head within reach of his own, snagging his lips in a quick but thorough kiss which left them both a little out of breath.

“I do want.”

Alec nuzzled his mouth against his own, smiling. “Okay.”

“Okay,” Magnus echoed in a small voice.

Alec kissed him quickly again, then leaned back and put his arm around Magnus’ shoulders, drawing him in to lean on against him.

“So who am I being forced to socialize with at this cop bar?” Magnus asked lightly, fingering absently at a button on Alec’s shirt. Alec sighed.

“Obviously you know Jace and Clary, and you met Lydia. Our Captain, Luke Garroway, will probably make an appearance. His niece, Maia, will probably show up. She’s a furniture designer, you’ll like her.” He went on to talk about two old-timers, Hodge and Aldertree, who were no-nonsense and a little...old school, but generally on the up. There was also Raj and Helen, younger than Hodge and Aldertree, but had been at the 7-0 longer than Alec and Jace, and they worked sex crimes. Alec obviously liked Helen and thought Raj was a kiss ass; Hodge sounded like some sort of mentor figure, and Aldertree sounded like a douche. He spoke of his Sargent, Aline Penhallow, with nothing but deferential respect. “And Izzy will probably show up with the accountant.”

“Ahem,” Magnus tapped his chest with a finger in question, “Accountant?”
“Fiance,” Alec corrected, obviously exasperated by even thinking of this person.

“We don’t like him?”

“He’s fine,” Alec answered dismissively. “So if we get separated somehow, and Jace will try, the safest thing to do is stay with Clary. She already knows you, so she’ll fend off the outright interrogations. Don’t trust Helen, though. She is tiny and she looks sweet, but she’s an evil snake and can trick you out of your shirt and wallet without blinking.”

“Dear god,” Magnus said with equal amount respect and skepticism.

“It’ll be a bar full of cops. Cops who listen to Jace run his mouth, and…”

Magnus leaned forward so he could turn back to look at Alec incredulously.

“And what, Alexander?”

For whatever reason, Alec looked more amused than agitated, which was impressive because Magnus knew exactly where this conversation was going. Jace hadn’t ever been subtly about commenting on Magnus’ lifestyle, even though Clary made sure to clarify that Jace’s reputation was the opposite of squeaky clean. But, again, Magnus knew Jace fairly well and could predict how he would respond to Alec bringing a boyfriend around...Well damn, that particular word had mentally slipped out far too easily. He was going to have to keep an eye on that situation.

Alec held up a placating hand, “He just likes to embarrass people. Especially me. And he probably thinks your romantic history is prime material. Because he is twelve.”

“Then you will have to defend my honor,” Magnus deadpanned. Alec gave him an adorable half smile and tugged him back against the sofa and into a kiss. This time, Magnus didn’t hesitate to sweep his tongue through his mouth. It pulled a low groan from Alec, and belatedly Magnus realized his hand was pretty far up Alec’s thigh, and Alec had a hand tight on his hip. They were in a perfect position for Magnus to be pulled onto Alec’s lap, and he knew exactly what that would turn into. He pulled out of the kiss, removing his hand as he went, only for Alec to catch it mid-air, chasing his lips. Magnus sunk back into the kiss, completely overwhelmed by the intensity of it, the way he pushed his tongue into Magnus’ mouth with so much suggestiveness that Magnus was half hard. With a groan, he ripped himself away, putting a little bit of distance between them on the sofa.
Alec looked wrecked and confused, and had Magnus really had a hand in his hair without noticing? He held one hand up in the air, where Magnus’ hand had just been, looking a little upset that it was now empty.

Chapter End Notes

Siapa menabur angin, akan menuai badai: He who sows wind, reaps the storm.
Chapter 10

“What’s wrong?” he asked breathlessly. Magnus pressed a hand to his face, hoping to cool it a bit.

“Nothing,” he said in what he hoped was a reassuring tone, except that his voice came out raspy and choked. “I just--” He let out a long exhale to calm himself. “I just don’t want to get carried away here.”

Alec closed the distance between them but respectfully kept his hands to himself. Magnus mentally kicked himself in the shin for being so touched by that. Jesus Christ, one gentlemanly move and he was putty in the guy’s hands? Pathetic.

“Oh, I’d really like you to get carried away.” He bent his head to catch Magnus’ gaze, drawing him back in seamlessly, like a damn snake charmer. “I’ll come with you,” he muttered leaning to press a kiss to his cheek, and another close to his ear, “or I can carry you.”

Magnus shuddered, feeling even more pathetic for being so turned on by so little and with so little effort. Well, this was obviously A-game Alec Lightwood, but Magnus thought he was either losing his mind or he was losing his edge or something equally ridiculous. Nope, no, he wriggled away, using his hands to put some distance back between them.

“Nope, no,” he verbalized, “I really don’t want to screw this up this early.”

Alec straightened suddenly, brow furrowed and eyes intense. “You wouldn’t screw anything up. If anyone’s gonna screw this up, it’s me.”

“What? Don’t be ridiculous.”

With a rueful sigh, Alec sank back into the sofa, head tilted against the back, and dropped his temple to look at Magnus.

“I’ve never been in a relationship.”

Magnus snorted, “I could’ve told you that.” Immediately a pillow was knocked against his
“Ha, ha, now shut up, you.” Magnus snickered to himself but put a finger over his lips to prove he’d be quiet. “I’ve been with people, but...it was just...functional, you know? To work off tension or whatever. I mean, I remember their faces and their names, but overall, it was anonymous.”

“Well I don’t remember all their faces or all their names, so I get it, but sex, god help me for saying it, isn’t always the most important thing, Alexander.” He got an eye roll for his efforts.

“I know that.”

“So then what’s bothering you?”

As with most things, Alec was straightforward, blurting out his thoughts like he couldn’t control them. And truly, it was amazing he got as many confessions as he did because his interrogation methods left something to be desired.

“How many people have you been with?”

“What?”

“Magnus, come on,” he grumbled, clearly not having it with Magnus’ play dumb, be coy act.

Still, he hesitated, “It’s in the past…”

“Twenty?”

Magnus pulled a face. Please, he hit twenty by twenty. A point of pride for him as a matter of fact, not that he was going to verbalize that thought.

“Under fifty or over?” Magnus winced. “Oh my god, over.” He paused. “It’s not closer to one hundred than fifty is it?”
“Oh please!”

“You know what? I don’t want to know. That’s really all the context I need.”

“Technically I stopped counting in 2006, so…”

Alec clapped his hands on his thighs. “Yeah, I really don’t want to know more than that.”

“I mean, you said there were--”

“Ten.”

Magnus winced. The discrepancy was pretty bad.

“Hey!” Alec said, defensively yet still laughing, “Ten is pretty high for most people!”

“I am aware of that, Alexander.”

They drifted off into silence at that. Keeping that silence, Alec found his hand and slid his own under it to thread their fingers together. That alone told Magnus more than any fleeting reassurances. Magnus let him play with his hand, ignoring how it tickled when he traced the lines on his palm. It felt too nice.

“Are you okay?” Alec asked after a short while. It really wasn’t fair, Magnus thought bitterly. The man should have come with a warning packet about all the stupidly adorable ways he could ruin you without thinking about it. Very seriously, Magnus realized he would never be able to go another date or kiss someone or just sit with them without comparing them to Alec Lightwood. It had been less than a goddamn week. Who decided that was an acceptable time frame? Not him. He had not signed up for this shit, no sir. And yet here he was, Magnus Bane, CEO, hedonist playboy, willingly sat in the middle of Alec’s razor-sharp focus.

“I should be asking you that question,” he grumbled ungraciously. But Alec only shrugged.
“Well everyone warned me…”

Magnus squawked in indignance, swatting lightly at his chest with his free hand. “Warned you?”

Alec looked nonplussed, a faint smile on his lips, and he propped his head up on his fist.

“Mhmm, apparently people are very worried about my virtue.”

“Your virtue? What about mine? Are they aware you’re the one trying to get in my pants?”

“Desperately,” he qualified, reaching out a hand to tug lightly at the front of Magnus’ shirt. Alec’s eyes gleamed with that sickeningly cute boyish charm that Magnus was now convinced he’d learned from Jace at some point in his life. He wasn’t sure if he wanted to strangle Blondie or hug him. Magnus sneered.

“You’re evil.”

“You’re the one fighting so hard. I’m perfectly willing,” he leaned forward to peck at Magnus’ lips, “and able.”

Magnus groaned internally because he was absolutely certain that was absolutely true. He’d felt how solid Alec was under his ill-fitting shirts. Bagginess could hide a multitude of flaws, but it could hide treasures, too. And the idea of having Alec spread out somewhere comfortable so Magnus could explore him piece by piece.

“I think…” Magnus bit his lip. “I think that you’re probably well worth the wait.” He flicked his eyes up to see Alec grinning, and then they were kissing again. Alec’s weight pressing him back against the sofa.

Thankfully Magnus caught a glance of his clock, realizing it was well past midnight.

“We should go to bed,” he said in a rush. He watched Alec open his mouth to tease him more, but
he snapped it shut. Thank fuck. Magnus really didn’t think he could take it. He squeezed his hand lightly.

“All right, I’ll head out. Call you tomorrow?”

“What?” Magnus said, confused. “Why don’t you just stay?” It was Alec’s turn to look confused. Although, it was a more condescending confused like he was looking at someone mentally deficient enough to not remember what they said one moment to the next. He rolled his eyes. “I meant that I have a perfectly fine guest room, and refuse to let you leave by yourself this late to go back to your warzone of a neighborhood.”

“It is not a warzone,” Alec correctly easily with no heat.

“Uh huh,” Magnus faux-agreed, pressing a light kiss to his cheek, “stay here,” he pressed a kiss to the corner of his mouth, “with me,” and another to the opposite side, “in my vault of an apartment.” He kissed him squarely on the mouth, lingering a little longer than strictly necessary.

“You’re not doing too good of a job convincing me to sleep in a different bed,” he groused, seeking out Magnus’ lips before he could get too far away. Magnus laughed into it, letting Alec get his fix before cutting him off. He stood up abruptly, holding out his hand to his grumpy looking detective, and dragged him over to the guest room. He went in, pulled out spare sleep clothes he kept for guests and informed him the half-bath was fully stocked with whatever he would need.

“You’re not in it,” he grumbled, leaning against the doorway. Magnus shook his head, laughing at him. Then he kissed him quickly and brushed by to get to his own room before he did something wonderfully stupid.

Still, he nearly crossed the hall on four separate occasions that night. All resulting in him flopping back into bed and punching his pillow. And he was sixty percent sure he heard Alec’s door open and close at least once.
Chapter 11

Magnus found himself too antsy to sleep in, so he was up by seven and doing yoga. He’d just gotten through his final transition when Alec’s phone starting buzzing. After the second buzz, Magnus realized it was a call, and saw Lydia’s name flash on the screen, so he picked up.

“Good morning, Detective Branwell,” he answered smoothly.

“Magnus?” she squeaked from the other end. “Wha-?”

He smiled, dragging a finger along his marble countertop, “Alec’s still asleep and I’m reluctant to wake him. Is there a problem?”

“Oh,” she breathed out, sound a little stunned. “Uh, no, not at all. Actually…” He heard a shuffling of papers, which meant she was probably at the station already. Alec wasn’t the only workaholic. “The Feds showed up and are all set. I just handed off the last of the files. I was calling to remind him not to come in today.” She chuckled. “And to remind him that four commanding officers have authorized me to use force if he defies that order.”

Magnus smiled appreciatively, “Duly noted. But don’t worry, I promise he won’t leave my sight for the next 24 hours.”

She laughed outright at that, making Magnus wrinkle his nose. Girl had a cute laugh.

“Good. And Magnus?”

“Yes, Detective?”

“Thanks.”

It was a breathless, sincere bout of gratitude, he could tell. He wasn’t entirely certain what she was specifically thanking him for, but he knew it wasn’t just for passing on her message.
“Lydia, when it doesn’t directly benefit me, I’ll accept your gratitude.”

They made their goodbyes and Magnus returned Alec’s phone to where he found it, only to see Alec emerging from the bedroom, pulling his shirt down as if he’d just put it on. Magnus nearly pouted. What a tragedy. Whoever decided Alec should have to wear shirts should be shot.

“Who was that?” Alec asked around a yawn. He twisted and bent his neck, which cracked, as he walked over. Magnus frowned, that was going to have to be taken care of.

“Lydia,” he answered lightly. He tilted his head when Alec froze, looking panicked. “She was just checking in,” he reassured him, brushing imaginary lint off his shoulder. “She asked me to remind you that you’re officially banned from the precinct today and something about using force if you showed up.”

Alec huffed, putting his hands to his hips. “She’s so violent,” he muttered absently. Magnus shrugged ambivalently.

“I like her.”

“Me too. So much that my mother believed that we were dating up until six months ago.” Magnus pulled in his lips, knowing that his eyes were lit up with unfettered glee. That confrontation must have been soap opera worthy, and he sorely wished he could have been right in the middle of it. “Yeah,” Alec said with a nod, “bit of a nasty shock for her when she found out.” Magnus smirked.

“What did she say?”

Alec threw his hands up like he was still completely baffled. “That’s just it. Nothing! My dad raved at me, but she didn’t talk to me for a week!”

Mangus snapped his mouth shut. Obviously, there were some unresolved issues there. He leaned forward, pressing a light kiss to his lips. Brief and sweet.

“Clearly, she’s nuts,” he muttered, kissing him again. “Breakfast?” And just like that, he cheerfully turned the conversation around to his cooking habits where breakfast foods were concerned. Alec didn’t believe him when he said he could burn eggs because he’d been in the army and had never met anyone capable of that. So, Magnus set about trying to prove it to him, only for Alec to swoop
in with instructions and suggestions which proved to be successful. Magnus would have been annoyed except that Alec pressed himself up against his back and kept a hand on his hip when he needed to move to grab something. And the eggs turned out pretty well, so it was difficult to be upset about any of it.

As a man true to his word, Magnus had no intention of letting Alec out of his sight that day. The problem with that was that as a cop and former military officer, he wasn’t exactly accustomed to sitting around doing nothing. Magnus felt a hot streak of wickedness shoot down his spine and suggested that he teach him yoga.

“To help with your back,” he’d reasoned innocently. Alec had sipped at his coffee with a skeptical brow arched in response, but he agreed nonetheless.

*  

Alec woke the next morning in Magnus’ guest bedroom having slept better than he had probably in his whole life. It took him a moment, but he realized that the soft murmur of Magnus’ voice had pulled him from sleep. Instead of getting up right away, he decided to just lay there and listen. Magnus had a great voice, quite honestly. He had this weirdly mellow accent so that Alec would never have been able to discern his nationality without being told. Magnus blamed it on learning most of his English from Brits and Australians. Apparently, once he started at Harvard, he worked with a speech therapist to smooth out his accent and learn more American English. Alec could only wonder if Magnus muttered in other languages like his mom muttered in Spanish.

With a sigh, Alec dragged himself out of bed and pulled on a shirt to go find him. He was a little startled to realize Magnus had been his phone when he set it back where Alec left it after hanging up.

Fortunately, it was just Lydia calling to threaten him. Alec was more than pleased to pass off his case and to know Magnus liked his partner. There was a brief awkward moment when Alec thought he’d have to talk about his parents. But Magnus quickly redirected to breakfast, only for Alec to discover that he was hilariously awful at cooking of any kind. For a brief moment, Alec thought he was doing it on purpose for the attention, but then he almost set his shirt on fire reaching for cooking spray. Deftly, Alec had gathered up the back of his shirt, pulling it tight, so it didn’t catch the flame. He covered the moved by pressing himself against Magnus’ back. Then there were eggshells and way too much pepper and issues of health safety, so Alec was really too distracted with not being poisoned to focus on their proximity. It was pleasant though, and the eggs didn’t turn out too bad either.

They brainstormed plans for the day over eggs and coffee, sitting side by side. Apparently, Magnus’ CFO had banished him from the office too. Not that he looked too bothered by it, seeing
as he had his foot wrapped around Alec’s ankle to trap him there. Because Alec was so eager to leave. Still, he wasn’t used to bumbling around on his days off. Usually, he went to the gym, cleaned his apartment, or ran errands, but none of those sounded appealing in the face of a whole day with Magnus. So that’s when Magnus suggested he teach him some yoga.

Alec had never tried it, despite Izzy’s insistence that it was good practice for maintaining strength and flexibility. Alec just preferred boxing and swimming and had never really seen the point. The fact that he was closeted contributed to his disinterest. No need to draw attention to himself.

Regardless, Alec was not fooled for one second by Magnus’ seemingly gracious and innocent offer. Not for a damn second. To help his back, he said. Ha.

“Right. Sure. And it has absolutely nothing to do with you getting your hands on my ass.”

Magnus bristled with false indignation like he’d expected to be caught out. Alec highly suspected that there were very few people who ever called him out on his whimsical-bordering-on-ridiculous behavior.

“How dare you,” he responded without heat. It has everything to do with getting my hands on your ass.” Alec snorted into his coffee, not able to look at him. “It also has to do with your very tense back and shoulders.” When he was able to get his embarrassment under control, Alec looked up to see a very self-satisfied looking Magnus leering at him. Alec shook his head.

“This is such a bad idea.”

“That’s not a no!” Magnus pointed out gleefully.

Alec sighed and put his coffee down, “No...it’s not.”

It took them twenty minutes to even get started because they were bickering. Magnus insisted on cheesy New Age music because “it wasn’t the same without it” and on burning incense. They bickered about where to set up, too, because Alec was convinced he was going to lose balance, crack his skull open and bleed out onto the very expensive-looking Persian rug. Magnus retaliated by insisting they move the coffee table, which was extremely heavy, by the way. And that meant other furniture had to get moved around. Alec humored him right up to the moment he suggested he do it in his underwear.
“I am not--!” Alec’s mouth snapped shut mid-protest when he saw Magnus bent over laughing at him. Alec threw a pillow at him, but of course, the asshole caught it.

“Your face!”

“You’re such a dick.”

“Yeah, yeah. There’s sweatpants in the discard box.”

It was Alec’s turn to pull a face again. “Discard box?” he asked with some incredulity.

“Not everyone stays for breakfast and yoga, Alexander.”

Alec wanted to scream out his indignant why, but figured that would get them nowhere. Instead, he just asked where the box was and went to fish out a pair of one of Magnus’ former lovers’ pants. Most of them were too short or too small, which had him snorting to himself, or too feminine in cut. There was one pair which were a bit tight, but the right length. So he swapped out his jeans for them. It didn’t escape his notice that the box was pretty full of clothing of all sorts. Shocking even himself, Alec found he wasn’t all that hung up on it. Or jealous, really. He did have questions about the latex bodysuit and the lone stripper heel, and he was dying to know what kind of adult person was comfortable walking around New York wearing jeans bedazzled with the word “Kitty” on the ass. Or maybe he didn’t want to know. That thought gave him enough pause that he froze for a moment. Nah, he definitely didn’t want to know.

He came out of the bedroom to see Magnus bent over in a deep stretch, ass on display. Alec’s head was tilting to the side without his permission. It was hardly his fault that Magnus was built, and was definitely not his fault that the sight of his toned ass in the air tripped Alec’s brain from zero to pervert in less than a second.

“Quit staring and get over here.”

“Excuse you, I’m entitled to some staring.”

“Not when I can’t enjoy it,” Magnus shot back, swanning back up to an upright position like a goddamn dancer. “C’mere.” He stretched out a hand to Alec, who took it, going willingly even he very easily could have resisted. With a small smile, Alec let Magnus move him into position,
hands roaming everywhere, as he chattered about breathing and focus. Alec didn’t really listen to any of it, content enough to enjoy Magnus’ warm hands on him. He did start paying attention when Magnus started barking orders at him to move into a position.

“I thought this was supposed to be relaxing?” Alec cheeked, earning a nudge from Magnus’ foot.

“And I thought you were supposed to be a soldier. Don’t you take orders?”

Alec dropped his head, huffing out an undignified laugh, before twisting to look up at a stoic-looking Magnus. He smirked and winked.

“Why don’t you find out?”

He felt Magnus’ hand drag along his spine. “Don’t tease, Alexander,” he hissed.

Alec lifted his hips and used his arms to lengthen his spine as Magnus had instructed. It actually felt pretty good, especially in his legs. He’d been at his desk all week, bunched up, and it felt heavenly to stretch out this well. “Who said I was?”

“Me,” Magnus breathed out, “I’m saying it.” Alec felt the hairs on his neck stand straight up as his body reacting not only to Magnus’ proximity but his obvious and intense scrutiny.

“Hey, my follow-through is not in question.”

“And I stand by what I said last night.”

Slowly, Alec released and straightened, careful not to overcorrect and fall on his ass.

“Good. Now get back to work, teach.” Magnus grumbled something suspect in another language Alec didn’t recognize, making him smirk sunnily. So he did talk to himself in other languages. Alec smirked right up until the moment Magnus kissed it off his face, leaving him a more than a little out of breath and way too turned on for that early in the day.
“On your knees, detective,” he murmured against Alec’s lips. Alec only indulged himself for a minute by kissing Magnus teasingly, no points of contact between them except greedy lips, before he cut it off abruptly and did as he was told.
Chapter 12

Chapter Summary

Minor smuttiness, nothing crazy

Chapter Notes

I went back and changed all of the "Alexanders" to "Alecs" in Magnus' sections because I got so sick of typing Alexander out fully. Gah. That's what I get for doing WIP.

Thanks for all of your lovely comments and kudos! I'm so happy everyone's enjoying it! Let me know if there's more of a dynamic you'd want to see or a situation they should find themselves in.

Duces!

Magnus thought Alec was the cutest thing ever because he attempted yoga like everything else: focus and perfectionism. He was torn between being amused and impressed. Amused because he very obviously didn’t have the flexibility or the right kind of balance for something so delicate, and impressed because he kept trying anyway. Not to mention, the view wasn’t so bad either.

Eventually, though, they moved on to other things, mostly TV and pre-lunch snacking. The Chairman performed a drive-by divebomb, by jumping squarely onto Magnus’ chest, licking his face and then darting off to who knew where. The Chairman didn't like guests for the most part and usually stayed hidden until he decided it was appropriate to make introductions. He explained this to a highly amused Alec, who claimed he’d spoiled his cat. Magnus just swatted at him and demanded to know why they were watching giant men hit balls with sticks just to run in circles. Magnus should have known that Alec was a huge dork and loved baseball for all the terrible reasons. He liked the statistics, the odds, the synchronicity of the game, and he insisted on explaining every bit of it to Magnus. It was adorable, and Magnus kept shutting him up by kissing him intermittently, which of course he submitted to, but continued on like he hadn’t been interrupted. Naturally, Magus continued to up his game, getting more daring, more teasing, dirtier. Alec’s responses increased every time, their exchanges lasted longer, right up until the TV went completely ignored, and Alec gave up all pretense of conversation.

“Magnus,” he murmured, seemingly trying to put a stop to the kiss. Magnus was sprawled out on top of him, much too comfortable, and moving his hips rhythmically against Alec’s. His skin was so cool and soft and lovely, and Magnus always ran so hot. It had a calming effect that was turning into something else entirely. Full blown lust. Alec was babbling his name now.
“Mmm, Alexander,” he let out an embarrassing whine. He felt Alec’s fingertips dig into him, testing the give of his flesh and then clenching tightly.

“Gotta stop,” Alec panted out, “you said--” Then he let out a short groan, shoving his tongue more fully into Magnus’ mouth, he wrapped his arms around the small of Magnus’ back, like two steel braces, pushing up his hips and Magnus’ came down. “Don’t to---not too far cause you--” Magnus cut that line of thought off by angling his head and kissing him with renewed vigor, hot and messy and a little out of control. Alec was grinding himself up against Magnus, losing that steady rhythm, tugging at Magnus’ shirt and the waistband of his pants. Magnus’ hands were holding Alec’s head where he wanted, nails dragging along his scalp. He was losing his breath, losing focus, losing his goddamn mind, and they were both fully clothed. Magnus was so hard that it hurt, and thank fuck he was in yoga pants instead of jeans. But that just meant there was a thinner layer between their dicks, that just meant they could feel each other’s heat and hardness all the better.

Magnus sucked on Alec’s tongue, bit his bottom lip before pulling it int between his own, lavishing it with the attention he’d been dying to give it the night before.

“Just a little far,” he rasped out, sliding a hand down to pull one of Alec’s legs over his hip. They groaned into each other’s mouths as they slotted together more firmly. It was just this side of too perfect, and Magnus refused to let himself think about how silly it was that they were rutting against each other like teenagers; fully clothed and in the middle of the day once left unsupervised. He just kept his focus on Alec, let himself feel his way through it. So focused on how good it was that they were coming together, one right after the other, laughing and smiling into short and sweet kisses.

“That was ridiculous,” Alec groused but with fondness in his voice. Fondness that bordered on lovestruck, which Magnus was studiously ignoring for the time being.

“Perfect ridiculous,” Magnus shot back, teasing his mouth back open with his tongue, just to get a taste. He all but melted down into Alec when he opened beautifully, letting Magnus do as he pleased, following and matching until they were both soothed. When he pulled away, Magnus dropped his forehead to Alec’s and let out an unsteady exhale.

“See, I knew--” He ground his forehead against Alec’s. “Knew it wasn’t gonna be enough.”

“What?” Alec asked groggily.

“Nothing,” Magnus answered, kissing him back into complacency. They stayed like that for the next couple of hours, moving and changing positions to get more comfortable. Alec ended up with
his back against the cushions, holding Magnus tight against his front. And while he felt that crazy urge to get up and move and do something productive or creative or just anything at all, it was almost like the impulse was dampened. Like a song so quietly on repeat in your head that you didn’t feel the need to pay attention to the words. Besides, people were always telling Magnus that he thought too much, felt too much, moved around too much. He didn’t want to freak Alec out by revealing a moment of manic. He did feel comfortable enough to self-soothe right there, within the space of his arms, which was new and he didn’t mind as much as he thought he would. It was nice.

Eventually, though, they had to clean up and get something to eat. Magnus almost insisted on ordering in, but Alec laughed at him. Laughed at him all the way into the kitchen, and then laughed at the contents of his fridge and pantry. He stood there in front of the empty, walk-in pantry while Magnus leaned against the counter, arms crossed petulantly.

“I’m never here.”

“You don’t even have salt. Even pioneers had salt.”

“I don’t cook.”

“What about bread? Do you have bread? Because I’m pretty sure that even POWs get bread.”

“You are so not funny.”

He turned around and put his hands to his hips, “All right. I think I’ve got enough to work with.”

Magnus furrowed his brows, “For what?”

He waggled his brows in response. “Monte Cristos.”

So they ate, and Alec continued to mock him ruthlessly for his kitchen and supplies. Magnus was used to hearing far worse about his overall personality, but Alec was looking at him with a fond smile, nudging their feet together from where they sat at the counter. Magnus just enjoyed the attention, soaking up all of Alec’s affection in close quarters. Magnus was able to deftly turn the conversation back on him, demanding to know about the best meals he’d had overseas, the best ones he’d eaten in the city, the best ones he’d made. Magnus was amazed to find that, for a man so surrounded by violence, Alec took great comfort in something that was healing and unifying. He
briefly mentioned that he’d been to restaurants in the city that had most people waiting six months just to request a reservation. His family was old money, dedicated to public service, and thus had a lot of friends. But these weren’t stories he wanted to talk about, stories which involved his parents and grand expense.

No, he talked about the family meals he’d eaten in Baghdad while helping train Iraqi soldiers. He talked about the women who’d fed ten people on next to nothing and still made a ceremony of it. He talked about how generous they were and accepting of his presence there, even though his presence there was a never-ending reminder of the war their countries were locked in. He didn’t tell Magnus what happened to those families, but from the soft sadness in his eyes, Magnus presumed those happy family dinners weren’t the end of the story. He also talked about the places he and Jace had gone to as patrolmen, small family-owned and operated places that refused to cater to American palates. And Magnus was a little in love with the recurrent central theme of most of these stories: family.

Eventually, though, Alec needed to get back to his apartment to change clothes.

“I’m definitely going with you,” Magnus said quickly. Alec frowned.

“Or you could stay here and I’ll meet you somewhere for dinner before we go meet the squad.”

“Or,” Magnus countered, sidling up to him, hands on his chest, “I go with you.”

It didn’t take much convincing, though, because apparently, he was just as reluctant as Magnus to separate.

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Alec honestly didn’t have any desire to be out of Magnus’ company either, so he agreed to wait while he got ready for their evening plans. Magnus grabbed up his hand and tugged him along into the master bedroom. Which was a strange combination of spotless chaos. Alec had a feeling that he wouldn’t find a spec of dust or stray hair anywhere in that room, but it looked like someone’s closet had vomited all over the spare furniture. Magnus’ clothes littered almost every available surface in some capacity.

“This is madness.”
Magnus flapped his hand, disappearing into the walk-in closet because obviously there had to be more clothes.

“Controlled chaos at worst.”

“I’ve seen hoarders who were more organized.”

“Well of course!” he called out. “They’ve so much more to manage, don’t they?”

As predicted, Magnus’ grooming process was lengthy and complicated. Alec’s only point of comparison was Izzy, who took forever because she’s always worn her hair long. So long that they’d been late to school quite frequently in high school. Despite how annoying it had been, Alec had never found it in him to leave her. And besides, watching Magnus was far more enjoyable. He didn’t want to seem creepy, so he sprawled out on the bed watching him a subtly as he could, not asking questions or making comments. Magnus chattered the whole time, however, and only occasionally required verbal responses. Thankfully, Chairman Meow appeared on the bed out of nowhere, curling up against Alec all but demanding pets and attention. Alec happily obliged, thinking that entertaining the cat was a wonderful pretense for being a total perv while he watched Magnus get ready.

By the end of it, Magnus was wearing a silk burgundy shirt which was opened four buttons down, necklaces layered in the vee of it. He wore a dark blue jacket, stripes on one lapel, and charcoal pants. He wore a belt with a relatively sedate buckle but had silver chains clipped at his hip, and his shoes had an amberish glow. Alec had no clue how makeup worked, but Magnus looked good in it, so that was all he needed to know.

When they finally disentangled the Chairman from Alec’s feet and got out the front door, Magnus insisted on calling for his driver, Ernesto. Alec wanted to protest on principle, but there really didn’t seem to be any sense in calling for a cab when Magnus was going to do what he wanted anyway. And actually, it was kind of pleasant because Ernesto was hilarious, and kept telling Alec stories in Spanish about Magnus, which happened to be the one language Magnus hadn’t picked up properly in his travels. Which was a travesty, especially since he knew eight others. Ernesto was obviously very fond of Magnus, which was impressive for a driver-rider relationship. He explained that by telling Alec that Magnus had pulled him out of a bad security gig with some bad people.

“I’m muy happy to make sure Mr. Bane goes safely.”

“Oh stop, you’re making me blush.”
“Dios! You know what make Mr. Bane blush, Senor?” He launched into a story, in English, about a particularly obnoxious woman with a My Little Pony tattoo that Magnus had picked up from some club and brought to a wedding. Apparently, she caused such a riot at the reception that she was escorted from the premises by the police.

“For fuck’s--! Ernesto, how many times do I have to tell you that I was not made aware that she snorted speed in the bathroom after the ceremony?”

“A My Little Pony tattoo, Magnus? Really?”

“I hate the both of you.”

“This is probably the best car ride of my life, and I once drove a drunk clown and his hooker girlfriend to the police station after he came home from work early and she was still working. They beat the crap out of each other.”

“Un payaso?” Ernesto said shrilly, suggesting a phobia. He crossed himself and kissed his fingers.

“His girlfriend was a hooker?”

Alec pointed a finger back and forth between them, “The split focus here is really telling.”
Chapter 13

Despite his cruel mocking at Magnus’ expense, Alec wouldn’t allow Ernesto to idle on the street in his neighborhood. He told him to go to the diner down the street, and that they’d text when they were ready to leave again. He even made Magnus hand over cash for pie and coffee, which he insisted were the best in Brooklyn.

“If you keep saying things like that, Alexander, I will dump you.”

“I will order pie from every place in the city just to prove it to you--”

Alec was cut off by a skinny latino in baggy clothes and bloodshot eyes coming onto the sidewalk from an alley Magnus hadn’t registered. He looked homeless and drunk but didn’t appear threatening.

“Lieutenant, that chica Lucia left this message with me to give to you. Says her tio’s at her again,” he informed Alec, words slurring. Magnus had a hand on Alec’s forearm, feeling the impulse to pull him away. But Alec was just nodding.

“Thank you, Major, I’ll pass this along to my superiors.”

Magnus watched, confused as they saluted each other, and the man disappeared back into the alley.

“Who was that?” Magnus blurted out, trying to process what he’d just witnessed.

“Rodrigo,” he answered matter of factly. Alec shoved the note into his back pocket and tugged Magnus by the hand to the door.

“But--”

“Magnus, go through the door before the alarm goes off.”

“Alarm?”
He could barely pay attention to the dingy lobby before Alec was crowding him into the elevator. Magnus made only one comment about how he’d always known he was going to die in an elevator, for which he got pinched.

Alec’s apartment was exactly how he’d pictured it: sparse of furniture and decoration yet perfectly functional and spotless. He didn’t have much in the way of possessions, nothing that stood out anyway, with one exception. A floor to ceiling bookcase stuffed to bursting with books, and that’s what Magnus beelined to when Alec disappeared into his bedroom to clean up and change. Presuming that Alec was far more private with most people than he was with Magnus, he decided to remain in the living area, focused on those books. It was a wider range than you might expect. Sure, there were the US History and military history books you’d expect from a former military officer, along with books on sociology and criminology, but there was a wide range of fiction. None of which you’d find in a corner store, and there definitely weren’t any mysteries or thrillers. There was a shocking number of classics, and Magnus got a little impatient with himself for thinking that way. Alec had gotten into NYU after all, just because he didn’t go, didn’t mean that he didn’t concoct private studies of his own. What really surprised him though, was all the poetry; there was some in English, but the majority was split between South American poets and Sufi, in Spanish and Arabic respectively. Attar, Rumi, Sadi, and Hafiz. Storni, Neruda, Mistral, Burgos. Books and books of it. There was a good deal of names even Magnus had never heard of. He pulled one of the volumes of Hafiz, shaking his head at the Arabic print, only to realize that notes littered the margins of the most of the pages, all in Arabic.

“You ready?” Alec asked, walking in from his bedroom, looking absolutely edible. He was wearing a charcoal black henley with a green leather bomber jacket, black pants which tucked into combat boots. Magnus almost needed to slap himself out of it, that is, until he caught a dangerous glint of a gun on his hip.

He frowned, snapped the book shut, and pointed at Alec’s waist with all the accusation he could muster.

“Nuh uh!”

“What?” he demanded, arms spread out defensively. “I’m not--Oh!” he followed Magnus’s finger to the gun. He immediately took out and set it on the table to undo the holster. “Habit,” he told him sheepishly. He grabbed both the gun and its holster, disappeared into his bedroom and came back without them. He did, however, go to a well-hidden safe under his entertainment stand, and pulled out his badge. “But I am taking this.”

Magnus decided not to argue so as not to draw attention to himself as he shoved the Hafiz back into the bookcase. He shot a text off to Ernesto, and they were off and out the door again. Alec claimed
he was malnourished due to Magnus’ shoddy kitchen supplies, so he demanded to pick the restaurant for dinner. He shocked Magnus yet again by begging Ernesto to join them in this hole in the wall Italian place Alec claimed to go to once a month religiously. Which turned out to be true because the hostess, the waitstaff, and even the chef, from the window, recognized and greeted him. He impressed Magnus yet again by chatting with them in Italian and ordered the house specials and a bottle of house red for the table. It was simplistic and charming and actually very good. And despite his initial reservations and Ernesto’s discomfort, the three of them kept up a steady stream of conversation, with Alec switching easily between English and Spanish. For someone who didn’t seem excessively social, Alec was wonderfully capable in small groups. Evidently, the wait staff loved him because they brought out tiramisu on the house and one of the older women begged him to go out with her daughter. When Magnus pointedly covered Alec’s hand with his own, the woman didn’t even blink.

“I have a nephew…”

It did not escape Alec’s notice that Magnus handed the woman his credit card before she even brought them the check.

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Soon enough, they were walking into Dilly’s, the 7-0’s favorite dive bar to hang out after shifts, hold their holiday parties, celebrate big wins. As usual, the place was full of cops, mostly 7-0, mostly still active, but Jace apparently had heard other squads from other precincts were coming out too and the old timers were bar fixtures at the counter. Apparently, he and Magnus were the last to arrive because most of the booths were full and Alec could hear the sound of Clary’s shrill cackle all the wall across the room.

“Alec!” Izzy called out, waving like mad with her free hand. The other was holding Simon’s but was also up in the air like it wasn’t. Alec snorted at her enthusiasm.

“Sister?” Magnus asked.

“Yep.”

“And the accountant?”

“Simon.”
“Sheldon,” he repeated wrongly, “Got it. Let’s go.” And he darted out ahead of Alec, walking straight towards Izzy, clearly on a mission. Alec almost called out to correct him but assumed he was being teased and followed behind at a quick pace, hoping to stave off unnecessary nonsense. He felt a little thrill seeing Magnus’ mask go right up, operating in a new territory with the confidence of someone who’d never known anything different. Just based on their conversation, he obviously wasn’t enthused about being around cops, but it didn’t show. Familiar faces greeted Alec, clapped him on the back as he went. That wasn’t typical, but a lot of people made their own busts that week because of his lead so everyone was pretty grateful. Before Magnus could get to Izzy, he did a quick hop-step and inserted himself between them, pushing Simon out of the way.

“Simon, go get me a beer,” he snapped, not even looking at him.

“Alec,” he whined back, probably pouting. Idiot. Alec just shoved at him and moved to wrap Izzy in a bear hug.

“I saw you on Monday, loser,” she faux-complained when he lifted her off her feet.

“Shut up and let me love you.”

She swatted his shoulder, “Shut up and be nice to Simon.”

Alec set her back to her feet, “Never.” He grabbed her by the shoulders and maneuvered her in Magnus’ direction.

“Izzy,” he said slowly, “Magnus Bane, Magnus, my sister Izzy.” Izzy held her hand out like it was meant to be kissed, which of course Magnus obliged, making her laugh. So brownie points there, but then she went into what Max called “Differential Diagnosis” mode.

“Date?” she asked Magnus flatly.

“Dat ing .”

“Huh. Degree? Job?”
“MBA, CEO.”

“Profitable?” she asked, curiosity obviously piqued. Crap, he was just going to have to let her get this out of her system.

“Very.”

Then she did that thing where she crossed her arms and jutted her hip out. “Hometown?”

“Indonesia.”

“Family?”

“Extremely overprotective and invasive friends.”

She tossed her hair, “Prada or Gucci?” Oh dear god…

Magnus pulled his head back, face blank, “D&G.”

“Clueless or Mean Girls?”

“How dare you even ask that question.”

There was a short pause and then Izzy was bouncing and clapping her hands.

“Yay! You can stay,” she grabbed Magnus’ hand and pushed away Alec, “and you can help Simon with drinks. Goodbye!” Then she was dragging Magnus into the fray of mostly cops where Jace and Clary were sat in the middle. Alec watched the couple greet Magnus enthusiastically, even Lydia cracked a smile when she saw him. Alec just scowled and did what he was told, finding Simon at the bar trying and failing to get the bartender’s attention. Alec smirked and waved the guy down.
“Louis, in a sec, yeah?”

“Whatever, Lightwood,” he grunted.

Simon turned to him, flabbergasted, “How did you do that? I’ve been standing here, waiting—”

“You’re not a cop, Si. He can smell the civvie on you.”

Simon frowned, “You served with him, didn’t you?”

Alec snorted, “Iraq.”

“I hate you guys.”

“Aw, Simon, you say the sweetest things,” Alec teased, ruffling Simon’s hair. When Louis came over, Alec took the liberty of ordering everyone’s drinks, but then he realized he had no clue what Magnus drank. “Crap. Lou, can you send Cindy over to our table, get an order from the only guy here wearing glitter?”

“Whatever.”

“Speaking of, who is that guy, anyway?” Simon asked dumbly.

“My date.”

Simon’s face froze into unvocalized joy like he’d been waiting for that moment for his entire life. He immediately threw his arms around Alec.

“Jesus Christ Simon—”
“I’m so happy for you!” he squealed.

Alec groaned, wishing to die quickly, and patted him stiffly on the shoulder.

“Yeah, yeah, thanks or whatever.”

“IZzy was convinced you were going to die alone, but I said there’s no way someone has a story like yours and doesn’t get a happy ever after. I mean it’s just not fair—”

“Take a breath, man.”

He immediately released Alec, who patted his jacket down. “Sorry! I mean, not really, because Iz says you’re touch-starved and should be showed casual affection whenever possible—”

“Simon!”

“Sorry! Oh look, here’s the drinks!” His soon-to-be brother-in-law grabbed the tray of drinks before Alec could snag his own from it, and took off for the table. Alec scowled and reached behind the bar to grab the closest bottle of whatever was there. He lifted it in Louis’ direction.

“Lou!”

“Whatever.”

He made his way back to their table and was immediately accosted by Helen and Aline who had a thousand questions about Magnus, starting with his name and occupation and ending with who did his hair. Naturally, they went in alternation, a habit from when they were partners and interrogated together. Alec had some difficulty keeping up with them while also providing accurate information. After the first three questions, if he didn’t want to answer?

“Pass.”

“But-!”
“I’m not answering that.” He snapped his fingers and rolled his wrist impatiently in a gesture for them to continue. “Pass.”

Eventually, he begged off, feeling a little antsy having left Magnus alone with his siblings for too long. It helped significantly that the worst of them was already on Magnus’ radar. Magnus was sat at the end of the table, listening to Alec’s colleagues and siblings talk, making little to no attempt to include him. Alec swiped chair from another table and set it close to Magnus, close enough that their legs touched and Alec could comfortably put his arm around the back of Magnus’ chair. While potentially overstepping and a little possessive-seeming, it was also a defensive gesture. Alec was still getting used to people commenting on his sexuality, and while people from his own precinct were cool, he wasn’t sure about the rest of them. So he opted for an aggressive defense. If people were going to talk shit, he wasn’t going to allow speculation to be a factor. He was gay and with Magnus, and he was going to make that abundantly clear. Regardless, Magnus didn’t seem to mind. He looked over at him with a smile and slid a hand over his thigh. Alec dipped his head to tell him quietly that the waitress was coming over to get his drink order.

“What?” Magnus asked, looking a little confused. Alec frowned, absolutely unsure what to do with that reaction.

“Didn’t know what you wanted,” he answered with a shrug. He used his beer to point at Jace, “And I didn’t want to inflict my preferences on you. Because of this asshole, I can only drink well whiskey and watery beer.”

“Not my fault your body’s a bitch.”

“I object to that terminology,” Aline piped in. “Clary?” Immediately, Clary swatted Jace upside the head and no one laughed because it was now a common occurrence. Some of the guys around the precinct liked to give Jace crap about it. But he had the same response every time:

“How about you and my partner go get in the sparring ring right now and we’ll talk about who she’s got whipped, heh?” It was a shockingly mature response for his brother. Magnus gestured between the couple and Aline.

“I like this system.”

“Mmm,” Alec said agreeably, “It’s not effective.” Magnus graced him with a soft smile.
“No?”

“Not even a little.”

“Really?”

Alec snorted again, for the third time in the few minutes they’d been there, and dipped his head in Jace’s direction, “See for yourself.” Magnus turned his head to see Jace pantomiming some weird sex act that Alec couldn’t figure out to save his life, but managed to look disgusting all the same, in their direction. Magnus let out a short huff.

“You know,” he said loudly enough for everyone to hear while leaning more heavily against him, “you were right.” Alec lifted his brows, waiting. “I’m definitely glad I met Jace before you. Otherwise this? Wow.”

Across the table Jace squawked indignantly, looking confused and offended at the same time, while the others laughed. Jace tapped rapidly on Clary’s shoulder, she gestured half-heartedly.

“Definitely an insult.”

Jace squawked louder than before, but thankfully Cindy showed up to get Magnus’ drink order before it deteriorated. Magnus asked for a vodka tonic but asked for a specific kind of vodka Alec hadn’t heard of. Cindy was pretty sure they had it, but she had to check. He told her to swap it out for a whiskey sour if they didn’t.

“I’ve got a weird allergy. Most places don’t stock the vodka I have to use.”

“Well shit,” Alec muttered, “glad I didn’t order for you then.”

Even though it was an offhand comment, Magnus reacted to it like Alec had just said something extremely endearing and threaded their fingers together. Alec pressed a kiss to his temple and somehow got drawn into a weird debate between Hodge, Helen, Raj, and Aline about which cop movie franchise was the best. Hodge preferred Dirty Harry. Raj said Training Day. Helen said Lethal Weapon. And in an upsetting twist, Aline was in Jace’s camp with Die Hard. They pulled
Alec in, asking for his opinions about characters and demanding he create an objective badassness scale, as Alec preferred not to think about work in his recreational time. He wasn’t sure what Magnus was talking about with the people on the other side of the table, but he was certain that it was terrible or embarrassing or both.

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If Magnus had heard Alec’s thoughts, he would have kissed his nonsense worries away. Isabelle was an absolutely stunning woman with wonderful taste and a sharp sense of humor. Even though she and Clary seemed to get along all right topically, there was some clear tension between them. Magnus got the impression that Isabelle was just this side of too abrasive and too loud for little Biscuit. She may have been a cop, but she was a soft touch by nature. Isabelle definitely seemed the more of the “I play with dead people” type, and didn’t seem to have much of a bedside manner. Regardless, Magnus liked her immensely, and he could understand easily why Alec was so fond of her. His ears lit up, however, when Clary asked Simon about his job. Jace groaned and got up, “excusing” himself to the restroom. Simon, nonplussed, launched into a tirade of near epic proportions about how much he hated his job and the people there.

“I love the work, don’t get me wrong. The work is great. But I’m dead sure they’re skimming from the books. And we do accounting. In New York. That means mobs and crime and I’m gonna lose a finger, I just know it.”

“Mmm,” Magnus noted as the waitress set down his vodka tonic. He tipped her generously. “You’d probably lose a whole hand first.” Simon looked at him, eyes wide in horror. “Sheldon, where do you work exactly?” He did a subtle lean in order to make sure that Alec wasn’t listening to this part of the conversation. No doubt, he would hear about it, but he didn’t want him causing a fuss.

“It’s Simon. I work for Fineberg—”

“Ah,” Magnus tossed a dismissive hand while he took a sip. “I know them well.” He reached into his breast pocket, producing Raphael’s card. “If you’re interested in new locales, call my CFO tomorrow.”

“You’re offering me a job?” he asked, absolutely dumbstruck. Magnus did so enjoy inspiring that particular feeling and resulting expression in people. So he smiled.

“Tell him who you are, and he’ll set you up somewhere. Make sure he matches your salary and ask for an increase if possible.”
“But--?”

“What if he doesn’t believe you?” Magnus finished airily. “Tell him that his best friend in the whole world will mix red glitter into his hair products if he doesn’t do it. He’ll know.”

Across the table, Isabelle looked startled. “Magnus, that’s extremely generous, but--”

“Not generous at all, trust me. I’ve been looking to hire Raphael some underlings so he’ll stop being such a whiny pain in the ass. If your boy works for Fineberg, he’ll pass muster for Raph.” He looked at Simon pointedly. “But seriously, don’t wait to call him. First thing tomorrow morning.” Because if not, Raphael would assume Magnus was doing business shit-faced again, and that his poor victims actually thought they were making business connections, and thus waited the appropriate 3 days before calling. Simon looked horrified at the prospect of doing so, so Magnus reassured him again.

“Dude!” Simon exclaimed loudly in his ear. “You are the best!” He then launched himself at Magnus, wrapping him up in an extremely uncomfortable hug at an awkward angle. Magnus used one hand to sip from his drink and the other to pat the man placatingly. The movement caught Alec’s attention, so Magus shrugged.

“Sheldon’s a little excitable.”

Four people answered with: “It’s Simon.”

Alec laughed.
Chapter 14

Alec decided whatever his co-workers were discussing was extremely uninteresting and was now tuned into whatever Magnus was saying and what people were saying to him. Some of his colleagues asked a few invasive questions and either Alec or Clary warded them off, telling them to sheath their claws. Magnus thought it was absolutely lovely that so many people cared about what was going on in Alec’s life. And it was no one-way street, either. Alec was very aware of what was going on with the people around them; Raj’s mother was getting surgery, Aline’s daughter was getting bullied at school, Helen’s girlfriend was upset about her hours and asked for a break, one of Hodge’s former partners had just retired. Alec knew about all of it, didn’t offer advice, and yet somehow encouraged and comforted at the same time. Magnus was so impressed with him in a way he hadn’t expected to be.

But eventually, their conversation deteriorated into cop talk, which started to make Magnus’ skin crawl, especially at the mention of the angle of knife wounds and blood spatter. Raj was demanding a live-action recreation right then and there. Alec noticed and grabbed his hand.

“Come on, let’s go play pool. This is only gonna get worse.” Magnus nodded, and Alec got up to lead him toward the pool tables, dart boards, and a jukebox. They waited a few minutes for a table to open, leaning up against the wall while they debriefed about what Magnus was thinking. He didn’t say too much, even though Alec was obviously eager to hear his opinions. When it got to the point that the anxiety was rolling off him in waves, Magnus wound their arms together and leaned in closer.

“I like them,” he said quietly, hoping he sounded reassuring, “and it’s obvious how much they care about you.”

Alec fixed him with an unreadable look and then ducked to kiss him soundly. It was brief and sweet like their first kiss, but ultimately more familiar and lovely. Magnus was shocked by it, but very pleased.

It turned out that Alec was an excellent pool player. He claimed it was because he’d trained as a sniper and had great aim. Alec also happened to be very gullible. You wouldn’t think that a cop would be so easy to persuade, but Magnus chalked it up to him being distracted by Magnus’ fabulous ass. So naturally, Magnus hustled him. Not for money, of course, but just to get Alec’s hands on him, press their bodies together. Clary and Izzy came over to play darts. And he caught a teasing smirk from Clary who knew just how good of a pool player he was. He did, in fact, own a pool hall where some of the best players in the world came to compete. Magnus mouthed “shut up” and slid a finger across his throat, indicating his thoughts on her commentary. Her face turned red as she burst into giggles and turned to whisper to Izzy. Alec’s sister’s eyebrows shot straight up and she made a face that looked like she’d just seen a kitten. Of course, they kept giggling. Ugh, straight women. Magnus decided to ignore them and focus on Alec, who was blushing and smiling
adorably under Magnus’ undivided attention. It was occasionally interrupted because some of the other cops wandered over.

Most of them were friendly, some of them ignored Magnus in favor of speaking to Alec. He didn’t mind it, he just hoped it wasn’t weirdly hostile to Alec. Others were just coming to introduce themselves to Magnus, get a look at Alec’s...what? Boyfriend? It was too soon to say that, but Magnus presumed that Alec hadn’t brought other men around his friends and co-workers. Just based on their reactions? Probably not. And Magnus was...the polar opposite of nothing. He was probably too much for a foray into being publicly out; he was ridiculous and glittery, and not serious enough. Not that Magnus was feeling self-conscious in the least. He was just feeling weirdly defensive of Alec and wanted to make it easier. But he seemed to be doing okay, other than the few times he went stiff due to an off-color comment from the older crowd. They weren’t blatant, just low heat barbs which Alec let roll off him easily enough. Magnus chose to believe that younger cops always took a little flack from the older ones and that it wasn’t exclusive to Alec.

Magnus didn’t have long to dwell on any of it though because Jace, Raj, and Simon came over and were attempting to give him pointers on how to beat Alec at pool. However, no one seemed to have done it themselves, so why would he take pointers from them? Jace insisted that he was almost as good as Alec, so demanded a game to test out what Alec had “taught” him. Magnus put on his ditzy sorority girl affect, jutting a hip flirtatiously.

“Sure, sounds like fun!” He caught Alec’s eye and winked, and was thoroughly amused by his burgeoning suspicions. Alec was gullible, not stupid. Jace was stupid. So Magnus ran with it. He broke, which went purposefully terrible, and Jace sunk a few balls. His skill was mediocre at best because he was too distractible. He didn’t have Alec’s intractable focus. Which is exactly what Magnus took advantage of. Magnus missed a shot on purpose, and while everyone clapped him on the back consolingly, telling him he’d improve, Alec was watching Magnus intently. There was that appraising gaze he’d turned on Magnus’ possessions and that picture Will had taken in Marseille. He looked like he’d caught a thread and intended to follow it to the end. Magnus just blew a kiss at him and let Jace scratch on his next turn. Had he done that intentionally? Absolutely. Because right after that, Magnus sunk his first three balls. Everyone was excited for him, ribbing Jace who was babbling about statistics and luck. Alec wasn’t fooled. After Magnus’ fifth shot, Alec wandered over, leaning on the table while Magnus lined up his next shot, pretending to fumble.

“You are such a shit ,” Alec hissed, making Magnus want to smirk. He didn’t though, he kept his focus on the pool cue.

“I do not know to what you refer,” he answered as innocently as possible, remembering that comment Alec had made about how people who were lying didn’t use contractions. Alec leaned over, lips near his ear.
“Liar.”

Stupidly, Magnus preened. It was crazy how quickly Magnus was getting attached to Alec predicting him. He liked the attention, he liked how private and warm it felt between them even though there were dozens of people nearby. Magnus was pretty used to being the center of attention, but Alec made him feel like...he didn’t watch him because he was flamboyant, he didn’t watch him because he was wealthy or powerful or beautiful. Alec made him feel...magical.

So Magnus sighed and adjusted his grip on the cue and cocked his head. “Should I put him out of his misery?”

“Please,” Alec answered with a soft smile, eyes bright. Magnus let out a girlish sigh and reached to adjust Alec’s jacket.

“Anything for you, darling.”

Magnus ended the game in a little over a minute, landing all his shots with ease. They guys got really excited about it, drawing attention from the people around them. But Magnus made quick work of it, so as not to let them onto his game. Jace agreed to buy him a drink on account of “beginner’s luck.” Magnus thanked him profusely, which should have tipped him off but didn’t.

Alec slid an arm around his waist, pulling him in close as people dispersed. “You do realize you now have to keep up that ruse?” Magnus felt a shiver shoot down his spine and squirmed in Alec’s hold, smiling at the suggestion of longevity.

“I’m a quick study with excellent motivation,” he answered suggestively, twisting his head back to look at Alec. He was shaking his head and fighting off a smile.

“I’m beat,” he responded after a moment. “You ready?”

* 

Alec was immediately suspicious of Magnus’ billiards skills. Immediately. Not because of anything he said or did, but because Alec just had a gut instinct. An extremely wealthy businessman who didn’t know how to play pool? No way. He decided not to call him out, enjoying their physical proximity far too much. Not to mention, it was pretty fun to try and distract him from
his terrible shots to see if it would actually improve his accuracy. It did, but Magnus pretended like it was intentional. The bastard.

It was even more hilarious when the guys, all self-proclaimed “good players,” came over to offer Magnus pointers. The dude didn’t miss a single beat. He listened to everything they said and asked the dumbest questions in the ditziest tone possible. Maybe it wasn’t obvious to them, but it was obvious to Alec. Then Alec saw him fidgeting with one of the chalk cubes, letting it slip through his fingers in a continuous circle, and his suspicions were confirmed. Magnus was a pool shark.

Jace wanted Magnus to “practice” playing against him because his brother and friends were all snakes who would do anything to get Alec to lose. Backstabbing heathens. It didn’t matter though because Alec was pretty confident Magnus could kick his ass with his eyes closed. Playing that badly under scrutiny took skill. Magnus let Jace take the lead and Alec stood back, propped up against the nearest column. He caught a flash of red in his peripheral.

“You know he used to compete, right?” Clary asked with a light sigh, intentionally colliding with the column he was holding up. Of course he did.

“I didn’t, but I suspected.”

She laughed. “What gave him away?”

“Chalk,” Alec answered, using a hand to mimic what Magnus had been doing earlier. Then he crossed his arms again. Clary snorted, lolling her head along the column to look up at Alec.

“He’s always twiddling with something.” She went back to looking at Jace. “Don’t tell him, but Magnus was the one who really taught me to play.” Alec frowned. He remembered several conversations with Jace about teaching Clary to play pool. Actually, her progress made more sense when Magnus was involved.

“Jace is a bad teacher, huh?”

“More like distracting. And since everybody plays, I wanted to actually learn...Magnus offered and I swore him to secrecy so Jace would think he was the one teaching me. I pay Magnus for his silence.”
She looked at him pointedly, “You will never know.”

Slowly, they smiled at each other and with small laughs looked back at their respective dates. Weirdly enough, it felt like a bonding moment with the two of them watching Jace and Magnus play, both of them trying a little too hard to accomplish opposite ends. Alec was getting ready to put a stop to it. Not because it wasn’t funny. It was definitely funny watching anyone pull one over on Jace, and Magnus was doing it without so much as blinking. Actually, the blinking was part of the ruse, playing dumb and whatnot. Anyway. The point was, innocent prank or not, Alec felt weird about Magnus pretending to be something he wasn’t. But Clary was standing there, and they hadn’t spoken much in the last week about anything that didn’t pertain to work. For whatever reason, this kind of thing had always been difficult for Alec. Showing gratitude to anyone who wasn’t related to him was awkward and stilted. With Clary it was worse. But then Magnus caught his gaze and blew a kiss at him. What a jerk. Jace scratched on the next turn, and then Magnus swept around the table and sunk three balls. Alec took in the angle of his fourth shot and saw how it was lined up to hit just to the right of the corner left pocket. It wasn’t a “perfect” looking shot, but it was designed to look imperfect, and he sunk it anyway.

“Time to end the carnage,” he muttered to Clary, who giggled.

“Please and thanks. It’s just painful.”

Alec started to walk over, but then he turned suddenly facing Clary so she didn’t misunderstand him.

“I know we don’t get along,” he started slowly.

“We do not,” she agreed, straightening up and obviously taking him seriously.

“And I haven’t given you much reason to like me. Or be nice to me, mostly because I’ve never been nice to you.”

“Agreed.”

“So…” he let a heavy exhale and shoved his hand in his pocket to hide that it was shaking, “thank
“You’re welcome,” she answered sincerely. “And, in an effort to continue congenial relations, I will refrain from hugging you.”

Alec threw his head back to laugh. “You are so weird, Fairchild.”

“She is so weird,” Jace commented, sipping his drink. “She hump.”

“Proudly,” she said, reaching up to nudge him toward the table. “Now go put a stop to this before someone puts down money and Magnus hustles a bar full of cops.”

He left her with a nod and weaved his way over to where Magnus stood lining up his next shot. Everyone was clamoring with advice, excited that the “underdog” was getting ahead. Alec perched a hip on the pool table, crossed his arms, and whispered his accusation quietly enough so only Magnus could hear. And damn, was he good. Didn’t crack, didn’t even flinch. But he did offer to end the charade by quickly winning the game. Everyone around them was chalking it up to beginner’s luck, mocking Jace, and offering to buy Magnus drinks. Magnus didn’t accept from anyone but Jace, who still hadn’t caught on. In most things, Alec’s brother was amazingly perceptive, but in others? Not so much.

Magnus came back around the table, under the pretense of adjusting Alec’s jacket. When he was sufficiently close, Alec slid an arm around his waist.

“You do realize you now have to keep up that ruse?” he whispered against Magnus’ ear. There was a small part of him that felt presumptuous. As if Magnus would be spending so much time with his co-workers and family that he would have to pretend to be a bad pool player. That they would still be seeing each other long enough for that. But Magnus turned one of those dimpled grins on him, and answered with something equal parts true and suggestive. Alec really didn’t want to be around people anymore, just Magnus, so he suggested they leave. Magnus pounced on the idea, looking as eager as Alec felt.

Alec made quick goodbyes, not really caring if everyone knew he was leaving. He saw them every day, all day, and he probably wouldn’t see Magnus again for another week. Who knew? So they bailed and walked with no real destination in mind. Magnus didn’t give him too many opinions on the people he’d met, but somehow got Alec talking more about them. He told a lot of stories about the precinct and the pranks people pulled. It eventually evolved into the shenanigans he and Jace got up to as kids, mostly when Jace tricked or deceived Alec into participating, or somehow Izzy would have been implicated in something unless Alec stepped in. It was difficult, but he managed to circumvent discussing his parents too much, and he hoped it wasn’t obvious. They walked all
the way to Brighton Beach, which was an hour walk from Dilly’s. Alec didn’t even realize they’d been talking that long. That was probably how Magnus did so well with his business; he could get people talking about themselves, make it enjoyable, and time would fly by. If Magnus could make Alec, someone who spent all of his time trying to make other people talk specifically about what they didn’t want to talk about, feel like that, then it was surprising Magnus didn’t own the country by now.

* 

It took barely a word from Magnus for Alec to start gushing about his friends and family. If ever you needed to bond, and bond quickly, with Alec Lightwood they were the in-route. Magnus had learned to read people when he was fairly young, so finding a thread of conversation to put the other at ease was like pushing buttons on a vending machine. But usually, he didn’t enjoy the result so much. Alec was obviously cast as caretaker and the “responsible” one in most of these stories, but his quick thinking and problem solving contributed so much to the hilarity of the situation. Of course, he tried to downplay it, but it was very obvious to Magnus that Alec was far too accustomed to thinking on his feet and coming up with quick fixes to save everyone’s ass. That he swerved every time his parents came up in the story, Magnus purposely ignored but filed away for later.

About thirty minutes into their walk, and Magnus was fairly certain they were walking in the direction of the beach, Alec grabbed his hand. It was stupid, the whole thing was stupid. He was giddy over a boy taking him to meet his friends and holding his hand. He really needed to get a grip, especially if he was going to stick to this whole “waiting to have sex” thing. But he didn’t want to fuck this up. Alec hadn’t been in a relationship, hadn’t had sex with someone who actually cared about him. Well, that probably wasn’t true. Those men had probably liked Alec a lot, if they were more than just a night, they probably fell in love with him. Probably. Because Magnus couldn’t figure out how they couldn’t.

They did end up at the beach, which was all Alec’s doing. Magnus just followed him, swaying into him at streetlights and providing a running commentary on Alec’s stories. The air was starting to get chilly at night, since fall was right around the corner. Magnus was actually very much looking forward to see Alec bundled up in sweaters and scarves. They opted to go to the pier, walk down near the water. Magnus wasn’t a huge fan of the water for a lot of reasons, his stepfather being one of them. But it didn’t seem so bad, not on a clear night with Alec’s arm around him.

“I used to come here a lot when I was a kid.”

Magnus frowned, turning away from the water to look up at him. “I thought you lived in Manhattan?”
Alec was still looking out over the water when he nodded. “Jace and Izzy would get into trouble, fight with Mom and Dad, and end up grounded. I didn’t have a lot of other friends, so I would come here.” He talked about playing checkers with some of the older guys, reading on the beach, sometimes he’d rent a bike with the money he made helping out his parents’ neighbors with chores and pet sitting. He liked to watch the boats and had occasionally talked to the fishermen. He knew way too much about fishing without ever having done it.

“Coming here made me love Brooklyn, so when I got my first offer to transfer out of Vice I asked to be placed here. Jace followed.”

“Well, I’m glad you did.”

Alec scrunched up his nose adorably, “Me too.”

Magnus tilted his face up to be kissed, and Alec obliged. Magnus let himself sink into it, just warm and lazy presses with arms around each other. God, it was perfect. His focus was so narrowed to this point that everything else was white noise: the waves, the traffic, the shrieks of teenagers up to no good. Alec’s kisses were light and playful, lingering like he was savoring it. Magnus pressed back, trying to keep Alec with him as long as possible before he needed air. Alec’s lips were perfect. Absolutely perfect. He was obsessed with them, wanted to have them with him all day every day. They were just so plush and kissable. But if they didn’t stop soon…

“It’s getting late,” he breathed out reluctantly, pulling back. Alec groaned and dropped his forehead to Magnus’, making him grin. “I have a brunch meeting with Raph. And when Raph says brunch, he means breakfast.” At some ungodly hour, usually, after having shown up without so much as a warning text. While he wasn’t so eager to end the evening, he also had the distinct impression that the evening wouldn’t end if it continued for much longer.

“All right,” Alec half-heartedly agreed. “Cab?”

Magnus rolled his eyes, “Ernesto.”

“It’s past midnight!”

“I texted him thirty minutes ago while we walking.” He pulled out his phone and sent another text.
Oh. Okay.” He bent to kiss him again and then they were walking back toward the street. They stood there, warming each other’s hands and trading kisses while they waited. But Ernesto didn’t take long, so they climbed in, leaning heavily on each other. They didn’t talk and Ernesto played music in Spanish Magnus didn’t recognize, but the woman had a lovely soft voice and sounded quite sad. It made Magnus slide an arm through Alec’s to cuddle closer. He felt Alec press a kiss to his temple, and that was definitely his new favorite thing. He closed his eyes to it and leaned into the touch.

Ernesto took Alec home first, and Magnus felt weird about the thought of leaving him there. Didn’t like it. He wanted a little privacy for their goodbye, so he followed Alec out of the car, telling Ernesto to wait a moment.

Alec put both hands to his face and kissed him thoroughly.

“I really liked having you there tonight,” he sighed, pecking Magnus’ lips once more.

“I liked being there,” Magnus said, kissing back. “I liked them.” He pressed another kiss. “I like you.”

Alec hummed, quickly licking into Magnus’ mouth like he was trying to memorize what he could before it was stolen away from him. Magnus keened, responding eagerly. But they needed to cut this off, put some distance between them for a second.

“I like you, too,” Alec answered when they finally broke apart. He didn’t go too far, though, and played with Magnus’ necklaces while they figured out their next free second.

“I can get away for a few hours on Monday night. But we’ve got a conference call at 9.”

“The international thing sucks, by the way,” Alec grumbled. “I do happy hour with Izzy on Monday nights.” Magnus frowned, brain whirring trying to figure out Tuesday or make some counteroffer. Alec tapped his shoulder excitedly, “Ooh, come with. Seriously. She’s been trying to get me to let Simon come for years. If you come too I won’t kill him,” he said, holding out his hands like it was the only option and the perfect solution at the same time.

“If you’re sure--”
Alec cut him off with a kiss. “Of course I’m sure.” He kissed him again, starting to pull away. “I will see you Monday,” and one last kiss to the cheek, “text me when you get home.” And then he was disappearing through the door of his building, leaving Magnus on the sidewalk, feeling strangely bereft and flustered.

So he got back in the car, sitting in the front with Ernesto, the sad song still playing on the radio. Without a word, Ernesto pulled away from the curb, heading for Magnus’ apartment. He listened to the woman croon her song and felt an ache in his own chest, and he wished he was more than a week into whatever this was with Alec.

“Who is this?” he asked quietly, staring out the window, watching Alec’s neighborhood fade from view.

“Eh, uh, Carla Morrison.”

“It’s pretty.”

They sat in silence for a while, until Ernesto broke it, which was unlike him. He was the kind of man who liked to talk and he liked to do his job. If he could do them separately, he’d prefer it. Since Magnus talked almost constantly and usually needed a sounding board, Ernesto cheerfully obliged. But he usually didn’t break the silence Magnus created. No, he was far too respectful for that.

“This one’s good one, Mr. Bane. Muy bueno.”

“Yeah,” Magnus answered, voice feeling too thick for his throat.

“He good man. Good man take care of you.”

Magnus scoffed, “I am perfectly capable of doing that myself, Ernesto.”

His driver nodded, lips pursed, “Sí, por supuesto.” He kept nodding. “Or...you let handsome cop be nice and cook you dinner, eh?”
Magnus felt the tug of an exasperated smile on his lips. Even his driver felt the need to weigh in on his personal choices. Not that he was going to argue with that idea. He’d definitely like to see Alec in an apron.

"Yeah," Magnus agreed with a nod, letting the smile come to his lips freely, "maybe." He inhaled deeply to settle the animal in his chest, telling it to simmer down. "Maybe."
Chapter 15

So a lot of people have been saying they're reading this in one sitting. It warms the cockles of my heart cause I too use this site to avoid my life. Usually grad school and laundry.

If you feel like sharing what you're avoiding and commiserating, please feel free to comment!

Or come find me on tumblr: rideswraptors

Alec was a terrible texter. It was a verifiable fact and Magnus would testify to it under oath regardless of consequences. He’d texted him the second Ernesto dropped him off at home, which didn’t amount to much other than a solitary “K” and a “Thanks for coming. Nite.” The next day, Magnus woke to three texts by 8 AM. Of course, that was because Alec was a freak who woke up at the crack of dawn. Still, the texts had Magnus smiling; half because they were cute, half because they were terrible.

G morning

Jace left 3 drunk VMs. Showing up at his place now.

The next was just a picture of Jace sprawled out on the floor, a foot flung on the couch, without pants but with shoes on. Clary was laughing in the background from where she was perched at the breakfast bar. The caption said: Needs a better babysitter.

Despite the terrible content, and having his eyes assaulted with a hungover half naked Jace, Magnus was stupidly pleased with the random updates. It was charming, really, and seemingly unfiltered.

Dear god, I did nothing to deserve that.

Magnus managed to make coffee and start his yoga routine before Alec texted back. Embarrassingly enough, Magnus had tripped over himself to get to his phone when it dinged. God, he was pathetic. Even Chairman Meow knew it. He glared at Magnus from his perch on the bookshelf.
“Shut it, you. I’m not the one who eats garbage.” Chairman’s response was a quiet meow, and to return to his grooming.

*Not entertaining for you?*

#

*Traumatizing. Please tell me you covered him up.*

#

*Nope. Poured water on his face n left.*

#

*Poor biscuit.*

*

Alec was absurdly pleased that Magnus kept up a steady stream of texts throughout the day. Apparently, he was in a meeting with Raphael for most of the day, and then had several conference calls. Alec was tempted to ask him to dinner but figured they needed to cool off a little. He’d see him Monday night.

He’d gone on his morning run, showered, tormented Jace, and then went right into work. He had no intention of staying for too long, but he definitely needed to get started on the cases which had lagged because of the week prior. Lydia, as always, had beaten him there and was doing her typical color coding to prioritize. The missing person had been found, it was a runaway teenager with a long history of disappearing for weekends at a time. So that left two homicides. Alec knew Jace and Clary prioritized by flipping a coin; Lydia had a slightly more complex system which used demographics and statistics. She wanted to look into the young Wall Street guy who’d been found outside a club known for distributing. She contended it would be easier. Alec insisted on the older prostitute they found in a park, making Lydia scowl. She hated the transients cases because they turned up far too much evidence which led to nowhere.
He wouldn’t say that he was distracted by Magnus’ texts, per se. It was just that his investment levels were about equal work to Magnus. The girl was killed by her pimp, who had a track record for such things. The Wall Street kid overdosed in the club and the manager had security put him outside to protect the club. So five collars with hard evidence within a few hours. Not bad for a day’s work. Unfortunately, he had to sit with the pimp until the lawyer showed up. So he’d handcuffed the guy to his desk, propped his feet up and texted Magnus.

*Raph has yelled at me four times to put my phone away. I’m putting my life in danger just to talk to you. Appreciate my efforts.*

#

*Recognized. Lydia wouldn’t let me drive. Said I wasn’t focused.*

#

*Slander!*

#

*That’s what I said*

#

*You working?*

#

*Nah waiting for lawyer*

*Pimp chained to my desk*
“Yo, man, you got like a granola bar or sumthin’? I’m so hungry!” the pimp whined. Alec continued tapping out responses to Magnus.

“Well maybe you should consider that the next time you decide to take a baseball bat to another person.”

“She was steppin’ out!”

“God, you need to shut up. Have you never watched tv?” he grumbled. He smiled at some comment Magnus made about Raphael trying to steal his phone, grinning stupidly at the thought that Magnus would ignore work and his best friend to talk to him.

“Can’t you go get me some candy from the vending machine or sumthin’?” he begged. “Yo girl can wait, man!”
“My boyfriend is a law-abiding citizen who is not chained to a desk, so I think I’ll give him preferential treatment.”

“This is cruel and usual punishment!”

Alec snorted. “You can tell it to your lawyer. Whenever they get here.”

Magnus sent him a picture of a scowling Raphael, who was flipping off the camera. Alec hadn’t met him, obviously, but he thought they’d get along.

Of course you will, you’re both salty assholes who are sweet to me.

#

He better not be sweet to you

#

Lol Raph says he’d rather gargle lighter fluid.

#

Stupid

#

See? Sweet.
I think it’s an obvious choice here.

#

I think it’s sweet.

Raph thinks it’s sweet too

#

Dear Detective Lightwood, I do not. -Raphael Santiago

I do think you have the patience of a saint -RS

He’s so damn rude

It’s Magnus I got my phone back

Honestly he’s a child

But he’s my child, so I guess it’s my fault

#

I’m sure you did your best raising him.

#

Single parents do not get enough credit in this country

YOUR country

#

Hey I have no defense for that so uncool.
Alec left the precinct around 1 PM, still texting Magnus, and arrived at his building to find his mother standing on the stoop. The neighborhood kids were watching her warily but gave her wide berth. Everything about her screamed cop, so there was no way in hell anyone was going to mess with her. Alec stopped on the sidewalk, nearly dropping his phone.

“What are you doing here?” he blurted out. Maryse Lightwood could be described as nothing less than a force of nature. She was first generation American, her parents had come from Cuba and Guyana, speaking Spanish and French. She grew up in the projects, joined the Army to get her education and then worked her way up the police force into the FBI. She had long dark hair and eyes only a shade lighter. She was always perfectly groomed, perfectly pressed, and her expression was usually unreadable to those who didn’t know her. Those people included anyone who she didn’t consider family. With her children, she had always been an even balance of loving and severe. Overbearing didn’t quite cover it, but she didn’t smother them like other mothers. She’d always fostered some independence in them. It was just that she expected quite a lot back because of that extended leash.

“You weren’t at dinner last week,” she said back easily, not acknowledging the fact that he hadn’t greeted her properly. Her presence was unsettling enough without her overlooking the formalities. “We have family dinner every week for a reason, Alec,” she said solemnly.

“Yeah, and it was made abundantly clear I wasn’t welcome.” He moved up the steps to open the door for himself, ready to shut it in her face if necessary.

She frowned. “That wasn’t about you.” She crossed her arms. “Can we go inside, please?”

Alec nearly laughed, “If my neighborhood makes you so uncomfortable, then maybe you should leave.”

“Oh for--! Alexander Gideon, I grew up in the projects in Queens, your father’s the one with the money. Now can we go inside and discuss this like adults?”

He opened the door wider and let her through. They went up to his apartment and he waited patiently for her to make some disparaging comment. She did wrinkle her nose, looking around.

“I thought gay men were supposed to be good at decorating.”
Alec actually laughed outright, startled but pleased by it. His decorating skills were abysmal at best, Magnus said as much. The fact that Maryse agreed suggested that they might get along. Actually, barring any previous tempestuous encounters, they would probably get along very well.

“So this is about dinner tonight?” he asked, sitting down on the couch. His mother decided to walk through the apartment, letting her hand drift over his things. She ended up at his bookcase like Magnus had. She pulled out the book of Hafiz, with a pretty smile on her face and held it up to him pointedly. He shrugged with his eyebrows, not commenting.

“This was always your favorite. It always put Izzy and Jace right to sleep, but you wouldn’t sleep until I stopped reading.”

Alec swallowed hard as she put it back on the shelf, “You’re a good reader.” She turned back to him, smile dimmed, but still there. She just looked sadder.

“I didn’t come here just because of dinner, Alec. I know I’ve been...difficult the past few months.” He snorted. Calling every day and leaving angry voicemails was a bit more than difficult, but whatever. She scowled and came to sit down next to him, hands tight on her lap. “I know. I’m...it’s...whatever. I figured that this was long overdue, especially considering the circumstances.”

“Me being gay?”

She lifted a perfect brow at him, unimpressed by his attempt to startle her, “Specifically that, yes.”

He spread his arms and settled back into the couch. “Then go ahead.”

His mother inhaled slowly. “Okay. First thing you need to know is that I had my suspicions about your sexuality since we took in Jace.”

“What?”

She held up her hand placatingly, “We don’t need to hash out details, Alec. But I grew up around boys, remember? I know the difference. I saw the way you looked at Jace and you were never
interested in girls. I didn’t say anything to your father because he was stupid enough to believe it was just because you were so responsible.”

“Why didn’t you say anything to me?” he asked quietly, his stomach clenching. His mother reached out and put a hand to his cheek, thumb stroking over his cheekbone. He leaned helplessly into it.

“Maybe I should have, I don’t know. There’s not exactly a rulebook. I thought you would come to us when it was important. When you were ready.” She pulled her lips into a thin line. “I just wanted you to be happy. I didn’t realize you were hiding because of us.”

“It wasn’t--” He sighed and took her hand in his. “If you really feel that way, then why did you get so mad?”

“I wasn’t mad at you, Alec. Surprised, yes. I figured it had been long enough that maybe you’d changed your mind or...I guess I don’t know what I thought. And then you told us it was because Clary outed you in front of the whole precinct. I was angry and confused and hurting for you because...that absolutely is not how I wanted things to be for you. I blame myself for that, for not being worthy of your trust.”

“Mom--”

“Let me finish, Alexander.” And Alec melted. Magnus was the only one who called him Alexander. His mom used to call him by his full name, but that had changed some time ago. She dropped another hand over their clasped ones. “Shortly before you came out to us, your father informed me that he’d been having an affair.”

Alec reared back. “What?”

She barrelled through. “He said he thought he was in love, but he didn’t want to throw away our marriage, so...”

Alec was standing up, feeling ready to fight. “That son of a bitch!” His attention went back to his mother when she grabbed his hand, holding it while looking up at him. He turned to look down at her, heartbreaking at the sadness on her face. “Mom?” She shrugged, tears welling up.

“It’s okay, honey, all right? Please? Just sit. Please.” Alec exhaled slowly through his nose and sat
down beside her, a little closer than before. He couldn’t figure out where to put his energy, what to
do with his hands. His mom spared him the last one and just held him.

She took a breath. “I didn’t come here to talk to you about your father. I just wanted you to
understand that...my reaction had absolutely nothing to do with you. And everything to do with me.
I just,” she lifted her shoulders helplessly, “I didn’t want to admit that. But after talking with Izzy
and Jace…” She smiled gently. “They tell you’ve been seeing someone?”

Alec let out a small, disbelieving laugh. “Yeah. Yeah. Clary set us up.” He laughed harder when
his mother’s brows shot right up. “I know,” he assured her, “trust me, I know. But I’m glad I went.
He’s…” he trailed off, thinking about the best way to describe Magnus and ended up staring at
their clasped hands. He must have been quiet for too long because his mother dipped her head to
catch his gaze, smiling brilliantly.

“You’re in love,” she said softly, sounding a little awed. Alec scrambled.

“Don’t be ridiculous. It’s still so...we’ve only been seeing each other…” He rolled his shoulder in
discomfort. “Mom, seriously, stop.” She had pulled her hands back and was currently holding them
to her mouth, barely stifling her glee. “Stop it.”

She grabbed his face between her hands and pressed a long kiss to his forehead. “I’m just very
happy for you, mijo.”

“Yo también, mamá.”

“Bueno,” she said patting his face lightly. He leaned into the contact. “I want to meet him, but let
me work on your father first.”

“I really don’t--”

She covered his mouth with her hand, smiling ruefully, “Don’t start saying things you’ll regret.
That’s my job in this family.” He nodded, quieting. “He’s been coming around, but you know how
he is.”

“Okay, I’ll leave it up to you then.”
“And you’ll come to dinner tonight.”

Alec sighed, shaking his head. “And I’ll come to dinner.”
Chapter 17

Magnus couldn’t quite pull away from work quickly enough for their happy hour date, so he asked Alec to meet him at their Brooklyn office. Alec texted Izzy letting her know they’d be late and headed to address he’d sent. It was in the downtown area, definitely the nicer end of Brooklyn, near to the courthouse where Alec and his colleagues usually testified. He filed that knowledge away for later. He hated testifying, so anything he could add to those days to make them less awful would be great.

Quite unexpectedly, Magnus’ office building was a squat brick townhouse with a wide limestone stoop. It looked more like a tiny school than an office, but on the mailbox was a shiny bronze plate reading Bane, Inc. It was so domestic looking that he wasn’t sure if he should knock or not. That choice was taken away from him when a beefy-looking security guard opened the door.

“Detective Lightwood?” he asked gruffly.

“That’s me,” he answered, confused. The guy opened the door wider for him, letting him into a lavish foyer with deep leather couches, artfully arranged books and magazines, and a coffee cart. The furniture looked heavy and old and probably was very expensive. Alec felt like he’d stepped into some kind of secret society clubhouse.

“Mr. Santiago will be with you momentarily,” the guard said evenly.

Alec spun on his heel, lifting a hand to clarify, “I’m--”

“Mr. Santiago will be with you momentarily,” the guard repeated with some meaning Alec didn’t understand. He didn’t have a chance to protest further because the guard disappeared into a side room, shutting the door behind him. Okay. Weird. Alec walked around the room, examining everything. He thought about sitting for a brief moment, but felt a little too anxious. He focused his attention on how the room was set up, how things were placed, and played a memory game with himself. He imagined Magnus decorating the room himself, directing Alec where to put things. It was a trick he did with most crime scenes, only in those cases he would imagine the victim telling him the story of what happened to them, step by step, knowing things they couldn’t possibly know. Occasionally, it gave him insight, gave him ideas he wouldn’t have gotten otherwise. Lydia claimed it was his version of going “Mentalist” on her. It was something Alec picked up in the army, only in reverse. He memorized tactical plans by staging them in his mind that way; only it was Jace directing him. Back then, Jace had been his anchor, one of the few things he held onto during the chaos.
This was altogether more pleasant. He liked the idea of Magnus bickering with people about ambiance and feng shui, bossing around men twice his size to get the furniture in a more aesthetically pleasing spot. He liked thinking about how Magnus chose each piece because there was no doubt in his mind that he had, and why he chose them. Maybe for color or shape, but it certainly wasn’t for size. He doubted Magnus thought about the trivialities of space and numbers, doubted he bothered to measure things before bringing it in. And yet, everything did. It blended wonderfully together, creating a perfect image of class and financial success.

“Detective Lightwood,” a smooth voice called from behind him. This was obviously Raphael Santiago, descending the spiral staircase. The first thing Alec noticed was how fluid his movements were, like a cat. Predatory and sleek. And Raphael certainly looked sleek. He wore a well-tailored, fitted dove grey suit with black and silver accents. His tie was a pale blue, barely a shade lighter than his suit and his shirt was a shade lighter than that. He had a rounded face, short cropped hair which was longer on top and coiffed up with product. He was one of those people who looked like he could kill you and smile about it.

“Raphael?” he asked politely. The man nodded, extending his hand as he approached with a sureness in his step suggesting he did this on a regular basis. Magnus did say he was an integral part of the business and rarely behind the scenes. They shook hands briefly, but Raphael lingered where he stood, putting his hands in his pockets.

“Magnus is finishing up a phone call. Demanding client,” he explained flatly.

“Ah,” Alec answered with a nod. They stood awkwardly for a long moment until Raphael broke the silence.

“You know, Magnus and I were at Harvard together.”

Alec nodded again, “I do know that, yes.”

“So when I say I’ve seen it all…”

“Oh,” Alec chuckled lightly, “I’m sure.”

Raphael laughed disingenuously, looking highly unamused. He shook his hand in his jacket pocket and then reached out another to adjust Alec’s leather one as if it were a friendly gesture. “Yeah, you think you know. Listen, I don’t care if you are a cop. I don’t care if you’re Clary’s friend. I
don’t care how high up the chain your mommy and daddy go. You fuck with Magnus, and I will bury you. I’ve done it a hundred times before with bigger fish than you, and I’ll keep doing it. Do we understand each other?”

Alec hadn’t been sure what to expect from Magnus’ closest friend and business partner, but the shovel talk certainly wasn’t it. He shouldn’t have been surprised, though. Magnus seemed to inspire that feeling in people. Alec was pretty sure he’d say the same, if not something similar. He’d definitely said it to Izzy’s exes, and he’d said it to Clary at some point. That protectiveness, the fierce loyalty, was a quality Alec could respect even if they had nothing else in common. Which, it didn’t look like they did. Alec licked his lips to keep the smile off his face and held out his hand again. Raphael took it.

“Perfectly,” he answered finally.

“Good.”

“Dear fucking god,” Magnus exclaimed from the staircase behind them. Raphael spun on his heel. “Did I just walk in on a pissing contest?”

He could feel Raphael’s scowl. “We are both zipped up, thank you. I was just introducing myself.”

Magnus barked out a faux laugh. “Just introducing yourself, my ass.” He came to the last few steps and held out his hand to Alec. “Alexander get over here before he produces his fangs.”

Alec laughed and went anyway. “He was perfectly nice, Magnus.”

“Colluding already. Could have called that one.” He took up Alec’s hand, leading him up the stairs. “Put your fangs away, Raph, and don’t look him directly in the eyes, Alexander, he’s a hypnotist.”

“You’re ridiculous!” Raphael called out from the foyer.

“With good reason!” Magnus shot back, leaning slightly over the railing. “The comptroller?”

“That was your fault!”
“Uh huh, and the Apple exec?”

“I warned you about that one, so that’s on you, too.”

“Bah!”

Magnus dragged Alec up the stairs and down a lushly carpeted hallway. He didn’t speak or look at Alec until they were behind a closed door, which Alec presumed was his office. Once in the room, Magnus spun quick on his heel and slid into Alec’s arms, reaching up to kiss him. Alec sighed into it, relaxing. It was stupid how quickly this became a calming influence on him. But Magnus just had this way of exciting him while putting him at ease. Their exchange was light but lingering, while they soaked in each other’s presence.

“Been wanting to do that all day,” Magnus confessed breathlessly, fingers playing with the hairs at the nape of Alec’s neck. Alec nearly purred, wishing they were somewhere more comfortable.

“Me too,” he pecked at Magnus’ lips, his thumbs brushing over his rib cage. “You ready to go?”

“Almost. Need to put things away, grab my stuff. Just a sec?” Then Magnus was sliding away from him, shuffling papers and folders on his desk, tossing them into an unkempt pile. His office was comfortable but sterile and lacked a Magnus-like quality Alec had noticed in his loft. It wasn’t lived in.

“You don’t spend much time here, do you?” Alec mused, letting his hand drift over a polished quartz ball which seemed to serve no purpose other than to provide color to the room.

“Not at all,” Magnus answered, punctuating each word with the toss of a folder. He grabbed his phone, wallet, and keys, tossing them into his pockets. “This is Raphael’s space mostly. We do host some meetings here and it’s convenient for the out of town visitors, but I like to live my life in the wild. Not shut up here.”

_Shut up_ was hardly accurate. There were big bay windows letting in plenty of natural light. He also had low lights on, giving the room a warm glow. The furniture was scarce but functional, and it seemed relatively open. Alec figured it was probably a bedroom at one point, with an en-suite, too.
“In the wilds of Brooklyn?” Alec teased. Magnus looked up with a grin on his face.

“That’s how our business got started. Wouldn’t do to go forgetting our roots.”

Alec looked at him, thinking about what his mother had said the day before, and shook his head feeling absolutely helpless to every conflicting feeling in his body.

“You’re a complex man, Magnus Bane.”

He hummed, coming around the desk with a thin smile on his lips. He reached to adjust Alec’s jacket, and he momentarily wondered why people kept doing that. He liked it when Magnus did it, though.

“I would say I’m very simple,” he countered. “I like good food, good liquor, and you.” Alec bent to kiss him sweetly.

“I like you, too.” He patted Magnus’ chest, putting a hand to his shoulder. “You look nice, too. Maybe a little too nice for the dive we’re going to, but I like it.”

He was definitely looking too nice for Izzy’s regular spot. But Magnus was too nice for most places. Alec had a brief thought that people dressed like Magnus got mugged or worse in his neighborhood, but shook it off. They would be fine. It wasn’t the dark ages. He just kept reminding himself that Magnus was who he was and there was no issue with enjoying it.

“So do you,” Magnus said, kissing him in thanks. “But let’s go. I’m sick of this office, I need fresh air and people!”

Then they were off with Magnus talking a mile a minute as if he’d been holding in every thought he’d had all day. Maybe he had. Alec didn’t know what he was like during these business meetings, but with him, he had a hard time containing his thoughts and reactions. It would have been nice to think it was just Alec’s influence, but it was far too soon to be thinking like that. Regardless, Alec was having trouble remembering that they’d only been seeing each other for a couple of weeks. It felt like much, much longer.

Ernesto drove them again, chatting happily in Spanish with Alec. Magnus held his hand the whole time and kept making snarky comments about collusion and Alec running off with Ernesto.
“Can I bring my wife, kids, my wife’s sister, and three nephews?” he guffawed.

“Well, then it wouldn’t be running,” Alec pointed out, “it would be hobbling.”

“You wouldn’t get very far.”

“And Raphael would kill me.”

“Alas,” Magnus said patting Ernesto’s shoulder, “It’s a doomed love, my friend.”
Chapter 18

Izzy’s favorite bar was this dive-y pseudo club called The Red Hook. The owner was a former classmate from boot camp who’d gotten discharged and immediately washed up. Izzy patronized his bar at least once a week in solidarity. Alec may not have liked the place at all, but he couldn’t argue with the logic of her choice. Magnus wasn’t looking overly impressed with it either, so Alec quickly explained the situation.

“Ah, I’m sensing a family trait.”

“What’s that?”

“Loyalty to your strays.”

Alec dismissed that with a click of his tongue, thanked Ernesto, and dragged Magnus into the place. The bouncer knew him well enough to let him through without questions. The fact that the Red Hook needed a bouncer when it was barely 6 PM should have been all the description necessary.

Inside it was a hipster-ish, basement looking scene. The crowd was mostly young professionals getting ready to blow off steam. The Red Hook was somewhere you started the night or finished the night. You didn’t spend time there in between. It was littered with booths and standing tables, tacky strobe lights and thumping music. It was dark and smelled like stale sweat and Alec really hated it. The things he did for his baby sister.

He caught sight of Izzy’s smile from across the room. She and Simon were seated across from each other at a booth near the bar. Prime real estate she’d probably swiped from somebody unawares. Alec took Magnus’ hand and threaded them through the thinning crowd; maybe it wasn’t necessary, but he liked holding Magnus’ hand, so sue him. As soon as they got to the table, Izzy was on her feet, kissing Magnus’ cheek and pushing him into her side of the booth. They immediately launched into an in-depth conversation about the club and its inner workings. Simon and Izzy knew all of the details, so Alec was quickly ignored in favor of that. He was more than happy to watch that happen. Magnus and Izzy getting along seamlessly was a top order priority. And Simon liked whoever Izzy liked, so who really cared about that?

Alec flagged down a waiter to get them drinks, letting Magnus order for him. He got excited and then immediately suspicious of his intentions.
“Are you going to let me pay?”

“Not a chance.”

“Then you can order.”

Magnus clapped his hands together and ordered what sounded like the girliest drink ever. Usually, he would have hated it, except that he found he had little shame when it came to pleasing Magnus. At this point, he thought he’d probably do more to please Magnus than Izzy, which was saying something. Because he put up with a lot for Izzy’s sake. Including Simon. Shockingly, the drink was a dark brown color and didn’t taste like fruit. Apparently, it just had a stupid name.

“Actually that’s not bad.”

“Aww,” Izzy cooed, “you’ve figured out my brother’s weirdo palate.”

“Hey!”

“It is weird,” Magnus muttered, patting his hand consolingly.

“I just don’t like alcohol that much.”


“It’s kind of true,” Magnus conceded reluctantly.

“Traitor.”

Magnus lifted his hands in defeat. “I’m just being honest.”

“Dude has your number, bubby.”
“Stop it.”

“Mine brother dearest.”

“Izzy.”

“Hermano flaco.”

“I will strangle you. No. I’ll strangle Simon. Try getting married then.”

“Gordito,” she hissed. He kicked at her, making her yelp in surprise, but Magnus was laughing at them so it didn’t matter. And obviously, he didn’t know Alec’s childhood nickname was “gordito” because he’d been a chubby baby. Chubby didn’t really describe it. He was fat. For awhile. And his family never let it go. There were naked baby pictures in the bathroom where everyone could see. Magnus would never be allowed to know that. Ever.

Of course, this started Izzy on childhood stories of Alec, which Magnus was immensely interested in hearing. Thankfully, Simon came around when Alec was overseas, so he knew next to nothing. Izzy was the only one with ammunition. And boy did she have a lot. Luckily, she steered away from the worst of it. Mostly she talked about how sulky and rule-abiding he was, even as a little kid.

“In all fairness, Jace couldn’t do anything without making a mess or causing a ruckus,” Izzy conceded.

“He does have that effect on people,” Magnus agreed.

“But seriously, no matter what happened or how ridiculous things got, Alec always went along with it and backed every single thing he said. Do you-” she snorted, “do you remember when he shot mom’s gun at the goose?” Izzy asked around laughs. Alec dropped his head to the booth, shaking his head. Yes, yes, he did.

“Jace shot a goose?”
“A stuffed goose,” Izzy clarified. “He took the safety off mom’s old pistol by mistake and was messing with it. He shot out a window and then shot off the head of our abuelo’s prize goose. He’d made it into a lamp!”

“Oh my god.”

“You have no idea!” Izzy cackled. “It was just headless. And then--” she laughed harder, “Then Alec cleaned the gun threw a ball through the window to cover up the bullet hole, cut off the goose’s head and gave it to the neighbor’s dog!”

Magnus pulled his lips in, obviously amused, “And what was the logic behind that?”

Alec shrugged lightly and clicked his teeth. “I told mom that Izzy let the neighbor’s dog in and that Jace was playing fetch with him. Threw the ball through the window and Rizzo ripped off the goose’s head.”

“Wow.”

“Yeah. That was one of my better plans, actually.”

“Very quick thinking.”

“Well, it was that or sit through another gun safety seminar.”

“Seminar?” Magnus echoed in disbelief. Alec nodded grimly.

“Mom is very serious about gun safety.”

Izzy lifted her glass, “With good reason.”

“There may or may not have been a couple more incidents with Jace and guns.”
“A couple?” Izzy scoffed. “Try six. It was like he saw a gun, so he had to touch it.”

“That is so telling,” Simon muttered to himself. Alec kicked him for it. Alec could talk shit about Jace, but nobody else could because Alec was the one who cleaned up his messes and dealt with all his shit.

“But he never got in trouble because Alec was so good at covering it up or making it look like something less serious happened.”

Alec nodded, twisting his lips thoughtfully. “Max made a great fall guy before he started talking in full sentences.”

“This coming from Mr. Upstanding Citizen, never tell a lie, follows rules to the letter?”

Izzy just shrugged with a wide smile. “Big brother makes few exceptions.”

* 

Magnus was pretty sure before getting to the bar that he couldn’t possibly like Alec anymore than he already did. But then Izzy started telling childhood stories, and Magnus was absolutely smitten. Alec’s problem solving as a little kiddo was so adorable, he was so completely defensive of Jace (who didn’t deserve it, but that was a separate issue). He didn’t look at all ashamed of himself either. It was an interesting thing to learn; when he made an exception for someone, it was an exception through and through. That meant the end justified the means. The contradiction was so apparent given his extremely high standards for himself and others. Magnus was finding that he liked Alec’s contradictions the most.

“Okay so if Jace was always breaking things and Alexander was always cleaning up, what were you doing, dear Isabelle?” he asked, ripping his gaze away from Alec before it got embarrassing.

“Sneaking out,” Alec supplied immediately.

“Nuh uh!” she shot back. “I was a good kid, thank you very much!”
“Right, you were a very good distraction up until you were twelve and used us as the distraction to sneak out and meet your boyfriends.”

“That’s genius,” Magnus said, toasting her.

“You had boyfriends at twelve?” Simon squeaked. It made Alec scowl. How did he not know this by now?

“Simon, do I need to hit you?”

“What? No!”

“Simmer down, killer,” Izzy snipped at Alec. Magnus snorted, earning him a glare. “And yes Simon, you know I have a colorful and varied past.”

“I just didn’t know it started so young.”

Magnus shrugged, “I had my first kiss when I was ten.”

“Oh my god, not you too,” Alec teased.

“See? I knew I liked you,” Izzy said, sliding her arm through his and squeezing. “Magnus understands me.”


“Keep talking, I dare you.”

“I didn’t--!”
“Please, make more comments. I really want to hear your thoughts.”

“Oh dear god.”

“Are they always like this?” Magnus asked, budging up next to Izzy. He was attempting, poorly, to hide the fact that he was incredibly turned on by Alec’s defensiveness. It wasn’t going great, but no one had ever accused him of being a saint.

“Usually worse,” Izzy answered quietly. “Simon tends to put his foot in his mouth.”

“No kidding.”

“He tries, he really does, but...well...Alec, you know?”

Magnus smiled, flicking his gaze back to a salty looking Alec who was unimpressed with Simon’s babbling explanations.

“I’m starting to.”

Eventually, Alec got tired of tormenting Simon and turned the full force of his charm on Magnus. The alcohol must have been starting to hit him. He was smiley and lacing every comment with innuendo when the other two weren’t paying attention. Magnus was just eating it up. It obviously had something to do with Izzy’s presence. Maybe she just had a calming effect on him. Whatever it was, Magnus was loving it. They were rudely interrupted, however, when a behemoth-sized man came over to Izzy’s side, leaned over to her and brushed a hand through her hair.

“Hey baby, looking for a ride?”

She batted his hand away. “Obviously not.”

“Come on, honey, I’ll show you a good time.”
“She said get lost asshole!” Simon growled as he started to get to his feet. Magnus was shocked when Alec, himself unmoved by the situation, grabbed Simon’s shoulder with a blank expression and pulled him back down into his seat.

“Listen, you don’t need to waste your time with these fags--” The animal trailed off as Izzy slid from the booth to stand. She was wearing a tight-fitting dress, three-inch heels, with her curls spread around her shoulders. Magnus saw her smile brightly at him, her hand crawling up his chest to his shoulder. The guy was grinning, but Alec just lifted his brows at Magnus, tipping his head in her direction.

In the next second, she was clenching into his shoulder and kneeling him in the groin, helping bear his weight as he lowered to the ground, whimpering. She backed away innocently as his whining attracted attention from those around him. Somebody called over security and two guys in black came to lift him up and toss him from the bar.

Izzy shrugged with faux innocence. “I guess the little guy just can’t handle his liquor.”

Magnus clapped lightly with a nod. “Impressive.” Izzy dipped into a curtsey before sliding back into the booth. “Where’d you learn?”

“Mom,” both Alec and Izzy said simultaneously. Magnus’ eyes riveted to Alec, interest absolutely piqued at the mention of the Lightwoods’ parents. Alec had very obviously diverted attention away from that facet of his life, and Magnus couldn’t deny he was exceptionally eager to hear about it. Much to his dismay, not much in the way of information was offered. Alec quickly explained she had an army background and had learned Krav Maga in Tel Aviv during an exchange program.

“She sounds interesting,” Magnus offered, trying to stay completely neutral. Simon snorted.

“You have no idea,” he said across the table. He immediately yelped, indicating he’d probably been kicked. By Izzy, of course, because Alec outright punched him in the shoulder. Family was Alec’s number one priority, and he was exceptionally loyal to those who fell under that umbrella, no matter how strained the relationship, apparently.

“The point,” Alec continued, glaring at Simon briefly, “is that Izzy could probably kill you with her eyes closed.”

“Yeesh,” Magnus offered lightly.
“Jace refuses to spar with her because he says she cheats,” Alec said, looking at Magnus, expression unchanging.

“But I don’t.” Alec didn’t look away, he didn’t even blink.

“It’s never been proven either way.”

“Because it never happened,” Izzy argued.

“Allegedly.” At her enraged growl, Alec smirked sunnily. It warmed Magnus like you couldn’t believe, especially when Alec’s legs stretched out to twine with his. This seating arrangement was so unfortunate, but it was a power move on Izzy’s part, Magnus knew. She wanted to make comments and watch Alec’s reaction to them. Obviously. But he really wished they were closer, touching in some way more intimate than legs and feet. Some contact was better than none, and he did have a better view of those blushes. Unfortunately, he also had a perfect view of Alec’s neck, which was distracting. He wanted to lick it.

Simon was just as annoying as Magnus remembered he was. Poor Raphael. Alas, they were in need of another good accountant while making these cuts. There would be a lot of transactions and moving of assets. Raphael was in no position to complain. Simon was babbling about his band, and Alec looked ready to punch himself in the face. Magnus decided to save him.

“Did you call my CFO, Sheldon?” He already knew he had since he’d spent the whole day with Raphael the day before. Alec’s expression was immediately suspicious. He arched a brow at Magnus, who merely shrugged with his mouth.

“It’s Simon,” he answered automatically. “And yeah. He seemed to think you weren’t looking for someone.”

“Oh, we are,” Magnus answered sipping his drink.

“Yeah,” Simon continued slowly. “He wants me to come in on Wednesday for an interview.” Excellent timing, actually because they were closing that account in Berlin.
“Excellent!” Magnus echoed out loud. “We should toast to your new job.”

“New job?” Alec repeated dumbly.

“I haven’t gotten it yet.”

“You have. Raphael likes to insist on formalities.”

“Uh huh, Magnus?” Alec interrupted. “Can I speak to you for a second?” They offered to get Simon and Izzy another round of drinks and got up, Alec leading him by the arm to the bar. He shot a glance over Magnus’ shoulder before settling on his face. “You offered Simon a job?”

“Sort of.” Alec’s what the fuck expression and obvious confusion were enough to prompt an eye roll. “He was complaining about his job. We need another accountant. Raphael’s a picky motherfucker and dragging his feet. Need I continue?”

“Yeah, how about the fact that he’s my brother-in-law and it’s a little weird?”

“Point of clarification: brother-in-law to be and it’s a lot weird, but I’ll admit I’m kind of desperate and it’s not every day I get to screw over a rival by plucking one of the best and brightest.”

“You know his boss?”

“Lorenzo and I go way back. All the way back to him suing us for not paying for a job he didn’t complete.”

“Wow.”

“Yeah, I heard Fineberg and swooped like a vulture. Easy pickings. Can we drink now?”

“You’re terrible and I love it.”
Magnus beamed. “Good.” He lifted up on his toes to kiss him quickly. “Now use your behemoth height to wave down the bartender.” Alec rolled his eyes but lifted a hand to wave her over anyway.

“I am not--” He cut off when the bartender immediately caught sight of him and came over. “That means nothing.”

Magnus hummed, sliding an arm around his waist. “It means I can climb you like a tree,” he said quietly right as the bartender asked for their order. Alec’s brain apparently blanked out, so Magnus told her what they needed in a far too cheerful voice. When she turned back to grab the requisite liquor, Alec tipped his face up and kissed him hurriedly. The energy around them was so frenetic, but for Magnus, everything ground to a halt with Alec this close. There was so much focus and intention in the way he kissed, and Magnus was helpless to it. He couldn’t help but chase after his lips when he pulled away, and whine a little at the loss of contact. He wasn’t out of it enough to miss a beat when paying the bill, but still, looking at Alec’s lust-blown eyes, he really would have preferred somewhere more private. Alas. The night was really about getting to know Izzy better, and Magnus was not foolish enough to miss that opportunity.

They took their drinks back to the table and Magnus immediately delved into a deep discussion with Izzy about her military background and profession. He actually found human biology pretty interesting and had dabbled with chemistry in Melbourne. Now it was mostly poured into herbal remedies and mixing his own lotions, but still. She was a wealth of knowledge and had endless energy for discussing her work. Magnus detected a hint of dissatisfaction with the bureaucracy of the job, but unfortunately, his business had little use for a forensic pathologist. So Magnus deftly set aside work to talk fashion and cackled inwardly when Alec’s and Simon’s eyes glazed over in boredom. He and Izzy had similar tastes, evidently, and shopped in similar places. However, they had varying opinions on couture and Magnus vowed to take her to Fashion Week because it was a crime she’d never been. Alec actually grinned a little at her excitement. He’d intended to take Alec as arm candy, but Izzy would definitely be more fun, not to mention more amenable to spoiling. He was hoping to convince Cat to come along with Madzie, too. He was sorely in need of time with his favorite girl.
Chapter 19

Chapter Notes

Yeah, I'm on a roll. Do me a favor and get adequate rest this week!

The next couple of weeks proceeded in much the same way as the first two. Magnus had never-ending meetings and Alec was constantly up to his ears in a case. They would meet in the middle of the day for lunch or coffee, or they’d meet for a late dinner and end up making out on Magnus’ sofa. Alec only stayed over in the guest room once more after that first time. He always made himself leave, claiming there were good reasons for it. Magnus couldn’t think of any, but he supposed he was the one putting an embargo on sex, so he couldn’t really complain about Alec’s method for dealing with it. Their texts were definitely getting more suggestive and their kisses less polite. They were becoming just this side of raw and a little needy, and Magnus wasn’t exactly immune to it. Still, there was something holding him back from taking that next step. No matter how many times Alec brought it up, jokingly or not, there was some hurdle Magnus couldn’t quite get a leg up on and he wanted to sort it out before jumping into bed. He had the distinct impression that once he had Alexander Lightwood in his bed, that neither of them was going anywhere. No, it was better to sort things out first and then add sex. He’d made too many mistakes in the past, thinking that sex would ease the tension or simplify it. Sex never simplified anything except your hormones.

It was at that month mark that Magnus finally got up the nerve to ask Alec to come with him to Pandemonium. He spent most of his evenings doing business there, so it made sense. He just was hesitant to bring Alec into that part of his life. Pandemonium was the seedy underbelly of Magnus’ personal life. It’s where he picked up all of his dates, it’s where he’d indulged in his not so legal habits. Basically, it was self-indulgent wish-fulfillment with strobe lights and neon blue drinks. And it was absolutely not Alec Lightwood’s scene. Not in the least. He’d avoided bringing up the club by name in their conversations just because he had that straight-laced vibe which Magnus had always found tedious in the past. But Alec was just so...incorruptible. Usually, people who were rigid in their thoughts and habits and practices were denying themselves things they really wanted; sex, food, whatever. Alec clearly had some issues on that front, but he didn’t seem like the type to go down the rabbit hole. Like, he wasn’t going to become a regular clubber just because Magnus took him one time. He wasn’t suddenly going to like complex cocktails or big, fancy parties, or want to constantly experiment like he was chasing a new high. Alec was more likely to go along with it to humor Magnus because he liked it. He was more likely to try something because Magnus enjoyed it, but had no problem disagreeing. As was the case with that Korean place Magnus loved but Alec vocally hated. Kimchi wasn’t for everyone. It was...refreshing.

So basically inviting Alec to Pandemonium was the equivalent of asking him to meet his own child.

Alec was supposed to meet him there with his friends and siblings. Apparently, the whole
entourage was required for such an evening. Magnus didn’t care either way, he just wanted some alone time with Alec. Alone time with a tipsy Alec in a crowded club full of sweaty, drunk people. It was better than it sounded, honestly.

Magnus stood on the catwalk overlooking the dancefloor. It was late, and the place was packed. Magnus was still triaging paperwork and employee complaints. A waitress was sick of being groped by customers and was demanding security up the ante. Magnus told her he’d pay for self-defense classes and she could assault any customer bothering her without penalty. It was better to let her deal with it instead of getting sued because of an overzealous security guard. There was a floor manager who was sick of the day shift. There was a bartender who claimed a waitress was skimming tips. All of these things should have been handled by an operations manager, but Magnus took over for the evening, just for a little while, to get some face time with his people. He liked checking in like this on occasion, making sure they all knew shenanigans wouldn’t be tolerated.

Despite his attention to his employees, Magnus kept his eyes on the main entrance, waiting. Quincy, his head of security, leaned against the railing next to him, making note of points of concern in the club. He thought they needed another guy near the back rooms because they’d caught three people using and had to kick them out. Magnus asked him about security at the front door in that case. But he countered that people didn’t want to hang around in a club line while people were searched. True enough. They went back and forth like this for some time until they called it quits. There was no good answer; clubs were clubs were clubs. And people liked to do drugs in them.

“Word is your new squeeze is 5-0,” Quincy informed him smugly. Quincy always had some commentary on Magnus’ love life, probably because he was privy to a lot of it.

“He is, in fact, a detective, yes.”

“Like that dimepiece you always bring here?”

“Clarissa is also a detective, yes.”

“Look at you gettin’ in bed with the fuzz.”

“Check yourself, Q, I’m still your boss.”
“Whatever you say, man, whatever you say. But introduce me, yeah? I’d like to meet the man sweet-talking Magnus Bane outta his own sandbox.”

Magnus swatted at him, blushing. “Get out of here. Don’t I pay you for something? Go do that.”

Quincy laughed and disappeared down the catwalk, leaving Magnus to his thoughts. Sandbox, indeed. He’d spent most of his life dreaming of having power, of being in charge of his life and owning his own spaces. Pandemonium was absolutely the pinnacle of his achievements, even if it didn’t bring in the most money, even if it wasn’t the classiest place. He’d put his heart and soul into this place, built it up himself without using his father’s money.

Inexplicably, his attention was drawn to the entrance. Maybe it was Jace’s loud whooping or the flash of Clary’s bright red hair, but Magnus couldn’t help but think it was Alec’s presence that did it. He couldn’t see him very well from his vaulted position, but Izzy, in her flashy silver dress, was easy to spot and had planted herself between her brother and fiance, arms threaded through theirs. It made Magnus smile, seeing the way they clustered around Alec, making a circle around him. From where he stood, it was obvious that they were shielding him from contact with too many people. Maybe it was a little too defensive a gesture, but it was definitely necessary. Alec was probably nowhere near comfortable being there. And in that moment, Magnus wanted nothing more than to be one of those people shielding him. He pushed off the railing, dragging his hand along it as he made his way back to the staircase.

Magnus had told Alec before to head straight to the VIP section so they could easily find each other. By the time he snaked through the crowd himself, Clary and Jace were sidling up to security, trying to speak loudly enough and gesturing wildly. Probably getting nowhere because Jace was about as subtle as a flare gun, and Clary was no better. Magnus was making his way over, but wouldn’t quite be able to intercede yet. But then Alec came into view. He wore a tight black t-shirt and his green bomber, his usual black jeans, and boots. Looked good though. Alec stepped between Jace and the bouncer, put a hand to his shoulder, said something in his ear and pointed directly at Magnus.

Magnus’ stomach dropped feeling the full weight of Alec’s gaze on him. Mechanically, Magnus lifted his hand, telling the bouncer to let them through. The other four immediately filed in, but Alec waited lips lifted in a closed-lipped smile that reached his eyes. They came together like magnets, kissing quickly in greeting like they’d been doing it forever. Magnus almost led him into the VIP section, but seeing Jace rubbing his hands together, grimaced, and thought better of it. He lifted his face to Alec and bit his lip.

“We good to abandon ship?”

“God, please.”
“Just Magnus will do, darling,” he snarked, taking up his hands and kissing each in turn. “Private bar. Come with me.”
Chapter 20

The second the stale air in Pandemonium hit his nostrils, Alec was looking up trying to contain himself. It wasn’t working well. The lights were too bright, the music too loud, the smell overwhelming. There was a reason Alec didn’t like places like this. One wrong move could trigger a panic attack. But then Izzy was sliding an arm through his, giving him an anchor.

“You’re here for Magnus,” she said quietly before nudging his shoulder with her nose. Right. Magnus. He was here for Magnus. And Magnus had said something about the VIP section? He’d told Jace that before they left, so hopefully he remembered. Alec’s attention was elsewhere, drawn up to the source of the lights. There was an intricate series of catwalks up there, probably where they had security doing patrols or people up there for special events...or Magnus overlooking his kingdom like a goddamn emperor. He felt himself grinning as Izzy led them, let his eyes follow Magnus as he walked across to the staircase and made his way down. It was easy to keep track of him, as people parted when Magnus approached them. He had that effect on people.

Of course Jace and Clary tried to convince the bouncer at VIP that they were Magnus’ friends and they were waiting for him. Of course this was true, but the bouncer wasn’t buying it. Not from those two, with all of the subtlety of hammer. So Alec stepped in, still tracking Magnus, and pointed him out to the bouncer. Magnus lifted a hand, and Jace let out an undignified whoop when he let them through. Alec didn’t really care about the VIP section or the drinking or any of it. He just waited for Magnus, who had the adorable smile on his face. They slotted together easily, kissing in greeting. The pure casualness of it had Alec’s heart fluttering. So when Magnus suggested they go to this private bar, Alec leapt at the offering. He loved his siblings, he did, but he had no desire to watch them get shitfaced with their significant others.

The private bar was situated behind the VIP section, open only to the waitstaff, and apparently, Magnus. He was the owner, so it made sense. The bartender immediately set about getting Magnus’ usual order, and Magnus responded by ordering for Alec as well. They slid onto stools, and Magnus had him blushing under his laser-focused attention and excessive compliments. Alec was starting to believe that Magnus loved nothing better than embarrassing him. But it was pretty hard to hate it because he followed it up with wandering hands and smiles of his own, to the point that Alec couldn’t resist stealing kisses.

“How was work?” Magnus asked finally after he’d tamped down his laughter. Alec took a sip of his drink, confused by the flavor, but downing it nonetheless.

“Terrible,” he answered truthfully. He didn’t want to expand beyond that because that wasn’t the point of spending time with Magnus out in public. “You?”

“Tedious,” Magnus informed him with a small smile. Apparently, he didn’t want to expand either.
Alec looked at him, still smiling, and shrugged. Honestly, their professional lives were hopeless. Alec was just glad to be able to carve out time with him. Magnus turned and downed his drink.

“Dance with me,” he demanded. He said it like he knew Alec wasn’t going to say no. Which, for one, was very far off from the truth, and for another, it was very, very true. Alec just really didn’t like that he knew it so well. Inwardly, Alec felt like he was going to vomit, but outwardly, he also finished his drink and got up from the stool. He held out his hand to Magnus, who took it, grinning wickedly.

Alec found himself following Magnus’ lead, as usual, allowing himself to be pulled into an overheated throng of people moving like someone had dumped itching powder into their pants. Women were folded over their partners, melted into their sides, and there was a weirdly frenetic energy spurred on by alcohol and dim lighting. Alec nearly let himself fall into it, just for a moment. But then Magnus was sliding back into his space, pressing up against him, grounding him. And suddenly Alec couldn’t focus on anything else. Everything in his head went quiet like they were in a bubble underwater, and all he could see was Magnus.

Magnus who was moving to some beat Alec couldn’t figure out. He followed that too, letting Magnus guide his hips with his hands. It was easy enough, and when Alec got comfortable enough, Magnus snaked his hands up his chest, put them to the curve of Alec’s neck. And shit, there was nothing more important than keeping Magnus’ body close to his. He vaguely registered hands grabbing at him from odd angles, but then Magnus was maneuvering him away, shoving those hands away. Alec curled himself into Magnus, winding his arms around his torso, sliding his hands up his shirt teasingly. He felt the rumble from Magnus’ chest, knew he was half hard just from the press of their bodies. Being close like this, basically encapsulated in Magnus, was probably the best Alec had ever felt in his life. Barring the fact that they were in what he believed was a hellscape, surrounded by people who were drunk off their asses.

That all kind of bled away when Magnus angled his head to lick and bite at Alec’s ear, when he rolled his hips into Alec’s in time with the music. Alec barely heard it, too focused on supporting Magnus, guiding him closer. Magnus used him like a pole, and Alec was about to lose his goddamn mind. He wasn’t even sure how long they were there, had lost sense of time and anything that wasn’t Magnus.

But all too soon, Magnus was leading him off the dancefloor again, dragging him into the VIP section which was a bunch of sofas full of people Alec didn’t recognize. There was one auspiciously empty sofa however and Magnus went straight for it. The second they sat down, bottles of water were brought over as well as refills of the drinks they’d ordered earlier. Magnus didn’t pay attention to the alcohol, just handed Alec a water. Alec let Magnus pull his arm around his shoulders, so they could sit closer together. Alec hooked that arm around Magnus’, neck to bring his head closer so he could press kisses to his temple. Magnus’ hand drifted over his thigh, resting comfortably. They spoke quietly, eliciting small smiles between sips of cocktails, hands skating under hems while they watched people. Alec was really good at predicting who would end up dancing with who, and Magnus always knew when someone hit their alcohol limit. They
occasionally bickered, but eventually it came out as the other said. Magnus continued to argue 
about the couples, even though Alec obviously had superior judgment.

“I don’t know how you think you know human behavior better than a detective,” Alec teased.

“Excuse you, I’m an extremely successful businessman with over a decade of experience in 
interpersonal relations, I am absolutely more qualified than you.”

“Not a freaking chance--look at that girl-”

“The one between the two guys, yeah, I’ve seen her.”

He swatted Magnus’ chest, “Focus. She’s not into either of them.”

“No, she definitely into mesh top, I can see.”

“Nuh uh, she’s making eyes at mohawk.”

“That punk? Hardly. That girl is an 8 at least. He’s barely a 5.”

“Yeah and mohawk 5 has been dancing with her friend the whole time.”

“She has two guys who are way better looking--”

“I’m telling you, just watch--”

“No way, this bitch.”

“There is no accounting for taste.”
“I am saddened. I despair for humanity.”

“That’s a lot of pressure to put on one eighteen year old’s shoulders.”

Magnus sighed heavily, “I suppose. Refill?” Alec was about to agree, but then Magnus was moving away as if to get them himself, so Alec grabbed him around the hips to keep him there.

“No moving, stay here,” Alec whined pathetically. Magnus chuckled and let himself be pulled onto Alec’s lap and got comfortable there. Alec was more than content to keep his arms around Magnus’ waist, hands on his warm skin instead of his slippery shirt. Shit, his abs were nice, he could feel the lines and the divots of his muscle there. Magnus slipped an arm around Alec’s neck, hanging there a little as he reached for the fresh drinks from a waitress’ tray. He handed one to Alec before grabbing the other, and said something to the waitress that Alec didn’t understand. All this passed while Alec was feeling Magnus up, completely unashamed of doing so. Even when Jace and Clary came stumbling back over, laughing.

“You two are officers of the law?” Magnus drawled, settling back into Alec. “Disgraceful.”

Jace pointed at Magnus with his bottle, “Hush you! And quit molesting my brother!”

Magnus squawked indignantly because it was rather obvious who was molesting who, but Alec didn’t react to any of it, far too content with his situation. Alec decided to ignore them and just focus on Magnus.

“Go away, Blondie. You’re ruining the mood.”

“Hey man,” he said spreading his arms, “I make the mood.”

“Ugh,” Magnus groaned curling into Alec, “make him go away.”

Alec chuckled, pressing a kiss to his forehead, “You invited him.”

“Such a mistake.”
Jace immediately protested, insisting that he was the life of the party, that everyone wanted to hang out with him. Clary got bored and collapsed onto the other end of the sofa, reaching pathetically for the highly amused waitress to bring her another drink. Jace was still on a roll, however, talking about himself in the third person now.

“Oh my god!” Magnus said straightening suddenly in Alec’s lap, “You’re like the teacher in the Peanuts. Has no one ever told you that you’re prettier when you’re quiet?”

“Hey!” Jace and Alec intoned. But Magnus turned to console Alec first.

“Oh please, you’re obviously prettier than Blondie. He would just be more attractive if he ever shut his trap.”

“Which he doesn’t.”

“Exactly my point.”

Alec ignored Jace’s complaints in favor of laughing at his expense and making out with Magnus. He vaguely registered Jace making gagging and disgusted noises nearby, but Magnus had his hands in his hair so he really didn’t give a shit.

“You guys are so cute,” Clary mused drunkenly, gaining their attention for a fraction of a second. “I’m so glad I gave you to each other.” Alec rolled his eyes and went back to kissing Magnus. They were jostled slightly when Jace went to sit next to Clary. Jace pushed at Alec and Alec shoved at Jace while trying to keep attached to Magnus, who was laughing. Eventually, he did have to briefly leave Magnus’ lips alone, long enough to push Jace off the sofa, much to Clary’s delight. That was probably the first moment he actually liked Clary. Loving Jace meant hating him a little too, and only people who loved Jace knew how to do that properly. So Alec pushed Clary off too.

“Go find your own sofa,” he said prissily. Then Magnus was jerking his mouth back to his own, kissing him greedily. Magnus pressed up over Alec, taking total control of the kiss, dominating as he pressed Alec back into the cushions.

“Ugh, god, disgusting,” Jace groaned from his seated position on the floor. “They’re too cute. I can’t take it.”

“I can’t, he’s too cute.”

“But we’re cute, too.”

Jace shook his head, lifting his hands in defeat. “Not as cute as they are, Clary. Not as cute as they are.”
Chapter 21

Every Wednesday, Alec and Lydia ate lunch with Clary and Jace to shoot the shit and go over cases. It was about as mature as could be expected. Alec and Jace couldn’t help but be competitive, Clary would say something Alec thought was stupid, and Lydia would have to mediate. Alec liked to think that he was a little bit nicer since Clary had introduced him to Magnus, but in all honesty, he really wasn’t. He all but berated her when she missed yet another obvious lead because she’d overlooked protocol.

“If you’d put even half the effort into the damn process—”

“Hey, ease up,” Jace argued, throwing a piece of crust at him. “Anyone would have missed it.”

“No Alec,” Lydia said in quiet sing-song. Alec tossed a smug thumb in her direction.

“How about you go simmer down and make me some coffee, eh?” Jace shot back like the ass he was. Alec settled deeper into his seat, digging into the noodles that were left over from his dinner with Magnus the night before.

“Yeah, I’m not going to do that for two reasons. One, that coffee is revolting.”

“And two?”

“I’m not your bitch.”

“Ohhhhh!” the girls intoned, throwing popcorn at Jace. He batted it away and swatted at Clary. But Clary leaned in to kiss his cheek. He grabbed her face before she could get away and kissed her lips, prompting boooing from Alec and coos from Lydia.

“Control yourselves, Straights!”

Clary wrenched her mouth away indignantly. “I gave you Magnus!” was her argument. Alec considered it for a moment and threw another piece of popcorn at Jace.
“Control yourself, Jace!” he amended.

One of the uniformed officers, Rosa, came in, regretfully interrupting their lunch, to bring Alec a folder of businesses attached to a case involving a murder. His next move was to start looking into the money laundering happening pretty transparently.

“Thanks, Rosa, I really appreciate it.”

“Sure thing, sir.”

Clary and Lydia got into some weirdly introspective conversation about their time as beat cops and what it meant to be women in that position, but he tuned them out to read. He imagined that it wasn’t so dissimilar from being a closeted cop. Regardless, he was a little more interested in looking at the list of businesses. He didn’t recognize any of the names, but put it on his to-do list.

“Whatcha got?” Jace asked between bites of his sandwich, leaning over to read. “That money laundering thing?”

“Yes,” Alec said, pulling the folder away so he wouldn’t get crumbs on them. “Do you mind?”

“I totally do not mind giving you pointers on money laundering.”

“Get outta here,” Alec said, shoving at his shoulder. “It’s just some of the fronts. No connections yet. I’ll look into it later.”

“What’s going on with that murder in Bed Stuy?”

“Nada,” Clary sighed. “We’ve canvassed a dozen times, talked to everyone he knew, and nothing. No one knows anything. No one saw anything.”

“So no one does anything,” Lydia finished. “Typical. If we can’t get the neighborhood to help us out, how are we supposed to help them?”
“By doing our jobs,” Alec answered firmly. “If we want them to trust us, then we need to do our jobs and do them right. No amount of PR is gonna make us look good, it just sounds like whiny pandering.”

“Just because a couple of guys go off the deep end--” Jace grumbled. He had no love for cops who lost control, but he did take personal offense to people who found him offensive.

“Nobody can go off the deep end. That’s the job. We don’t have the luxury of losing it like that. If you can’t handle it, retire.”

“A lot of good cops--” Clary started to argue.

“No. It’s not a debate, guys. You can do the job or you can’t. No one lets a pilot who can’t land a plane fly one full of passengers. No one should let a cop on the street who can’t handle the pressure.”

“It’s a tall order,” Lydia said quietly.

“It should be.”

“Okay!” Jace said slamming down his soda on the table. “We’re done with shop talk for the next fifteen minutes. Seriously, Lydia talk about your dog or Alec gush about Magnus.”

“I have--”

“Babe if you bring up your art show one more time, I’m gonna blow my brains out. I’m absolutely serious. I will shoot myself right here in front of you.”

She punched his shoulder. “I’m nervous! Be supportive!”

“Yeah Jace,” Alec offered up with faux sincerity, “be supportive.” He trailed off quietly, “Like the good, whipped little boyfriend you are…” Jace kicked at him.
“I’m not whipped, you’re whipped!”

“Hey, I don’t deny it! I don’t sit here and try to say otherwise. You walk around in here like her name isn’t branded on your balls.”

“Graphic,” Lydia chimed, “but astute.”

“Thank you.”

Clary was cackling like mad, snorting, and completely unable to keep eating. Jace was shaking his head at her, incredulous but fond. Alec looked over at Lydia who had one of her secret smiles on too while watching them. But they must have brought too much attention to their own pleasure because Jace whipped his head to glare at them, eyes narrowing.

“So, Alexander,” he said airily. Alec groaned, knowing where this was going. “How’s Magnus? Everything good? Loving the butt sex?”

“Goddamnit, Wayland!” Lydia snarled, too dignified to physically assault him. “Must you?”

“I so must, Branwell. Come on, you never tell us anything. Spill!”

Alec jabbed a finger in his direction. “I never tell you anything because of this exact situation right here.” He sorted through his noodles to get a piece of pork. “Besides, there’s not much to tell.”

“It’s Magnus,” Clary drawled, “I’m sure there’s plenty to tell.” Alec glared at her unimpressed.

“I will kick your ass, Fairchild.”

Jace almost protested until Lydia interrupted. “Just give them something, partner, so we can end this horrible, horrible conversation.”
Alec looked around at them, pretending to mull it over. He wasn’t exactly sure how to phrase it without drawing too much attention to the real situation. He wasn’t embarrassed by it in the least, but it was private. Something between him and Magnus, a decision that they were making together for pretty good reasons. Honestly, their track records were abysmal, so it was a good change of pace. Alec suspected Magnus had other reasons as well, but he wasn’t about to pressure him over something as trivial as sex at this point. And he absolutely wasn’t going to force the reasoning out of him. Magnus would talk when he wanted to talk. It was just that it was getting harder and harder to say no and stop themselves short, and Alec was going to lose his damn mind pretty soon. He only had so much time in a day to take showers, and hygiene was actually a priority most days.

“Oh my god,” Lydia said in a faux whisper, leaning forward. “You haven’t slept together yet, have you?” At that Jace and Clary immediately straightened in their seats, looking at him like he’d grown a second head. Which was absurd because it was not that crazy that two people wouldn’t jump into bed together before the two-month mark. Much like the first night he went to Pandemonium, Alec slept over at Magnus’ occasionally, and they shared a bed. They slept next to each other, huddled together like they lived together and had all the time in the world. Alec honestly believed that. He honestly believed that they had plenty of time.


“What?” Jace exclaimed, slamming a hand to the table. His voice was so high pitched it was almost a squeak. Clary lightly backhanded him on the chest, telling him to simmer down. “But it’s Magnus --”

“Just because you haven’t gone a week without sex since sixteen--”

“I thought gay guys were quick with the trigger or whatever. It’s not like you can get pregnant or anything.”

Clary pinched the bridge of her nose then gestured toward Alec. “I get it now,” she said tiredly. She twisted her hand in a circle, indicating the whole of Alec’s person. “All of this. I get it. I totally get why you are the way that you are.”

“What’s that supposed to mean?” Jace demanded.

“That you’re a jackass,” Alec supplied cheerfully. He lifted his water bottle to cheers Clary with her soda, and they drank together.
“Okay, Jace’s mental deficiency aside,” Lydia said in earnest, “what’s the deal?”

Alec shrugged as nonchalantly as he could manage, not really willing to discuss his insecurities in the precinct breakroom.

“We’re just taking it slow. It’s not like we’re on a schedule.”

“I think that’s sweet,” Clary offered, looking pointedly at Jace, who spread his arms defensively.

“Need I remind you-”

She slapped a hand over his mouth. “Nope. No one needs reminding.” Her blush had Lydia cracking up. Alec actually knew that story because Jace never shut up about the women he slept with, so Clary-stories were like his sex stories on steroids. He got everything in technicolor detail and then some. So yes, he was perfectly aware that Clary had all but thrown herself at him the first week they were partnered up. And because of his stupid, terrible, perfect cop memory, he remembered every damn detail Jace had shared with him. He had to physically shake off his disgust at the thought.

“Oh shut up,” Clary sneered.

“Straight people,” Alec said, shaking his head in disgust.

*

The overall quality of the day went downhill when Alec ran the backgrounds and financials of the businesses on the list Rosa had given him. Three of the ten listed Bane, Inc. as the primary owner.

“They’re not the focus here,” Lydia repeated for the third time.

“Yup.”

“I doubt he even knows what happens during the day to day operations for most of his holdings.”
“Yup.”

“You’re jumping to conclusions already, aren’t you?”

“Yup.”
Chapter 22

Magnus had decided to work out of his home office, absolutely refusing to put on real clothes for the day. He wore tight scuba leggings and his dark blue dressing gown and nothing else. It was the most comfortable he’d been in weeks. He did work with his feet on his desk with Chairman Meow trying to sabotage him at every turn by sitting on papers or walking across his laptop at inopportune moments. There were very few things that could have made that day better. One of those few things was Alec, who was coming over for dinner. So, really, it was an absolutely perfect day, and Magnus should have been immediately suspicious. Because life, especially his life, didn’t work that way. He had never once, in his lifetime, had a perfectly smooth day. Nope. Maybe one. The first night Alec stayed over. That was a good day, and it ended well. Not perfectly, but well. It was stupid, really, how quickly Alec had become an integral component of his good days. Stupid.

So he wasn’t surprised when Alec showed up fifteen minutes earlier than planned. That was fairly typical. Alec was fifteen minutes early, Magnus was fifteen minutes late. It worked out most of the time.

Magnus was surprised, however, when Alec entered his apartment without pausing to kiss him first. He pushed by, turned on his heel, and held up a manila file folder. Magnus reared back, confused. They hadn’t spoken much that day, so there wasn’t anything he’d said that he needed to explain or apologize for. And he certainly couldn’t think of anything that would prompt that reaction. So he focused on the folder: probably work-related, maybe Bane, Inc. related?

“What’s that?” he asked flatly, not sure where to start. He couldn’t stand the silence and tension rolling off Alec. He didn’t like thinking he’d been the one to prompt it. Alec held out the folder to him insistenty, so Magnus complied and took it, flipping it open to reveal a short stack of papers. He walked toward the dining room table, reading. The one on top was an itemized list of what looked like business. Three names were highlighted. Three fairly familiar names. “Ah,” he said, flipping through the pages. Just backgrounds and financials, known associates. “Well,” he shut it and leaned back against the table, “that’s not unexpected.”

Alec looked furious. That was unexpected.

“Are you kidding me? That’s all you have to say right now? I hand you that, and you’re just what...flippant?”

“Alexander--”

“That,” he emphasized his irritation by jabbing his finger in the direction of the folder like it was
Magnus scoffed, “I run a business, not the mob.”

“I know that!” Alec spat out. “But what the hell am I supposed to do right now? I can’t just ignore it, I can’t exclude it.”

“Aren’t there rules against discussing an ongoing police investigation with a potential suspect?” Magnus drawled unhelpfully. There was no point in denying that they didn’t really have a handle on what happened on a daily basis with each and every one of their businesses. They entrusted people with the books and the product, and planned as best they could for the worst outcome. Who their people got mixed up with in the process was outside their purview most of the time. That was part of the problem too, there was absolutely no way to manage so much on such an individual scale. Magnus and Raphael had solved that problem. So, that wasn’t the real issue here. The real issue was that look on Alec’s face. Angry and disappointed. Magnus wasn’t even personally responsible for it, but he felt the weight of it. He felt guilty for it. So naturally, he got sarcastic about it.

“Yeah,” Alec sneered, “you’re not a suspect and your holdings aren’t the focus of our investigations, so there’s no strict rule.”

“Well shit,” Magnus tossed the file behind him and perched himself on the table. “You’ve really thought about this.”

“Damn right, I have,” he said with a firm nod. “Magnus, I’m a cop. That kind of thing could bring the IA down on my head for months if not years, watching everything I do. Watching everything you do.”


“I’m not asking for clean, I’m asking for clarity.”

“Clarity.”

“Transparency,” he added firmly.
“Like you warning me about my businesses showing up in an investigation?”

“Something like that, yeah.”

“Okay.” Magnus crossed his arms. “Okay. Well...then you should know that a while ago, Raphael and I decided to trim down on some of our holdings.”

“By how much?”

“65%”

“Wow.”

“Yes.” He tossed a thumb over his shoulder, “And those three are on the list to be liquidated.”

Alec nodded and started to walk away, turning back only when Magnus called after him.

“I need a drink,” he said, “and we need to talk.”

So drinks in hand and meal spread out, Magnus explained to Alec how Bane Incorporated came into existence. His stepfather had been a huge jackass, but a rich one. He wasn’t actually Magnus’ legal stepfather because he’d never married Magnus’ mother. Still, she’d forced him to set up a trust in her name to be given to Magnus if anything ever happened to her. At the time, he’d probably planned on getting rid of Magnus and liquidating the trust. Whatever. He’d died before that ever happened, and Magnus went into the orphanages. The trust kicked in when Magnus turned 16, and Magnus had been named sole benefactor in his mother’s and stepfather’s wills. Everything came to him.

“I think I was in Bangkok at the time? Maybe Kathmandu, can’t remember.”

He’d met Raphael and Will at Harvard. Raphael was the numbers guy. Will was systems, tech, and marketing. And Magnus had the money.
“And the charisma. Don’t forget the charisma.”

Their big idea was simple: buy up small businesses that were being sold off for cheap.

“Why would they be sold for cheap?” Alec asked with a shake of his head. Magnus lifted his brows.

“This is New York. Why do you think?”

The mob. Magnus and his friends bought small businesses which were being sold off by mobsters to make fast cash and get rid of evidence. They were little places of no consequence; drop bars, corner stores, diners, anything they could get their hands on. In their first three years, they acquired twenty-five businesses.

“We gave each manager a year to prove they could be profitable. If they couldn’t we reappropriated, reorganized, and liquidated what we could.”

“What does that mean exactly?”

“We placed managers with ones we felt were the most successful, shuffled around employees to various openings, and reappropriated supplies to help make our other businesses more successful.”

“What if they didn’t want that?”

“Huh?”

“What if they didn’t accept that offer?”

He frowned, “They were people making it paycheck to paycheck, with other mouths to feed, and needing work. We didn’t force them, but they were very good offers.”

“Still.”
“Okay, hypothetically, if someone turned it down, we would give them other options. If it didn’t work for them, they’d get severance.”

“What happened if they were successful in the new place?”

“They were offered the option of setting up a new place, hiring new staff or borrowing from the pool.”

“And what if things didn’t work out in the new location?”

“Fired.”

“Is that what you’re doing with those three?”

Magnus shook his head, “No. We found some glaring inconsistencies in their books. I’d have to look at my notes, but it’s either because they’re hiding serious deficits or they’re embezzling. They’re on the slash and burn list.”

“Meaning?”

“Everyone’s being let go. Every piece sold off. And once we have the numbers, the managers get reported to the police. You,” he answered, gesturing uselessly. This whole thing was uncomfortable. He felt like he needed to justify himself, prove that he wasn’t like the other scumbags in the city. Differentiating himself from the people Alec dealt with on a regular basis, putting himself above that hard cynicism, was so...It was upsetting. It felt desperate and a little self-aggrandizing. He was trying not to be offended, but it was difficult.

“So our guy knew the books were being looked at, maybe yours maybe not, asked the wrong questions and got himself in a world of hurt.”

Magnus shrugged, “I could run his name through our employee records.”
"It’s better than me having to get a warrant."

Magnus took their drinks and set them aside so they could cuddle together on the sofa. Alec lifted his arms automatically and dropped them around his shoulders, rubbing there as he settled.

“So this is gonna take a little effort,” Alec mused, dropping a kiss to the top of his head. Magnus was just grateful that Alec was past this accusatory stage of this issue.

“I’m all for effort.”

“Listen, I’m sorry I came at you like that.”

“You were upset,” Magnus reasoned, not really wanting to get back into it. Alec blew right past that, which Magnus should have expected but didn’t.

“No. I was wrong. I was upset, but I should have handled it differently. You don’t have to justify every decision you make to me, and you certainly don’t have to prove yourself. Not to me, not to anyone.”

Magnus tilted his head back, feeling tears sting at his eyes. Like what the fuck? Why? There was nothing romantic about the fact that they were essentially on opposing sides. There was nothing romantic about the fact that Alec was going to have to report his companies to his superiors who would open an investigation. The IRS would probably get involved, and now Magnus had to figure out how to use that information. If he was going to use that information, or just proceed as if he’d never heard it. Was there much of a difference between each path? No. Probably not. He’d been ready to cut those businesses loose as it was, now he had better reasons to do it. And here was Alec...just...not giving him the benefit of the doubt but trusting him anyway.

“Thank you,” he whispered. Alec nodded wordlessly, confirming it with a kiss. “Stay tonight?” He nodded again, catching his lips again for something more thorough. Magnus sunk into it, feeling Alec’s pent-up energy. It was a little too much, honestly. Too intense.

“Yeah,” Alec answered finally, “let’s go to bed.”

*
Alec knew he’d come in too hot. Just the idea that Magnus’ name had come up at work, that Lydia could even remotely suspect him of being involved with a murder, was a little too much for him to process. If Magnus was even a fraction less than what he was, he would have kicked Alec out of his apartment immediately. Maybe if he’d had a shitter day or well...if anything had been slightly different, it could have gone much, much worse. Thankfully, Magnus was incredibly patient. Thankfully they could talk it out. And in the process, Alec learned just how incredible their business model really was. Despite his showy lifestyle, Magnus didn’t take more than thirty grand a year from the business’ pot. He had several private investments which helped supplement his income, but he lived on what most of his employees made. Most of his property and assets belonged to the company. The company owned the building he lived in and the other tenants’ rent afforded him to live there. Ernesto was paid through the company, the company owned the car. It was all above board and Magnus had Raphael keep records of everything.

He was more than appreciative that Magnus offered to look through employee records for their victim because it would have been extremely unpleasant to serve a subpoena to his boyfriend, for fuck’s sake. In response, Alec offered up an apology, which was very much necessary no matter what Magnus said. He got confirmation of that when Magnus looked at him, right on the edge of tears. Alec wasn’t really sure what a person had to do to make Magnus Bane cry, but he was pretty positive that he never wanted to find out. So he kissed him, hoping that manic energy would settle and channel elsewhere. Then Magnus was asking him to stay, so Alec was pulling him from the sofa and into the bedroom. They had a routine down by now, as this was a weekly occurrence. Alec had clothes there, Magnus had a beauty routine, washing off his makeup, removing his jewelry, putting on lotion. Alec would change and watch this process from the bed, just like he had the first time he’d been there.

This time, they didn’t talk during the process. Alec felt burnt out like he did after a stakeout, he was right at that point where he was going to scream if he saw another person check their reflection in a storefront window and his eyes felt dry and heavy. But when Magnus finally turned out the lights and came to bed, climbing in and settling against Alec without hesitation, everything mellowed. The howling in his brain calmed, and his focus narrowed to all the places where they touched. Alec liked sleeping with Magnus. The whole no-sex thing was getting problematic, but he definitely liked sharing that space with him. It was warm and peaceful, and Alec always slept better than he did at home. No nightmares. He liked waking up with Magnus too because it was the only time he was ever still. He was a late sleeper, hated waking up early, so Alec had taken advantage of that to watch him. Was it weird? Probably, but he couldn’t help it.

Magnus was also just really snuggly, and like Izzy always said, Alec was touch-starved. He loved that Magnus was always reaching for him, curling into him, trying to get more contact. He was like that in his sleep, too, trapping Alec as if he thought he’d run at first chance. It was oddly endearing, but Alec really liked it. Really, really liked it. Very few people had ever fought to keep Alec
around, so the fact that Magnus kept doing it, well he couldn’t deny that it felt good. Even if he
couldn’t really explain why Magnus would want to.

“Stop thinking,” Magnus grumbled, interrupting his train of thought, grinding it to a halt.

“How--?”

“I can hear you thinking, and it’s probably stupid, so stop.”

“How--?”

“Hush and go to sleep.”

“Yes, sir,” he chuckled, kissing his temple.

“Brat.”
Chapter 23

Chapter Notes

Madzie, Camille, sushi, oh my!

“Magnus! I’ve got an emergency, need you to—Oh! I didn’t know you had company!”

Magnus and Alec were sprawled out on the sofa, Magnus was watching Project Runway with a hand in Alec’s hair while he read something that looked like it was in Spanish. Occasionally he would read something out loud to Magnus just because he was attempting to get him to learn even a little. Magnus turned his head to scowl at Cat who was currently dumping her child into his lap as if that were a normal thing people did unannounced. Alec had bolted upright, startled by her sudden appearance. The dummy was even blushing like they’d been in the middle of something more private.

“Clearly,” Magnus drawled, cradling Madzie and bouncing her on his lap. It earned him a giggle and a hug. “Why is your spawn in my lap again?” Madzie wrinkled her nose and frowned at him.

“Madz, what did I tell you about listening to Uncle Magnus?”

“Don’t.”

“Good.”

Magnus dropped his jaw incredulously when Alec snorted quietly next to him. Seriously? Whose side was he on? Apparently, he felt no remorse because he didn’t even try to hide his amusement.

“Hi, I’m Alec,” he said between laughs, reaching a hand over the back of the couch to shake Cat’s. “I’m assuming you’re Catarina and Madzie?”

“Yeah-”
Magnus tossed his hands up, glaring at Alec. “So you’re really not letting me introduce you anymore?”

“Absolutely not,” was his firm reply. He looked back at Cat. “It’s a long story, but he’s terrible at it.” Magnus tried really hard to keep a straight face while Cat looked between them, really terribly confused about how to read this situation. Ideally, Cat would have met Alec in a dimly lit restaurant after a glass of wine. Not Cat barging into his apartment like a maniac.

“So there’s an emergency at the hospital--” Magnus looked between his goddaughter and her mother, absolutely unimpressed, and then addressed Madzie.

“Evidently your mother has forgotten that she works in the Emergency Room of the hospital.”

“Magnus,” she groused.

“You couldn’t call?”

“We were at the store. I just brought her over. Is it really that big of a deal?”

He nearly screamed his irritation, but Madzie was looking at him with a small, shy grin on her face. She had braids twisted in and pink overalls on, and how was he supposed to be annoyed looking at so much cute?

“Whatcha say, sweet pea? Wanna hang out with me and Alexander today?” The girl nodded slowly but didn’t answer. “What do you wanna do?” She shrugged her little shoulders. He bounced her with his legs. “What gives?”

Cat cleared her throat. “Someone hasn’t been speaking since D-A-D-D-Y didn’t show up for our field trip. Apparently, he had a job he couldn’t refuse.” Both mother and daughter were scowling for different reasons. Madzie made it clearly known that she wasn’t dumb and could spell, so she knew what her mother was talking about, and Cat just hated her ex.

“Ah,” Magnus said, picking up Madzie’s hands, “How is dear Devin?”
“How the hell should I know? Are you good to watch her for today? I should be done around 6.”

“Yep, sure, we’ll be here.”

Magnus saw Cat cut her eyes to the still silent Alec and then right back to him. Oh dear god in heaven…

“Can I speak to you for a moment? Privately?” she punctuated her question by lifting one pointed brow. He looked over at Alec who didn’t seem too upset by any of it. So he kissed Madzie’s forehead quickly and told them to sit tight while he followed Cat into his office.

*

Alec sat with Magnus’ goddaughter on the sofa, facing each other silently. She watched him warily like she was appraising him as a person but also waiting for him to do something odd. He realized quickly that he was probably doing the same thing. Kids had the tendency to do what you did, copy facial expressions and what not. He didn’t try for familiarity, just smiled.

“Cool braids,” he said gently after a short time. It must have been the right thing to say because she smiled wider and whispered a thank you that was so sweet he wanted to die. He could tell she was a little skittish, so he didn’t move closer or try to get friendlier.

“You know what I like?” he mused from his side of the sofa. “Fish. Like big ones at the zoo. Cause gills are weird.”

That earned him a quiet giggle which had him smiling brightly back at her. A couple more comments and she was telling him all about her field trip to the zoo and how she liked the owls and birds, but the alligator was scary.
“...I don’t know him. What kind of mother would I be leaving my kid with him?” Cat kept ranting and Magnus dutifully listened to her concerns. Which were natural but ill-founded. She went on for a couple of minutes before Magnus stopped her.

“Cat. He probably won’t even stay, okay? I doubt he wants to spend his day off babysitting, and I certainly won’t ask him to. Besides, he’s a cop, for god’s sake!”

“Yeah,” Cat shot back, “a cop with a little black girl--”

“Don’t gimme that!” he sneered. “I wouldn’t even dream of letting him anywhere near Madzie if I thought he was like that for even a second.”

“God, whatever. Just text me updates, okay? I have to go.”

“Yeah, yeah,” he shooed her with his hands. “Get outta my house.”

She opened the door roughly and Madzie’s twinkling laughter poured in, hitting Magnus like a lovely, warm wall. He and Cat stood there, watching as Alec was trying to teach her some hand game, both of them cracking up whenever they made a mistake. Madzie was repeating the rhyme with him, giggling and smiling like a lunatic. Magnus couldn’t tell who was happier, her or Alec. It was a bit jarring, seeing such a large man curled down to play with a small kid. Her hands were so little compared to his.

“I think we’ll be just fine,” Magnus said quietly. Cat’s face was tight and pained, watching them helplessly.

“She’s been crying herself to sleep.”

Magnus patted her back, wanting to hug her but knowing it wouldn’t be appreciated in the moment.

“Go to work Cat, I’ll call you later.”
Alec did his best to ignore the actually-loud conversation Magnus and Cat were having behind the closed office door. He wasn’t surprised she wasn’t thrilled about a stranger spending the day with her kid. Alec would have been skeptical of her parenting abilities if she hadn’t been. And actually, Madzie was such a cutie and really very sweet, so he wasn’t foreseeing a problem here. Apparently, she’d seen penguins at the zoo on her school field trip and since her dad hadn’t been able to go to that, she wanted to go see this penguin movie with him.

“But he had to work,” she told him with a sad shrug. Alec told her all about his favorite animals instead of addressing that. There wasn’t much to be said about dads who had to work, and nothing he would say would make her feel better about it. Her dad ditched her, and it didn’t get much worse than that. So he distracted her with his stories about Jace and the zoo, how that was how he got scared of ducks. He taught her “Slide” and “A Sailor Went to Sea.” Izzy had made him play these games with her all the time. Madzie knew some other ones and tried to teach him. He teased her by pretending to be bad at it. She would squeal and laugh at him every single time.

“I don’t get it! You’re just smarter than me!” he protested laughingly when she fell back on the sofa, red with laughter. Alec barely noticed when Cat left and startled when Magnus loomed over the sofa.

“Nope. No, you’re not allowed to be good with kids,” he said flatly with his hands on his hips.

“What?” Alec laughed, catching Madzie’s foot and swinging it a little. She jerked it back and started letting it fall in his direction, he met it with the palm of his hand, like they were high fiving. She giggled and the game continued.

“I can’t take this,” Magnus said, gesturing in a circular motion in their direction, looking disgusted. Probably with himself, as Alec thought he and Madzie were fairly adorable. “Sweet Pea, are you hungry?”

“Yes!” she shouted euphorically as if Magnus had just said the most magical thing ever. Alec gently tossed her foot, so that one leg crossed the other and slowly edged her off the couch to the floor while she giggled the entire time.

“Tell him you want flan,” Alec whispered theatrically.
“I want flan!” she shrieked, jumping to her feet, back onto the sofa, and throwing her arms over the back to make eyes at Magnus. Her godfather spun around, accusing finger already being thrown at Alec, who ducked as if to hide, making Madzie laugh harder.

“You are a terrible influence, young man.”

Alec popped back up, shrugging innocently, “Girl likes flan. Not my fault you suck at it.”

Madzie gasped loudly and swung a finger at him. “Bad word!” she said, eyes wide and horrified. Alec immediately held up his hands in defeat.

“My bad.”

Magnus snottily marched over and plucked his goddaughter from the sofa, perching her on his hip while she hugged his neck, swinging her feet out happily.

“That’s right,” he cooed at her idiotically, “Don’t you listen to that foul-mouthed Alexander.”

“I LIKE him!” she said sassily, imitating her favorite character’s voice (Lilo from Lilo and Stitch, obviously.)

While Alec cracked up on the sofa, Magnus leaned in to whisper, “Me too, Sweet Pea.”

Lunch with Alec and Madzie was highly entertaining and absolutely adorable. Magnus thought it was completely unfair that Madzie so quickly took to Alec. She insisted on helping him make their grilled cheese sandwiches, so Alec brought a chair to the stove and she stood on it watching him like a hawk. Some asinine biological imperative living bone deep in Magnus’ body screamed at him watching Alec handle her so easily and carefully. If he had ovaries, they would have exploded.

“So are you just a baby charmer or what?” Magnus asked as they ate. Madzie sat next to him, kicking her legs out happily as she crammed as much cheese into her mouth as possible. Alec snorted.
“No. I just helped out with my brother a lot.”

“Ahh, yes, young Max,” Magnus said, picking at his own sandwich. “The one I haven’t met.”

Alec shrugged, “He’s busy with school.” As if that were enough explanation for a man with Magnus’ level of anxiety. Oy vey. Alec must have caught on. “Look, he’s been...at odds with my parents because of me, so I’m trying to respect his space. It’s not like I’ve met all of your friends.”

“True.”

So Magnus set the issue aside because there wasn’t much else to say about it. He would meet the rest of Alec’s family when Alec was ready to introduce them. There was no sense in rushing him. The three of them quickly discussed going to the Brooklyn Zoo, but it was raining outside and Madzie claimed it would ruin her and Magnus’ hair, making Alec turn away to cover his laugh. He got pinched for his efforts.

Magnus quickly materialized most of the games and activities he kept specifically for Madzie-visits. She had paints and puzzles and video games, which meant they did all of them. Somehow, Alec ended up with blue paint on his face and Magnus was in the dance off his life with a seven-year-old on the Wii, Alec rooting against him the whole time and laughingly trying to sabotage him. Magnus contended that the dances weren’t even possible, but Madzie kept beating him.

“Shut up!” he whined when Alec shoved his face into a pillow to laugh. “Let’s see you try it!”

“Heck no! That girl’s a ringer!”

Eventually, they were too tired to move and no one wanted to dance anymore. Alec claimed Madzie’s puzzle was “rigged,” and if they got any more paint on the floor, Magnus was going to have to call in professional cleaners. So they decided to watch the penguin movie she’d wanted to see with her father. Magnus did a quick search and just bought it from on demand, figuring he needed more Madzie content anyway. While Magnus pulled pillows and blankets to the area rug in front of the TV, Alec made popcorn and hot chocolate. Madzie was allowed to help make it, but Magnus was not because it was a “secret” recipe.

“Collusion!” Magnus accused. “And with my goddaughter? For shame, Alexander, for shame.”
March of the Penguins was charming, if a little odd, but at least Morgan Freeman was narrating. Magnus actually enjoyed nature documentaries, so he was very quickly drawn in. Almost forty minutes in, however, Alec and Madzie were fast asleep. They were laying on the floor, Madzie between the two of them. And even though he and Alec weren’t pressed up against each other, or touching at all for that matter, it still felt intimate and domestic. Magnus had never once considered having a family; mostly because he’d never allowed himself to consider it. But right in that moment, with Madzie curled up against him and Alec pleasantly still, he could think of little else.

As Cat would return from her shift relatively soon, Magnus settled in to finish the movie and flip through channels while his two favorite people slept.
Chapter 25

Chapter Notes

Another texting chap

You'll never guess who I met.

#

Taylor Swift.

No! The queen of denmark

I always thought she looked so sassy

#

Rag, you ruin everything

Literally

#

How about you stop making me play pointless guessing games then?

Considering you work at the biggest hospital in NY and all?

#

Detective Alec Lightwood.

#
SHIT. What’s he like?

Where did you meet him?

Was he with Mag?

Please tell me you humiliated him

Him being Mag

As no stranger deserves your level of salt

#

First. Rude much?

At Mags’ place. They watched Madz for me today.

#

THEY?!

#

Yup.

Came back and found them all snuggled up asleep on the floor

Madzie loves him

Already asked when he’s watching her again

Apparently his grilled cheese is better than mine

#

First. Disgusting. I hope you got a pic.

Second. Those are fighting words.
Rite?
But w/e she had a good time.
Mag looks so happy
I think I love this guy

What’s he look like?

A GQ cover.

You’re kidding me.

Nope. Mag was right.
Stunning is exactly the word.

The poor bastard.
No kidding

Mag is def in trouble.

#

I shall pray for his soul

#

What good will that do him?

Coming from you, I mean.

#

When you’re right, you’re right.
Chapter 26

It happened on a perfectly average Thursday when Alec was supposed to be meeting Magnus for coffee. It was their usual place, their usual time, not overtly discussed that morning when Alec left Magnus’ apartment, but implied. It was a standing date now. He wasn’t really paying attention to his surroundings because his phone was bugging out and he was trying to fix it. To no avail, of course, because it was five years old and tech didn’t last that long anymore.

So when someone slid into the chair across from him, he assumed it was Magnus and passed over his usual order, mumbling an apology before shoving the thing back in his pocket. He looked up to see a highly amused woman with dark hair and darker eyes. Her hair was perfectly coiffed and she wore a red dress with a square collar and golden honeycomb statement necklace. She wore bright red lipstick, sharply angled eyeshadow, and diamonds in her ears.

“For a detective, Mr. Lightwood, you certainly are unobservant,” she said, her voice a low purr that had to be an affect. But it was his stomach that churned at the sound of his name on her very unfamiliar lips.

“I’m sorry, do I know you?” he asked, confused, pulling Magnus’ coffee back to himself in a weird, defensive gesture. She smiled at him. Most people would have been drawn in by it. She was exceptionally beautiful. Even for a gay man (painfully gay, according to Izzy), Alec was taken aback. But the wrenching in his gut made Alec think it was immediate hatred. Not unusual for him, since he was a cop, but still unsettling. Her laughter burned his ears.

“Of course not, but we will, seeing as we have a...mutual interest ,” she informed him with a smirk.

“A mutual--What?”

He was about to demand who the hell she was when she straightened, perking up, and looked over his shoulder with a wave.

“Maggie!” she said with a feigned cheerfulness that set Alec’s teeth on edge. Alec followed her gaze to see Magnus just inside the door, staring at them like a deer caught in the headlights. But worse. His jaw clenched, in that same way he did whenever Alec tried to organize his clothes better. Whatever Alec had just found himself in the middle of, he wanted nothing to do with it.

Not that he had any time because Magnus was stalking toward the table and grabbing his hand.
“I was just getting to know your latest boy toy, Maggie,” she continued, lounging in her seat. Magnus sneered at her, tugged at Alec’s hand and bodily dragged him from the cafe. Alec barely got a word out before they were on the street with Magnus speeding ahead, pulling Alec with him like a damn tugboat.

“What was that about?” Alec asked a little hysterically, not at all sure what was happening. Magnus barely acknowledged him, still looking ahead, charging forward.

“You didn’t make direct eye contact, did you?”

“I don’t know, maybe? Why?” Was that important? He remembered Magnus making a joke about looking Raphael directly in the eye, but that was a joke, right? Raphael wasn’t really a hypnotist. Magnus didn’t know a bunch of trained hypnotists, did he?

“Because Camille Belcourt is pretty much the shittiest human being on earth and I don’t want her thinking about you in any way, let alone looking at you.”

“ Weird.” Weird for a few reasons. One, Magnus had yet to mention a Camille to him. There was “a woman,” as far as Alec knew, but Magnus had never supplied a name. Also weird because this whole situation was weird. If this woman knew Magnus and they hated each other, then how did she know about Alec? And how did she know he was going to be there? And how--?

“Not really. Not at all.”

Apparently, this Camille followed them outside and was watching them. Alec jerked back at the sound of her voice.

“Come on, Maggie!” she called after them, voice completely even and not at all distressed. “Let’s be mature about this!”

Magnus froze, sheer fury crossing his features. Alec tried to grab for his other hand, hoping to keep him moving, but he jerked it away and whipped around.

“Mature?” he nearly shrieked. “Mature? You wanna talk to me about being mature?”
“Aw,” she pouted in exaggeration, “don’t be like that.”

Magnus held up a finger, “Screw you.” He turned back to Alec, grabbing his arm and pulling him along.

“Lovely meeting you, Detective Lightwood!” she laughed from behind them.

“Don’t look back,” Magnus growled, “keep walking.”

Alec did keep walking, but he walked straight for the corner store where he led Magnus right in. Apparently, Magnus was too frazzled to argue because he walked right in, headed straight for the fridges in the back. He paced in front of them, while Alec leaned up against the snack cake display, arms crossed.

“I just--ergh!” Magnus ground out, running his hand through his hair, essentially ruining whatever look he’d been going for.

“Take your time.”

“I hate that woman.”

“Oh, I can see that.” Magnus paused only briefly in his pacing, tipping his head with a smile resembling a snarl at that comment.

“You’re the only man alive whose first question isn’t why .”

Alec shrugged with a sniff. “Because you always respond so well to that.” Magnus shoved at him on his way back down the aisle. “Look, obviously she’s got you rattled--”

“She knows your name.”

“Yeah, that was weird.”
“She knows where we meet and what time, and I swear to god--!”

“Whoa!” Alec said soothingly, catching him before he could turn back this time. He caught him around the waist, pulled him into a hug. Magnus came in a lot easier than he’d anticipated, clinging to him tight. “Hey, it’s just you and me, yeah?” he said quietly and Magnus nodded jerkily, hands clenching into his jacket. The store owner poked his head around the corner, frowning and looking ready to shout. Alec jerked out his badge and flashed it. The guy blanched and disappeared.

“You wanna talk about it?”

“No,” he grumbled, voice muffled by Alec’s shoulder. Alec pulled him back by the shoulders so he could get a look at his face. Dutifully, he wiped at smudged makeup and smoothed out worry lines with his thumb.

“I don’t like that someone can upset you this much.”

“Tough shit.”

“All right then. No more coffee for you. How about we go get sushi from that place on Market? Sushi always settles you down.”

“That is a strange factoid to know.”

“What kind of boyfriend would I be if I didn’t know strange factoids about your moods?”

Magnus groaned with a pathetic whine. “Oh my god, nooo!”

“What?”

“I can’t believe you just self-labeled as my boyfriend the second after Camille stalks you through the city! I hate my life!” he said hysterically, falling back to Alec’s shoulder and taking in some unsteady breaths. Alec rubbed his back soothingly.
“I honestly don’t know what’s happening anymore.”

“Fuck,” Magnus said evenly, pulling back from their hug to wipe at his eyes and slap his own cheeks as if to wake himself up. “Nothing. Ok? Nothing is happening. Except that, you, my boyfriend, are taking me to get sushi and bubble tea, and we’re not talking about the she-demon with a penchant for ruining my life. Good? Good.” He grabbed Alec’s hand. “Let’s go.”
They get that sushi, and they don’t talk about the weird encounter with the weird woman. In fact, Magnus did everything within his power to avoid talking about it. Alec was perfectly fine with it, actually, because he doesn’t know what to say either. Exes stalking each other was a sensitive subject, especially considering Lydia’s history. Anyway, Alec did his best to distract him with stupid stories about Hodge and Jace butting heads. They were exact opposites in personality and never saw eye to eye. Magnus seemed amused, but there definitely wasn’t an improvement in his mood. Making a decision, he shot off a text (barely) to Lydia telling her that he wouldn’t be in for the rest of the afternoon. He smiled to himself and pretended as if he hadn’t done anything.

“So Magnus,” he started slowly, picking at the remainder of his roll, “I need to ask you something.” Alec felt a little bad when Magnus deflated, but his intentions were good and noble, so he could suck it up. And by the way, anyone who called Magnus “Maggie” needed to be shot. It was infantilizing and stupid. Magnus loosely held his chopsticks, looking a little sulky as he poked his last piece of sushi.

“Go ahead,” he grumbled, probably expecting the worst. Alec smirked watching him, seeing as he was staring down at the table.

“Well...I was going to ask Izzy, but she’s busy. I need new pants for work, but I’m hopeless with that stuff--”

“Huh?” Magnus said, head jerking up in shock.

“Yeah, I really need to just get it done.”

Magnus cleared his throat, visibly shaking off his confusion. “Of course, certainly. When are you--?”

“Today,” Alec interrupted, snatching the bill from the waiter before Magnus could grab it, “right now.”

“What--? What about work?”

“I don’t know how this usually works, but I’m pretty sure that you’re not supposed to talk about
work, especially not mine. You’re supposed to boss me around and snap at poor retail workers to find me clothes.”

Alec signed the check and led Magnus by the hand outside. Apparently, something had flipped in his boyfriend’s brain because the second they were in the cab, he was telling the driver where to go and detailing out a full afternoon of shopping that was making Alec’s head spin. Was he surprised that they started with Saks? No, no he was not. Magnus practically lived there when he wasn’t working or reminding Alec that they were waiting to have sex. Which was still pretty crazy how well that was working, actually. Alec was enjoying himself, and yes, sure, he would enjoy the sex more, but still.

Magnus was so cute pulling clothes for Alec and shoving him into a dressing room. Alec laughed quietly to himself when he heard Magnus summoning the floor people, enlisting their help to gather more clothes. Alec wasn’t sure how, but clothing remained on the sales floor nonetheless. When Alec emerged the first time, wearing casual slacks and a patterned purple button down, he was immediately swarmed by people. Someone was lifting each foot for someone else to slide on different shoes. Someone was threading a belt through the loops on his pants. Another was fastening a tie around his neck. And still one more was putting on cufflinks, a tie bar, and a sports jacket. Alec froze in place, stunned for a second, but cool with letting it happen. He was doing this for Magnus. He was doing this for Magnus.

When the people cleared, the object of his focus appeared, inspecting him. He was thrumming with excitement and Alec couldn’t keep his eyes off him, looking for any signs of that previous discontent. There weren’t any as far as he could tell, but Magnus had spent years constructing an extremely well-crafted mask that Alec was only just beginning to crack.

“Yes. No. Yes. No. Yes,” he said pointing to various items, “Next!” Then the swarm was back on him, re-dressing him from top to bottom. Alec was surprisingly cool with being almost naked around a bunch of people.

It went on like this for a couple of hours, and it wasn’t “terrible” per se, but Alec was happy when it was over. Magnus was ecstatic, for whatever reason, and Alec had a whole new wardrobe. It was pretty awesome, and making Magnus happy was awesome, so it worked out. Next, he took Alec to a men’s shoe store. He got three new pairs of shoes with matching belts and wallets, which Alec thought was unnecessary.

“They have to match, Alexander! By god!”

They also went to a low key jewelry store where Magnus picked him out a watch, a tie bar, and cufflinks which he claimed were better than the ones he’d tried on with his outfits. Right next door, of course, was one of Magnus’ favorite tailors. Magnus dragged him in there before he could
protest, and suddenly, he was being fitted for a suit.

“I have my dress uniform,” he hissed at Magnus over the tailor.

“No. This is for non-work events.”

“I don’t have non-work events.”

Magnus chuckled at him and reached up to kiss him lightly. “You do now.” They spent another twenty minutes deliberating colors and fabrics with Agnolo, the owner. Apparently, Magnus adored the man and they argued in French instead of Italian for whatever reason. Alec had no clue what they were saying, but a very pleasant young woman brought him coffee and pastries.

“I can’t believe you’re dating Magnus,” she whispered to him with a sweet giggle. Alec watched her move around quickly, fascination on his face. “He’s the best, isn’t he? Always so nice. Not like the other guys who come in here.” She set out a napkin and silverware, grouping together cream and sugar next to his coffee absently. “You’re so lucky, he’s such a catch.”

Alec flushed. “Thanks. I--uh, yeah, he is.”

“Agnolo, I can’t believe you would even suggest a Chinese silk-linen blend. Do you know me at all?”

“It’s for boyfriend! He probably have better taste!”

“The Iranian blend is far superior, we agreed.”

“Magnus, it’s expensive. Hard to ship. Hard to store!”

“Okay, okay, what about that Japanese line? In the Charleston green?”

“Yes, yes good batch! And that color! On him? Forget about it!”
Alec just went along with it, overly pleased with himself for being brilliant. Magnus’ mask had completely faded and all superficial thoughts of Camille, who was obviously an ex, had faded. That line in his forehead was gone and he seemed much lighter. Despite the gratuitous spending on Alec’s behalf, which he wasn’t totally comfortable with, Alec was pleased with the results. He wouldn’t have traded that afternoon for anything.

After the fifth store, Alec started losing his mind a little and decided he was going to mess with Magnus a little because what else was there for him to do? Magnus told the people retail staff at a small secondhand boutique called Color Mine to get Alec whatever he wanted, so he worked with that. A petite black woman with hipster-sized glasses named Shelley took him to the back dressing room of the vintage thrift boutique that was making Alec’s skin crawl for sheer awful hipsterness. He clapped her on the shoulder companionably.

“Shelley, I’m going to need a favor.”

“Mr. Bane did say anything.”

“Yes, Shelley, yes he did.”

That’s how Alec ends up trying on the worst themed outfits he’d ever seen in his life. Shelley pounced on the challenge and enlisted another girl on the floor to help her scavenge. Alec nearly lost it when they started putting everything together. They had themes from the 60’s and 80’s. They also had a lumberjack outfit, something vaguely resembling hip-hop, and an outfit that Alec could only describe as BDSM clubber. They saved the best for last, though, and when he picked it up, he was nodding and grinning like a psycho.

“Guys, this is perfect.”

The girls cackled, clapping their hands together with glee.
Chapter 28

Magnus twiddled with his phone while he waited for Alec. After an afternoon of brand names, he figured a small, quiet used clothing store would cleanse his palate a little. Alec’s idea had been pure genius because the combination of Alec and fashion was too irresistible to pass up over the likes of Camille. The sour taste had faded from his mouth and was replaced with Alec in better fitting clothing with more than two colors and neutrals. Alec didn’t even look totally miserable. A little miserable, but not totally. He was really, truly regretting the whole waiting-for-sex decision. He shook his head to get rid of the thought.

The store itself, Color Mine, was one of Magnus’ former businesses. He’d purchased it from the owner early in his career, wanting to help out the place which was pretty much his source only for clothing. They had been able to buy it back within a few years and had stellar profits ever since. Magnus was now a happy patron with fringe benefits. So, really, he should have known that the staff would more than happily mess with him.

His jaw nearly dropped when Alec came out wearing the most atrocious puce-colored plaid pants, which were slim cut bell bottoms with a yellow polyester shirt that had a wide cutaway collar and a denim vest. He didn’t miss the black and white saddle shoes.

“What? No pucca shells?” he spluttered out, completely taken aback. Shelley ran forward and pulled the pendant with dangling pucca shells and feathers out of the shirt. Magnus gestured toward it uselessly. “Oh. Well of course.”

“You don’t like it?” Alec teased, doing a small turn. The sales girls behind him chuckled behind their hands, eyes lit up like it was Christmas and they were two precious puppies tied up with big bows.

“You’re really doing this?”

The glint in Alec’s eye was almost feral. “I’m really doing this.”

Magnus spread his arms in a bring it on gesture. “All right then. Wow me.”

It was probably the best afternoon of Magnus’ life, which was insane. Insane because the day started with him seeing the one person he’d spent thousands of dollars and ten years avoiding, and now he was laughing harder than he had in all those years. After that atrocious 60s outfit (atrocious

...
even for the 60s), the girls dressed Alec up in a dozen other themed outfits. Some were decade-related, others were occupational. How did they even find enough for a lumberjack? But the crowning moment was the last outfit a white tulle skirt, a baby pink tank top, and a blonde wig. He didn’t do the heels, which was a travesty.

“You definitely pull off Carrie better than SJP,” Magnus had attempted to deadpan. Alec did a quick turn and Magnus broke. It was too much. It was amazing. Alec was amazing. How could such a shitty day turn around so completely so quickly? They did end up buying a couple of pieces, as Magnus never walked out of there without buying something for someone somewhere. Alec actually liked one of the leather jackets he tried on and some loafers, so that went in. Magnus made him get the leather pants too.

*

They loaded things into a car which were sent back to Magnus’ place, for some reason. Magnus somehow countered every logical point Alec made with something nonsensical, and in went the bags. It wasn’t Ernesto driving, unfortunately. Magnus gave him a month off for every six months he worked. Which was insane, actually, and Alec was a little in awe of that kind of generosity. Instead of taking the car, they ended up walking back to Magnus’ apartment, arm in arm. Alec stared at Magnus’ dopily as he babbled about the different outfits and clothing he liked. Alec wasn’t really paying attention, but Magnus wasn’t needing responsiveness, so Alec just soaked up his happiness.

They got back to the apartment just after dark with Magnus claiming he was going to die if Alec didn’t feed him soon. Half for dramatics, half for affection, Magnus leaned bodily into Alec while they waited for the elevator. Alec just lifted his arms to accommodate him, wrapping them around his shoulders.

“Thank you for today,” Magnus muttered into his chest. Alec squeezed him and dropped a kiss to his head. “Seriously, Alexander, I don’t even know—” The elevator doors open, the ding interrupting Magnus’ gratitude. Alec wasn’t about to overlook it though. He ushered Magnus into the elevator, pushed the penthouse button, and turned to crowd Magnus against the wall. They slid together, lips meeting in a lovely glide that was now so familiar. Magnus’ kiss was hard and rough, so intent on Alec that he thought he’d burn up from all that focus. They only just pulled away when the doors opened again.

Magnus was the one to lead this time, with Alec plastering himself to his back, not giving him much room to operate. Magnus chuckled as he fished out his keys while Alec kissed his neck and slid hands up his shirt, definitely trying to distract him.

“Not helping.”
“Not trying.”

They stumbled through the door, laughing, and Alec agreed to make dinner. But the object in his pocket was burning a hole there. So without much ceremony, he handed it over with a barely there explanation, not wanting to make a big deal out of it. There really wasn’t much you could offer a guy who could buy anything he wanted and then some. It was stupid, but who cared?

*

By the time they got back to the apartment, Magnus was giddy. Alec wouldn’t stop touching him, and Magnus ate it up. Their kiss in the elevator was more intoxicating than anything Magnus had experienced to date. Like, he’d been happy before, right? He had to have experienced some level of happiness before that point in time, that was the logical assumption. Magnus couldn’t remember any of it.

And then Alec handed him a packet of tissue paper with the Color Mine logo on it.

“It’s nothing special,” Alec said offhand, making his way to the kitchen. “Sayuri’s grandmother makes them and they sell them at the store. I saw them and thought of that story you told me about Tokyo.”

Magnus was frozen in place, holding the packet in his hand reverently, like it was going to jump out and attack him.

“You bought me something?”

Alec looked over his shoulder, brows arched but smiling. “Yeah. Weirdo.”

Frowning, Magnus unwrapped the packet and tossed the tissue paper over his shoulder thoughtlessly. It was a bright red brocade bag, embroidered with gold thread. Magnus recognized the characters, too. It was a prayer of love and protection. There would be a longer inscription on a piece of wood inside the bag.

“Sayuri said it was called an omamori charm. Supposed to bring you good luck.”
“Yeah,” Magnus whispered raspily. It was… “Alexander…”

“Hey, did you get that saffron you liked from that restaurant? I wanna make rice. You want veggies or chicken?”

Magnus had to swallow hard and clear his throat, shake himself out of the moment. “Surprise me.”

He really hoped that Alec didn’t see the tears slip down his cheeks.
The next couple of days flew by quickly, and Magnus knew he was worrying Alec with his odd behavior. It was just...He didn’t know what to feel about Camille anymore. She was old news, ancient history, and Magnus had spent so much time putting her from his mind that her sudden appearance was jarring. Most of his New York friends and acquaintances had never even met her, let alone knew anything about her. Raphael was one of two, including Ragnor, who had met her. Cat knew the sordid details, but that was it. The idea of telling Raphael she was here made him nauseous. He decided to trial the conversation out at his poker game with Cat and Ragnor. Unfortunately, Madzie had a fever, so it was just him and Ragnor. They forewent the cards in favor of drinking ridiculously old whiskey. Magnus let his friend complain about work and his obnoxious relatives for a solid hour before he even attempted to bring it up.

“Camille showed up at our regular coffee place.”

Ragnor froze mid-sip, going so far as to set the glass down and settle back into his chair, looking perplexed, “Your regular place with Alec?” Magnus nodded. “That’s...unexpected.”

“She knows about him. Knows his name, what he does, hell probably everything.”

“But that’s to be expected.”

“She’s essentially stalking him.”

“And you.”

Magnus dismissed that with a toss of his hand. “You want to know Alec’s response to all this?”

“Panic and confusion?” Ragnor predicted. Well, it was true of most of his former partners regarding Camille. She did have the tendency to make an appearance, show up unannounced. He
shook his head.

“He bought me sushi and let me take him shopping.”

“I’ll be damned.”

“You’ll be further damned to know that he conspired with the Color Mine shopgirls to put on a ridiculous fashion show of themed outfits.”

“It’s almost as if he knows you.”

“He dressed in drag. As Carrie Bradshaw.”

“Marry him this instant.”

Magnus slumped. “I don’t know what to do with any of this.

“When sorting out your feelings the first thing to do is decide what it was that attracted you to the object of your affection in the first place.”

Magnus held up three fingers. “How many fingers am I holding up?”

Ragnor frowned but answered, “Three.”

“Excellent. You can see. As can I. That’s what attracted me to Alec in the first place.”

“That good?”

“Better.”
“Can you at least show me a picture?”

“No, you’re too judgey.”

“But Cat hasn’t stopped talking about the two of you together. I’m a visual learner, Magnus, I can’t work like this.”

“Ugh fine.” He pulled out his phone and the home screen was a sneaky picture of Alec cooking without a shirt on in his black boxer briefs. Ragnor scowled and all but shoved the phone away.

“I meant his face, you dick! God. I get it, I get it.” Magnus chuckled and went to the lock screen which was just a blushing picture of Alec who’d looked up suddenly from reading his book. Immediately after the flash, Alec was scowling and pushing the phone out of Magnus’ hand to kiss him into forgetting about his never-ending quest to capture Alec on film. Alec didn’t like having his picture taken, which was a crime in Magnus’ not very humble opinion. Ragnor actually took the phone from him this time.

“Wow, he is handsome. Cat was not embellishing.”

“When has Cat ever embellished anything ever?”

“I thought she was humoring you.”

“She wasn’t. She too has eyes and is extremely jealous of me.” He plucked his phone out of Ragnor’s hands. “Hell, I’m jealous of me right now. I mean, he’s just...I don’t deserve him. I definitely don’t deserve to feel like this. Not after everything--”

“Stop being stupid,” Ragnor drawled irritably. “Of all the people in my colorful and varied acquaintance, you deserve happiness more than most.” Magnus shook his head, self-deprecatingly. “You do. You deserve someone wonderful who makes you happy in every way possible. And you know I detest sentiment.”

“You do,” Magnus agreed, inhaling deeply. “I don’t know why I can’t bring myself to introduce you two. There’s something stopping me...I’m...I don’t know, Ragnor.”
“Listen, my friend, you’ll know when I need to meet him. You’ll know when the right time is.”
Chapter 30

Alec paced up and down the block outside of Magnus’ apartment for a solid twenty minutes before he even went to the door to punch in the security code. Ever since this Camille person showed up, Magnus had been weird. Well, weirder than usual. He tried to downplay it as much as possible, but Magnus had this impossibly deep manic energy which fueled him day and night. He had a hard time sitting still when he wasn’t drunk or sleeping, and even then it was almost as if energy sparked off of him. It only increased with every extra person in the room. Alec was in awe of it mostly because people tended to overwhelm and drain him.

But not for the past few days. Alec had slept over, choosing Magnus’ bed instead of the guest room, obviously. He wasn’t sleeping through the night. Alec would wake up in the middle of the night to find the bed empty. Magnus was inevitably in his office or out on the balcony, trying to pretend like he wasn’t staring into nothing. Alec hadn’t wanted to say anything. He was holding firm on the point that Magnus had a right to keep his past in his past, and that they didn’t need to have these huge confessional moments. There were plenty of things Alec would be nervous about telling Magnus, and none of them involved sex, so…

But then Magnus had called him earlier in the day, “just to chat.” He’d been tense and vague, and it set Alec’s teeth on edge. Which was not so dissimilar to how he’d felt meeting Camille. Magnus tersely explained that he’d be in meetings until 7, but that he should come over for drinks after.

“Of course,” Alec had answered immediately. “Magnus, is everything okay?”

“Yes, of course,” was the even response, which rang so false to Alec’s ears that it made his eye twitch.

“Look, I know you. And I know something’s up with you. You don’t have to tell me, but...Magnus, I’m here if you need me.”

There was a long pause from the other end and Alec held his breath waiting for that response. He held his breath so tightly in his chest that it burned.

“I’ll see you tonight, Alexander.”

That was the last he’d heard from Magnus all day. Which was weird too. Usually, he’d get sporadic texts with random bits of information about what Magnus was doing. He said it was a
“power play” when he was bored during a meeting. He’d text Alec when he wanted to seem disinterested or ready to move on. Before, he’d just played Candy Crush. Alec preferred the texts. Alec’s brain obviously couldn’t stop itself from jumping to the worst possible conclusions. Maybe Camille was his ex and he’d decided to go back to her. Maybe he just realized he was bored of Alec. Not that that thought made any sense seeing as they hadn’t even slept together yet, by Magnus’ own choosing. So even if it didn’t make sense, his anxiety didn’t seem to care. Hence, the pacing.

Alec punched in the security code to get into the lobby, bouncing on the balls of his feet even in the elevator. This was messed up. It was messed up because this crazy woman had shown up out of nowhere and now Magnus was going to dump him before they got anywhere important. Alec wanted to hit something. Or shoot something. Or both. Maybe scream a little. Then the elevator dinged and the doors opened. Magnus left the door unlocked. Again. Yeah, he was going to hit something.

Alec didn’t bother calling out, just went in ready to fight. He completely lost the wind from his sails though when he found Magnus sitting out on the ledge of his balcony, legs dangling over the edge of the stone wall. It was a thick wall with a flat surface, so there was no danger of falling if you had any sort of physical ability at all. Alec stood in the doorway for a long moment, just watching him. He was wearing a deep red tunic and black jeans, his hair artfully arranged as always. He looked really good in the cast of city lights, the sun too low to matter much to anyone who lived there. Magnus always looked really good, but Alec spent those few minutes trying to memorize how he looked, just in case.

“You’re not sneaky, you know,” Magnus drawled, not looking over his shoulder. Alec snorted and crossed his arms over his chest, leaning against the doorframe.

“Who said I was trying?”

Magnus did look back at that, a small smile on his lips. His face was devoid of its usual makeup and he looked incredibly sad, almost like he’d been crying. Alec immediately straightened, ready to fight someone if he needed to, and walked over, doubts or no, to wipe at whatever remained of those tears. Unfortunately, he couldn’t seem to get the words out to ask what the hell was going on. Magnus didn’t mind, though, just pressed kisses to his hands.

“Hey.”

“Hey yourself,” Alec answered quietly.
“We need to talk.”

Alec bristled. “Okay. About what?”

Magnus shrugged in response, expression giving nothing away. “About me, mostly. I think--with Camille showing up and all--”

Alec held up a hand, “I’m gonna stop you right there. You don’t have to tell me anything you don’t want to, especially about her.” Magnus’ expression was practically impossible to read, which was frustrating. Just when Alec was starting to think he could figure Magnus out, something inevitably happened to upend the process. Well, he was nothing if not persistent. Despite the inscrutability, Magnus leaning in to kiss him was unmistakable. Alec leaned into it for a long moment, their lips meshing with a tenderness that tugged at his gut.

“Let’s get drinks,” Magnus said quietly, “and I’ll start at the beginning.”
So Alec helped Magnus down from the ledge and followed him inside where he mixed cocktails. They sat on opposite ends of the couch, and Magnus talked. Now, by this point, Alec was very much accustomed to Magnus’ storytelling. There was a certain level of detail and build up, an ebb and flow which was predictable and yet still entertaining. This story, Magnus’ own history, was nothing at all like that. It was more like reading a case file.

“Mental health was never...prioritized in Indonesia. People did seek out a diagnosis from medical professionals. Everything was more homeopathic with some shamanism for added effect.” Alec nodded, encouraging him to continue. “It was only later that I knew that my mother had schizophrenia. At the time, she was just...scary.” Magnus went on to tell him that in her manic states, his mother believed that he was a demon and had repeatedly tried to have that demon expelled from his body through methods he didn’t remember. He only knew because it was in his case history.

“I found her in the bedroom. Knife between her ribs. She left a note saying that she couldn’t live with herself for creating a monster.”

Apparently, Magnus’ stepfather blamed him for everything, and he was only six years old at the time. His verbal and physical abuse ultimately culminated in an attempt to drown Magnus in a river after he got drunk on his seventh birthday. When it didn’t work and Magnus came home, Magnus used a cigarette to set the man’s bed on fire while he slept. He suffered fifth degree burns, and Magnus was sent to an orphanage when he succumbed to those injuries. No one ever suspected Magnus, as he was only a child. What’s more, Magnus didn’t speak a single word until he was nine years old, so no one ever knew what truly happened.

Magnus shook as he confessed this, tears slipping. He batted them away when Alec set aside his untouched drink and moved forward.

“Sorry, this isn’t...I killed him,” Magnus said, voice thick with tears, “I hated him and I killed him.” Without thinking, Alec took Magnus’ drink from him too and pulled Magnus into his lap.
“Good,” Alec concluded. Magnus let out a sound of distress in lieu of an argument. “No, I’m serious. He would have killed you, so while I hate what it’s done to you, I can’t say I’m sorry for it.”

Magnus let out a sob and sunk into Alec’s arms. All Alec could do was hold him and listen. Because the story kept going. He ran away from the orphanage at 10, stowed away on a streamliner to China. He lived on the streets until monks at a remote shrine in a secluded, rural area took him in. He stayed there and studied with them until he was fifteen, and then was sent to study in New Dehli. The money kicked in on his sixteenth birthday, which he’d spent in Nepal.

Nepal was where he’d met Etta, a pretty American girl who was doing mission work with her family in Kathmandu. They were together for almost six months until Magnus had a breakdown which the doctors suspected was possibly schizophrenia. Etta hadn’t wanted to take that risk, so she left him. Magnus had left Nepal immediately and went to find work in Japan. He landed in Tokyo, where he met Imasu, the son of a Peruvian ambassador. They were together for a few months before Imasu’s mother decided Magnus was a “bad influence” and possessed by the devil. Imasu dumped him and was sent back to Peru. As a result, Magnus spent little to no time in South America. From there, he’d gone to Australia, applied to the University of Melbourne, and was accepted.

“And that is where I met Camille.”

Magnus was fully ensconced in Alec’s lap with Alec’s arms around him by that time. Alec couldn’t help but stiffen at the sound of her name. Magnus was already so tense from all this talk of his history, most of it occurring before he hit 20, that Alec was viscerally reacting to the final stressor who had prompted this whole conversation.

“Again,” Alec repeated, “We don’t have to--”

“Yeah,” Magnus said, voice hoarse, “yeah we do.”

And he laid out the whole sordid affair. Five years of bending over backward for Camille. Five years of constant self-doubt, paranoia over her behavior, expecting the worst at any given moment. She constantly cheated, throwing her affairs in Magnus’ face whenever he didn’t live up to her impossible standards. He did everything he could to make her happy, and it was never enough. He drowned himself in drugs and alcohol, using sex to bandaid everything.

“She broke me. I loved her so much, and she treated me like I was nothing. Just another piece of jewelry for her to take off whenever she felt like it,” he spat bitterly.
“I’m sorry.”

“Don’t be. Once I realized she was never going to change, I applied to Harvard, came here. It changed everything.”

Alec tapped his fingers against Magnus’ arm, trying to stamp down his impulsive questions.

“Go ahead and ask,” Magnus said tiredly. Alec almost protested, but Magnus interrupted. “It’s okay, just ask.”

“Did you want to marry her?”

“It was a thought process once. But she was very vocally against it, ranted about how pathetic monogamous couples were.”

“So when you were with her, did you…?”

“If she asked, yeah.”

“Oh.”

“Yeah.” He sniffed and Alec brought a hand up to cup his head, kissed his forehead. “Not all that proud of it.”

“Doesn’t matter,” Alec immediately supplied.

“It--”

“Doesn’t matter,” he repeated firmly. “I don’t care about that. You’re here now with me. Everything else is details.”
“I had to cross hemispheres and pay thousands of dollars to keep Camille away, and it didn’t work. Now, she’s stalking you and showing up for god knows what reason.”

“I’m sure it’s a coincidence.”

“No. Not a chance. Camille likes nothing better than holding a grudge. She thinks I owe her something, and she won’t go away this time until she gets it.”

“Magnus--” Alec could barely get his name out because he was curling into him, shaking. Crying, too. Magnus was all out crying into his shoulder, and all Alec could do was hold him, press kisses to his head. Some dark little spark in Alec reveled in the fact that his instinct to hate Camille had been absolutely correct. It turned into a raging bonfire when he felt wetness on his shirt. Alec couldn’t take it. It was too much to handle. He tipped Magnus’ face up, pressing kisses to what skin he could reach until they found each other’s mouths. It was needy and messy, and Alec could barely catch his breath. All he could think about was making Magnus feel good, easing that pain. He couldn’t think of a better plan.

“Magnus,” he whispered between desperate kisses, “Do you--cause I really--” His words were lost into Magnus’ mouth. With a growl, Alec wrapped his arms around him tighter and moved to tuck him underneath his body, pinning him to the couch. This part was familiar, this is how far they got: greedy makeout sessions and handjobs which they never allowed to happen in the bedroom.

“Not here,” Alec said quickly, sitting up and pulling Magnus with him. Standing up, Alec jerked Magnus back into his arms, ducking to kiss him thoroughly. Magnus clung to him, holding on as Alec maneuvered them in the direction of the bedroom. They stumbled over, laughing when they nearly wiped out because of Chairman Meow, but Magnus managed to get the door open before Alec could shove him back against it.
“This is not how I imagined this would go,” Magnus informed him between hot and heady kisses. He really hadn’t planned this. He’d expected Alec to be freaked out, to get angry, maybe leave or break up with him. But he’d been so kind and reassuring, quick to defend him despite Magnus’ blatantly horrible decisions. And instead of running, he was clambering to get Magnus naked. Well, in for a penny--Alec bit down on his lip, sucking it in to soothe, ripping a groan from him.

“It’s perfect,” Alec panted back, tossing his shirt, “you’re perfect.” They crashed together again, moaning at the hot skin on skin as they came together. Alec’s chest hair rubbed against Magnus’ over-sensitive skin, scraping just enough to drive Magnus just a little crazy.

“God,” Magnus whimpered, exposing his neck so Alec could lavish it with attention, “I cry and you want to fuck me.”

“Mmmm,” Alec hummed against his throat, sucking at his pulse point, “emotional context.”

“I’m puffy and gross--” Magnus offered weakly.

“Don’t care,” Alec growled out, “need you. Need you so bad, Magnus.” He bit at Magnus’ neck again, making him keen out, arms going up to wrap around Alec’s neck and shoulders, clambering to hold on before his knees gave out. “I’ve needed you for years, you have no idea--” Magnus cut off his rambling by slanting his mouth over Alec’s. Their kiss was frantic, made imperfect by their smiles and giggling as they stumbled toward the bed trying to move each other without breaking contact. Magnus’ legs hit the edge of the bed first, so he spun them, getting the upper hand, and pushed Alec roughly. He hit the bed with the bounce, and Magnus was quick to follow. Alec’s hands were already reaching for his head, jerking him down to kiss him. Alec was pushing himself up from the bed, kissing Magnus in earnest.

“Pants,” Magnus growled out, trying to keep himself steady and braced above Alec. It gave Alec more latitude to torment him. He slid his hands down Magnus’ shoulders and back, fingertips slipping into the waistband of his jeans and clenching.
“Mmm,” Alec hummed, “not yet. Like you like this.”

“Months!” Magnus spluttered indignantly as Alec’s lips moved over his jaw and neck, fixating on his pulse point. “You’ve been--ah, right there--it’s been months, Alexander.” But then Alec’s hands smoothed over Magnus’ ass to his thighs and pulled them to spread over his hips. Magnus ground himself down, pulling a groan from Alec.

“Really good months,” he panted, pushing himself up against Magnus’ downward thrusts. “Perfect months.”

“Shit,” Magnus whimpered. But then Alec was capturing his lips between his own again, devouring him whole. It was too intense to last so long. Out of frustration, Magnus slid a leg under Alec’s, got the proper leverage, and flipped them so Alec was on top. He sighed at the deep pressure, loving Alec’s warm, heavy weight on top of him. Alec’s arms went easily to bracket his head as he kissed him with that lovely focus he showed with everything he cared about. Magnus fit so completely under Alec that it was like he was covered by a blanket, a horny, muscle-bound blanket with perfect lips and abs.

“Fuck me,” he ordered between kisses, writhing to get his legs free just to wrap them around Alec’s hips. He lifted his own hips with a roll that had Alec tossing his head back.

“Thought you wanted--”

“You,” Magnus interrupted, peppering his face with kisses. “Want you. In me. Right now.”

Alec smirked, eyes wicked and gleaming. “Yes, sir.”

Getting their pants off proved challenging because Alec was extremely motivated now and Magnus was doing his best to distract him. They rolled, laughing as they attempted different ends.

“You--ah, stop it! You’re not helping!” Alec accused laughingly.

“Why would I help?”
Alec pulled back, eyes still bright and cheeks flushed. “You better behave or I’m getting my handcuffs.”

Magnus brushed their lips together, feather-light, “That better be a promise.”

After that, Magnus was helpful in divesting them both of their pants and underwear. He was shockingly eager to get more skin on skin contact. Excited and amped up, his greedy hands went to Alec’s hips, bringing them more tightly together, starting a rhythm that had both of them leaking like goddamn teenagers.

“Nope,” Alec said suddenly, pulling his mouth away from Magnus’ neck, trying to unbow their bodies to get so more distance. “Can’t--if we keep--”

“Alexander --”

“Let me, just let me,” Alec said, positioning them so that he had unfettered access to Magnus’ ass. He produced a bottle of lube from seemingly nowhere. Seriously, how far gone was he that he didn’t notice that? And then a couple of slick fingers were sliding inside him, and Magnus dropped his head back with a gasp. He was usually the one doing this; he hadn’t been topped in years. Not properly anyway. And fuck him stupid, was Alec efficient. He twisted and curled his fingers, making sure to brush his prostate every so often. When Magnus whined, he would bend forward to kiss him, causing his fingers to go in deeper.

“Fuck you are perfect,” Alec whispered against his lips. “I’d do this all night if you’d let me.”

“Hell no,” Magnus growled out, biting at his lip. “You better get to it before I take over.”

Alec smirked and pecked his lips sharply. “Bossy.”

“Damn right.”

He whimpered at the loss of contact when Alec pulled his hand away, but then he felt pressure right where he wanted it. Impatient, Magnus pushed against it and Alec was meeting him, pressing inside with a muffled groan. Muffled because Alec had dropped his face into Magnus’ neck, lips greedy on the sensitive skin. Alec moved so slowly that Magnus thought he would die. It was too much, Alec was too much. Sure, he was big, not the biggest Magnus had ever seen, but so damn
perfect. Under his hands, Alec thrummed, excitement rolled off him in waves. Magnus nudged at his head and Alec complied, lifting his face so that Magnus could kiss him, open and dirty. Alec startled him by thrusting in him sharply until he was fully seated.

“Shit!” Magnus panted into Alec’s mouth, clenching tightly and twisting to get him deeper.

“Fuck you,” Alec growled out, “don’t do that!”

“Can’t handle me, copper?”

Alec grimaced and pulled out to thrust slowly back in, punctuating the slide with a twist of his hips. Magnus dropped his head back to the mattress and moved his legs back to his chest, accommodating Alec’s heavy presence on him. In him. Burning him up as he continued pumping in and out with a steady rhythm. The position put some distance between them, but Magnus wanted to see Alec’s face. He saw the way his pupils expanded, so much that he could barely see green. He saw the flush on his cheeks, the bead of sweat on his brow, the line between his eyebrows, put there from exertion. Shit, he was so beautiful, especially right then, chasing his pleasure, fucking into Magnus like he could stay in that moment forever. He wanted to say so much, to talk him through it, but he bit his tongue, trying to stamp down the impulse. Magnus brought his hands to Alec’s face, and when Alec looked at him, focused on him again with that glaze of hot desire in his eyes, Magnus was gone.

Alec shoved his legs out of the way, dropped his body to Magnus’ to blanket him fully, and kissed him messily, his tongue making a thorough exploration of Magnus’ mouth. Magnus gasped at the change in angle, the heavy pressure, at how beautifully suffocating it felt having every inch of their bodies pressed together. Then Alec was fucking into him, fast and shallow, thrusting deep and hard every so often. There was no discernable pattern, Magnus felt his chest explode every time, his breath punched out of his body. He felt so desperate, so on edge, that he nearly cried when he couldn’t reach a hand to get ahold of his dick. It was trapped between them, loving the friction and the heat between their bodies, but still on edge. But then, Alec was rolling his body in sinuous waves, thrusting sharply into him, and grinding. Grinding right against Magnus’ damn prostate, which sent streams of sparks down his legs and made his toes curl. It also put more pressure on Magnus’ dick, rubbed Alec’s happy trail over it. At that point, Magnus was whining Alec’s name.

“Alexander, god, please,” he rasped into Alec’s ear. He drew his hands over Alec’s shoulders, digging his nails in.

“Tell me what you want, baby,” Alec growled back, letting out a guttural grunt when Magnus clenched down on the pullout. “Tell me.” So Magnus let out a stream of the dirtiest thoughts in his head, not bothering to filter any of it. Alec lost his finesse, lost all sense of rhythm, encouraging Magnus to keep talking through it.
“Just like that, right there,” Magnus panted out, breathless, “Shit you feel so good. That’s it, that’s it. Come in me, come in me.”

Alec’s face scrunched up and he thrust once, twice, and grunted as he came inside Magnus, body rocking against Magnus’ as he emptied himself. Magnus shuddered, skin hot and tight, and brought his hands up and down Alec’s back roughly. But Alec wasn’t content to enjoy his own orgasm; he was moving over Magnus again, pulling out, and sliding down to take Magnus’ dick in his mouth. Magnus cried out, surprised and overwhelmed at the sudden change in position and sensation. He accidentally thrust his hips up, shoving himself into Alec’s mouth, but the boy took it like a champ. He actually countered it, relaxing his throat and took him deeper. After that, Magnus didn’t last long. He came harder than he had in a decade, seeing spots and feeling ready to pass out. He didn’t realize his hand was still clenched in Alec’s hair until Alec gently pried his fingers loose.

“Sorry,” Magnus grumbled, letting his hand drop to the side. But Alec just smiled and moved back up Magnus’ body to kiss him. Magnus had always had a policy of no kissing after oral, but unsurprisingly, he completely forgot about it in the face of Alec Lightwood’s endearing sweetness, responding eagerly. Their kisses were light and sweet, and Alec braced his arms around Magnus and rolled so they were lying face to face. Magnus threw a leg over his hip and cuddled closer.

“So that was pretty fucking great,” Alec muttered into Magnus’ hair, pressing kisses there. Magnus nuzzled under his jaw and sighed.

“Oh my god, did I just render the great Magnus Bane speechless?” Alec teased with a giddiness of a little kid with a bottle rocket and some eggs. Magnus intoned a *shut up* with a hum. “Did I just fuck you stupid, Magnus?” he whispered in his ear, biting at the curve and lobe, making Magnus shudder. It was almost painful because he felt so oversensitive. Magnus weakly pressed his lips to Alec’s neck, lingering on his Adam's apple.

“Talk when my brain comes back,” he muttered tiredly.

“That’s adorable.”
“Excuse you, somebody just fucked me within an inch of my life.”

“Mm-hmm, that would be me.”

“She’s mine.”

“Been awhile since,” he paused to yawn, not at all interested in moving or getting cleaned up, “since…” He trailed off, not feeling the need to continue the thought. Alec peppered kisses to his temple. He murmured something about being right back, which Magnus barely paid attention to until Alec was suddenly up and gone, taking all the warmth with him. He whined a little, annoyed. But then Alec was right back in his space, pressing a warm, wet cloth between his legs, gently cleaning him. Magnus dropped his head to the pillow, watching him, feeling like he couldn’t breathe. That feeling dissipated when Alec tossed the cloth somewhere he couldn’t see and slotted himself back into Magnus’ space. The warmth doubled after he pulled the duvet up and over them, wrapping him up in his long arms. Magnus twined his arms and legs around him, sighing contentedly.

“Feel better?” Alec asked quietly.

“Mmm, much.” He stretched his legs through his toes. “Have I mentioned you’re my favorite thing ever?”

“No today.”

“You so are.”

Alec grabbed up his hand, thread their fingers together and trapped them between their chests. Magnus smiled and half smile, charmed by the casual affection after something so intense.

“You’re my favorite thing, too.”

To Magnus’ sexed-out brain, high on their proximity, drowning in Alec’s enthusiasm and affection, it sounded a lot like I love you.
Alec stayed over for the next week. It wasn’t like he didn’t have enough clothing at Magnus’ place. They tore into each other every free moment they got on any available surface. Magnus hadn’t been so sex-crazed since he was a teenager and Alec was just as bad. They couldn’t keep their hands off of each other. Alec actually ruined several of his shirts and they broke a lamp. After months of holding back, the dam broke and the whole valley flooded. Magnus had trouble focusing on anything of importance that wasn’t Alec-centric. Raphael got so sick of him that he banned him from the Brooklyn office and told him to work from somewhere else.

It was a little over a week later that Magnus’ brain started moving back to neutral. After a week of so much sex and deep sleep, he found himself wide awake at three o’clock in the morning. So he’d gotten out of bed, eyes lingering on Alec who was sprawled out, reaching into the empty space Magnus had left, and went into his office.

He didn’t know how long he was in there, reviewing proposals and presentations sent for last looks. He made a valid attempt to clear out his inbox, but there was one email he just couldn’t make himself respond to. It was too ironic, too ridiculous to contemplate. It had shown up the day after he and Alec slept together the first time, and he’d purposely ignored it for so long in favor of focusing on Alec. On how happy he was with Alec.

“Ow! Shit! Why is everything you own so damn pointy?” He spun in his chair to see Alec coming through the door to his office, shirtless and in his boxer briefs. And wasn’t that a pretty sight? Apparently, he’d stubbed his toe on something. Probably that end table near the entrance.

“What are you doing up?” he asked, trying to throw his best mask up. No need to upset him; Magnus had been enough of a mess around Alec for one lifetime.

“Well, you were being weird last night, so when you got up I let you have your space, but now I’m cold and I’ve come for my furnace.”

“I knew you were with me for my body heat.”
“It’s the Guyano blood. Runs cold, needs warmth. I’m also here for the kitchen. What’s keeping you?”

“Email.”

“At four in the morning,” Alec said flatly, completely unimpressed with that statement. He shrugged.

“Couldn’t sleep.”

“Something I’d like to discuss in the daylight. Bad news?”

“Sort of. I have to go to Indonesia soon.”

“What for?”

“My stepfather’s estate. There are loose ends I’ve let sit too long.” The lawyers were insistent. The property was just sitting there, eating up funds, wasting space. There were several companies wanting to buy him out, develop the area. Magnus just had little to no desire to even think about going back to Bekasi, let alone actually do it. Alec crossed his arms and leaned against the door frame.

Well…” he trailed off, obviously not sure what to say. “They’ll have to sit a little longer.”

“Yeah?”

“Yeah. At least until noon, unfortunately.”

“Huh. Didn’t know I was booked.”

“I already told Raphael to not bother coming to look for you. I’m sure he’d rather not be traumatized.”
“Presumptuous of you.”

“Bet?”

“Bet.”

Alec smirked and turned to walk back to the bedroom. “Loser’s responsible for food tomorrow.”

Magnus chuckled and shook his head. He had every intention of keeping Alec in an apron all day.
Alec wasn’t surprised when Jace stood up at Sunday dinner to make the announcement. He’d been planning it for weeks, despite Alec’s insistence that it was too soon. Magnus thought it was an amazing idea, so Alec was in the minority. They’d helped Jace plan it, listening to him give variations of the same speech about a hundred times at Magnus’ apartment. By the end of it, Jace had a better idea of what to say, and Alec and Magnus were plastered. For the first time, Jace fumbled over his words in the face of his family with Clary beaming up at him, holding his hand.

Alec watched Jace look down at her, lost for words, and shrug helplessly. Then he looked back up, right at Alec, like he was surprised to be there.

“We’re engaged,” he informed them. Izzy’s and Simon’s simultaneous squeals were immediate; Simon got out his chair to hug Jace and Izzy threw herself at Clary. Max quickly followed to do the same, and his mom was much more sedate in offering her congratulations. Alec and his father were the only ones not standing. Alec was watching his family happily, soaking up their excitement. He’d already congratulated Jace, and he’d talk to Clary later. In private. His father seemed pleased and reached over to shake Jace’s hand. But when he and Alec made eye contact, Alec’s enjoyment of the moment soured completely. The idea of associating his father with anything marriage-related was...upsetting. He didn’t want to think about it, much less think about it in conjunction with Jace’s happiness.

When they were all seated again, Izzy started hounding them for details. She wanted to know what happened from start to finish. Naturally, Clary went into extreme detail, embarrassing the hell out of Jace. Max ribbed Jace for being such a dork, but Alec had already had his fill of it. Magnus, too, actually. He felt a sharp pang when he realized that Magnus wasn’t getting the news at the same time as him. It felt weird not having him there, but he shot a glance at his father and put the feeling aside. No way was he subjecting Magnus to that.

“So, have you thought about dates yet?” his mother asked them evenly. Of course she was already planning.

“Not until after Simon and Izzy’s!” Clary interjected, wide-eyed, forcing Alec to cover a snort. “Obviously,” she followed up quietly. Izzy patted her hand.
“I think she meant what season you’d prefer,” Izzy explained, shooting her mother an unimpressed glare. Alec saw the small smirk on his mother’s face. Most people didn’t know it was an actual smirk, but it was. There was nothing Maryse Lightwood liked nothing better than making people uncomfortable for no reason.

“Oh,” Clary said, slumping in relief. “I don’t know…” She looked at Jace. “Winter?”

The expression on his mother’s face prompted Alec to pinch the bridge of his nose. It was going to be a long, painful engagement for everyone.

On their way to having drinks in the sitting room, Alec’s father pulled him aside by the elbow and gestured in the direction of his office. Alec shot a look at his mother, who was already watching them, a line between her brows. She shrugged at him and turned back to serving drinks. So, Alec nodded at his father and followed him in. He walked directly to a chair and sat down.

“What did you want to talk about?” Alec asked tersely. He hadn’t been alone with his father since his conversation with his mother. His father walked around to perch his hip on his desk and crossed his arms over his chest.

“Your mother informed me that you know about Marissa.”

“I don’t want to know her name,” Alec snapped flatly.

“Alec, I just wanted to explain--”

“Is it over?” he asked, feeling his gut twist. He didn’t want to know the answer, he really didn’t. But the way his father hung his head said it all. “Then I don’t give a damn what you have to say about it.” He got up from the chair. “Don’t get me wrong, I am absolutely disgusted with you to the point that I can’t even look at you.” His father opened his mouth to snap it shut again. “But I don’t want to fight with you today. Today is not about you, for once. It’s about Jace. And Clary. They deserve our love and support. So you’re going to go in there and congratulate them properly and act like you’re not a miserable failure of a husband.”

He promptly walked out, slamming the door behind him, and stormed back into the sitting room. Simon was speaking to Izzy in a hushed tone, and she looked upset, but Alec ignored that and went to his mother’s side.
“Alec…” she started, voice miserable.

He accepted a drink and kissed her cheek, “Not today, Mama, not today.”

His father came in a few minutes later, looking happy and light, and not at all like he’d just argued with Alec. Unfortunately, Alec couldn’t decide if he was pleased or disgusted with that development. He stayed there with his family for about twenty minutes while the conversation got rolling. Everything appeared normal, but Alec felt sick to his stomach. He sorely wished Magnus was there, wished he could hold his hand and pretend like his father hadn’t broken his mother’s heart. With a heavy sigh, he excused himself, claiming he was going to the bathroom.

Instead, he wandered the house for a bit. His let his hand run over furniture and familiar objects, following the path to his childhood bedroom. It was just a guest room now, devoid of his personal property. His mother had made sure to box up their things for safekeeping, or else display them properly in another part of the house. She wasn’t really the sentimental type. Alec flung himself on the bed, grinning at the familiar squeak of the mattress springs. He laid there, staring at the ceiling for about ten minutes before there was a knock at the door.

“Yeah?”

The door opened to reveal Izzy, who looked concerned. “Can I come in?” He shrugged, so she did. She walked around the room a little, examining the furniture and pictures their mom had put in there. She picked one up, smiling over her shoulder at him. “I hate this picture.”

“That is exactly why it’s framed.”

She chuckled and set it back down, her fingers drifting over it.

“Simon overheard you,” she told him quietly.

“Overheard what?”

She turned, hugging herself tightly and avoiding his gaze. “You and Dad talking in the office.”
“Oh.”

She shrugged. “He didn’t mean to. He was going to ask Dad if he wanted something to drink and you got loud...He…” Her voice trembled when her lip did. Alec sat up, swung his legs to the side of the bed, and held out his arms for her. Immediately, she went to him, sliding under his arm and curling against him. Alec settled his arm around her shoulders, rubbing.

“Is he still seeing her?”

“Apparently.”

“Are they getting divorced?”

“I don’t know, Iz. I don’t know.” Her response was a sniff, suggesting that she was crying or about to cry. She batted at her eyes and pulled herself out of his arms.

“Well forget him, right?” she said hysterically. “Forget him because I’m getting married to a great guy and Jace is gonna marry Clary, and you have Magnus. So…” she pressed her lips together, nodding. “So forget him. Let’s go celebrate.”

Alec smiled, “What?”

She held out her hand to him, “Yeah. Let’s go out. Let’s go celebrate. Let’s get the others, you call Magnus, and let’s go drink.”

“Iz--”

She stamped her foot. “I’m not a baby, Alec! Let’s go!” She turned on her heel and stormed out, calling down to the others to get ready to leave. They were gonna go party.
Magnus was stupidly pleased to get invited out to celebrate with the Lightwood siblings. He’d assumed that they would have wanted to stay at their parents’ place and celebrate there, but apparently not. Alec seemed a little tense on the phone, but assured him everything was fine. They were meeting at Pandemonium, at his own insistence, of course. Ernesto drove him there so he could arrive first and get everything squared away.

The Lightwoods showed up in style, flying past past security and into the VIP section where Magnus was waiting with champagne. While everyone grabbed glasses, Alec grabbed Magnus, kissing him. There was something just this side of desperate in it, a little sad. Magnus pulled back, holding his face and searching his eyes. Definitely some sadness there.

“Everything okay?” he asked quietly. Alec nodded and turned to kiss his palm. Then he took it and led him over to where his siblings had set up. He picked up a glass for both him and Magnus and toasted the happy couple, as if everything were okay. He even hugged Clary, whispering something to her, which had her beaming and hugging him again.

Alec sat on one of the couches, pulling Magnus onto his lap. They all sat there, talking and drinking for a long while. They quickly explained that Max had a morning class and had opted out. Magnus was disappointed to miss out meeting him, but there wasn't much to be done about it. Izzy and Clary eventually lost interest and headed for the dancefloor, a little too tipsy for a Sunday night. Simon offered to go watch them, reluctantly, as it was apparently “his turn.”

That left Alec, Jace, and Magnus on the couches. The brothers were trying very hard to embarrass each other with horrible, horrible stories of their respective youths, much to Magnus’ amusement. Alec was, as usual, handsy, and the longer they were there, the less tense he was. Magnus figured whatever was going on wasn’t worth discussing right then, so he let it go in favor of celebrating with Jace.

Jace, who fixed him with a serious look when Alec excused himself to the restroom. Magnus retook his seat, lifting a brow curiously at the blond, waiting for him to start whatever conversation he was itching to have.

“I know you’ve slept together,” Jace said flatly. Magnus nearly choked on his drink, not sure what to do with that comment. He set the alcohol aside, resituating himself to settle his nerves. Though why he was nervous because of Jace was beyond him; Jace was hardly a threat to his relationship.

“Alec told you, then,” he answered evenly.
“No.”

“Then how would you know that?”

“I don’t know. Alec and I have...a connection, I guess. I can feel it.”

“Ew.”

“Not like that, idiot. I mean, I can feel that he’s happier.”

“Oh.”

“I mean, he walked into the precinct whistling, Magnus. *Whistling.*”

Magnus coughed to hide a laugh, nearly choking on his drink, “You’re kidding.”

“Nope! Collared a killer with the biggest smile on his face. Hodge thought he was stoned.”

“Is there a point buried here somewhere?” Because Magnus could feel himself blushing. Which was absurd. Given his exploits in the past, Jace knowing he and Alec were going at it like rabbits was on the microscopic side of the scale. But the idea that he was impacting Alec’s behavior to the point that everyone was noticing was...whatever it was, his heart clenched.

“Yeah,” Jace said with a nod, “don’t mess with him. Alec seems like he’s got it together because he’s always taking care of people. That’s what he does. He’s good at it. But he’s got issues that aren’t going away just because he’s getting his jollies off with you.”

“Charming.”

“I’m dead serious, Magnus. He’s good at suppressing. Let me tell you, starting at the Academy was the only thing that kept him sane when he came home.”
“You’re worried he’s slipping?”

“No, but I’m worried that he will. This stuff...it bubbles to the surface when you least expect it. He’s fragile. Just...be good to him.”

“I will.”
Chapter 36

Warning: Explicit sex ahead

Jace’s words replayed over and over in Magnus’ head throughout the week, popping up at the strangest of times. He found himself up late, unable to sleep while he was in bed with Alec. He went over that conversation in his head again, thinking about everything Alec had been through just as an adult. He knew there were a good many things Alec hadn’t shared with him yet. One of them was on his chest, and Magnus traced his fingertips over it.

The tattoo on Alec’s chest was a crest with a flame in the middle, vines twining up the sides. Over it read “De Oppresso Liber” in script. Magnus had googled it and discovered that it was the Special Forces motto, which meant “To free the oppressed.” Under it were the words “Duty First,” followed by a date Magnus knew fell within Alec’s time overseas. He hadn’t given Magnus very many details about his time in the Army, and Magnus couldn’t blame him for that. He just hoped eventually that Alec would feel comfortable enough to come to him with those stories. So Magnus stroked over that tattoo reverently and pressed a long kiss to the center of it.

“Mmm, watcha doin’?” Alec asked sleepily, snuffling before rolling to his side to get closer. Magnus was forced to resituate himself, arching into him when he slid an arm around his waist.


“M’not that interesting.”

“You’re beautiful.”

“Stupid,” he grumbled, blushing even as he tucked his face into Magnus’ chest.

“Nuh-uh, I’m the smartest man alive.”

“Stop it,” he said half-heartedly.
“Not a chance,” Magnus mumbled, wriggling out of Alec’s grip to slide down his body, pressing him flat on his back. He peppered his cool skin with kisses, trailing his tongue where he pressed lips. He felt Alec’s hand drift through his hair as he went lower. Alec was probably the only person he’d ever let touch his hair like this. Usually, if he was offering a blowjob, he wasn’t about to let his hair get screwed up over it. Alec had this annoying habit of blowing right past all of Magnus’ so-called rules. As he latched his mouth on Alec’s length, it occurred to him that he really enjoyed doing this for Alec. Oral with someone was always hit or miss. Alec was a direct hit. He was appreciative and responded so beautifully. Getting Alec off this way always drove Magnus a little crazy.

He swirled his tongue over the tip and snaked it down the length of the vein underneath. Then he ducked down to suck a kiss at his perineum, before working his way back up to take him in his mouth. Alec was babbling under his breath, fingernails dragging lightly over Magnus’ scalp, and he moved his hips as if he struggled to keep them in place. It spurred Magnus on and he redoubled his efforts. Alec cried out, torso jerking up as if he was preparing to pull Magnus off and have his way with him. That was their usual pattern. Most times, Magnus was all about Alec following impulses, but this time, he slapped a hand to Alec’s chest, holding him down as he continued to work his dick over with lips and tongue and light grazes of teeth.

“Magnus, god--!” He response was to hum and suck, making Alec slam a fist to the mattress. “Shit! I’m-- Magnus! !” Alec came into Magnus' mouth and he sucked it down, his lips trailing sloppily over the head until Alec softened. With a groan, Alec dragged Magnus up along his body to kiss him filthily, tasting himself. He clamped his hands onto Magnus’ neck, locking their mouths together. “You gonna finish what you started?” Alec asked between greedy kisses.

“Thought I did,” Magnus answered, falling off to Alec’s side. “Roll over,” he ordered. Alec did so immediately, and Magnus slid a pillow under his hips, drawing his hands over the small of his back as he straddled Alec’s thighs. He leaned to reach for the discarded lube at the end of the bed, coated his fingers, and quickly prepped him. When Alec was pushing back against him, essentially whining for him to hurry up, Magnus smirked, quickly coating himself, and laid down to blanket himself over Alec’s back. He lined up and slid in, relishing Alec’s groan and the way he clenched his hands into the sheets.

“Damn, you are so perfect,” Magnus said gruffly, dropping a kiss to the back of his neck. “So good for me.” Alec was always so vocal when Magnus topped, making throaty little noises and gasping, which drove Magnus absolutely insane. He curled his arms under Alec’s shoulders, using that leverage to swivel his hips side to side, pretty moans escaping Alec’s lips. Then he thrust sharply three times, making Alec cry out.
“Take it so good for me, baby,” he ducked his head to kiss and bite at Alec’s ear, rolling his hips forward. Magnus was addicted to this, addicted to the way they moved together, addicted to the high of having so much power over Alec. He loved that he could reduce him to a needy whining mess, that he could give him exactly what he needed.

“Shit, shit, so good papi, oh my god. Harder, Magnus, fuck me harder.”

Magnus dragged his teeth along Alec’s spine as he lifted, bracing himself on his hands.

“Anything for you, darling.”

Magnus pounded into Alec at an even tempo, balls slapping against the curve of his ass, Alec’s body bouncing against the bed. Alec panted with every thrust, his hips jerking back into Magnus’ thrusts, but he couldn’t seem to get enough friction for himself.

“Touch yourself, yeah, that’s it. That’s it.”

“Magnus,” Alec sobbed, voice raised higher than usual. In response, Magnus picked up speed, fucking Alec through his orgasm and chasing after his own. Alec came, grunting through gritted teeth, and clenched down hard on Magnus while pushing his hips back in a powerful thrust, forcing Magnus in deeper than before. Magnus curled his body over Alec’s, rocking into him as he finished with a shout.

“Fuck! Yeah, that’s good,” Magnus he growled out and jerked himself in Alec, loving the tight grip he had on him. Alec babbled something in Spanish, as he was wont to do when he bottomed. Magnus caught only his infrequent pet name, papi, and little else. Magnus could barely see straight let alone try to decode a language he didn’t know. He dipped down, trailing soothing kisses down Alec’s spine, hands stroking his sides.

There were a lot of things Magnus wanted to say, things he wanted to promise. So he said them in Indonesian, letting the words spill out. I’ll keep you. I’ll protect you. I need you, I want you, I won’t let anyone hurt you. Alec rolled to his back and pulled Magnus down to kiss him properly, for which Magnus was eternally grateful. He was about to say something he couldn’t take back.
Chapter 37

Chapter Summary

Izzy/Magnus bonding

It wasn’t *odd* per se for Isabelle Lightwood to text him and ask to meet for drinks. They spoke regularly and she always asked him if he was coming to Monday Happy Hour with Alec. What was odd was that it was a Wednesday. It was also odd that Alec wasn’t coming along and that it wasn’t at their usual place. The Lightwoods were nothing if not creatures of habit, so he felt it was well within his rights to be suspicious.

They met at an upscale place in Manhattan, somewhere Magnus would never take Alec to if given the option. Isabelle fit right in. She wore a tightly fitted sleeveless black dress which showed the edges of a chest tattoo Magnus instantly recognized. Evidently, all the Lightwoods had such a tattoo. They greeted each other warmly, ordered drinks, and chatted happily for thirty minutes or so. Magnus wasn’t foolish enough to rush her; if she had a motive for this clandestine meeting, she’d reveal it in her own time. Much like Alec, she was the type to prefer to have the upper hand. Magnus was far too good of a negotiator to bother putting ego above mutually beneficial results.

“...but seriously, if I talk about the wedding for a second longer, I will lose my mind. I knew it was going to be challenging trying to please my mom and Simon’s, but good lord...”

Magnus patted her hand sympathetically and sipped his drink. “When it’s over, you two will be very happy together. That’s what you need to focus on.”

“How’s he doing with your CFO? He said...he said Raphael was a little scary.”

Magnus snorted. “Raphael likes people to *think* he’s scary. He hasn’t complained or run Simon out of the building, so I’m sure it’s going rather well.”

“He hadn’t said anything?” Izzy asked worriedly.

“That’s not unusual for him,” Magnus answered dismissively. “He’s far more likely to bitch than gush.”
“Right…” She looked down at her drink, absently stirring with the straw and frowning. “I didn’t really ask you here to talk about Simon, you know.”

“Oh, I assumed,” he answered lightly, trying to hide his curiosity. “You picked the one place in the world Alexander wouldn’t come near in a million years on the day he’s working late in a part of the city he couldn’t possibly currently be in.”

“I didn’t realize I was that transparent,” she grumbled, looking grumpy about it. Magnus chuckled. Her and her brother both. There was nothing subtle about the Lightwood family. “But yes, I did want to speak to you about Alec. Sort of.”

“I have to come to Manhattan to talk about Alexander?” he prompted.

She bobbled her head. “Him and my parents.”

“Ah.” That required another drink. He lifted a hand to the bartender and pointed down at his glass. “It’s not that bad.”

“Hence the subterfuge.”

“Their relationship is complicated.”

Magnus eagerly accepted the drink and immediately drank half of it. “Oh, I’m aware. Something to do with how effusive and talkative he is about them.” Isabelle rolled her eyes, clearly having several opinions on that subject.

“Like I said, complicated.” She finished her own drink. “I think you should ask to meet them,” she said quickly, as if forcing the words from her mouth. Magnus looked at her like she’d grown a third eye in the middle of her face. “Hear me out.”

“No offense, but I don’t take relationship advice from my own friends. Why should I take it from
She pulled a face like she would stamp her foot if standing. He was starting to get why Alec found her irritating sometimes.

“Look, I know Alec. I know it’s bothering him that you haven’t met yet. He’s totally resistant to it because he’s probably afraid Mom and Dad will disapprove. He has a really bad habit of going along with whatever they want.” Magnus bristled at the idea that Alec would break up with him over his parents. Not because he thought he would, but because the suggestion was insulting to them both. Isabelle held up placating hands. “That’s not what I meant.”

“Then do explain,” he snapped, extremely annoyed with this conversation. Alec’s parents were a continuous sore point between them. Magnus did his best to keep his questions to himself, but it was increasingly difficult. He didn’t appreciate someone else pointing it out to him. A small, very insecure part of him thought Alec might have been ashamed of dating him, at least where his parents were concerned. He was trying not to think that way, but the longer it continued, the bigger that insecurity came.

“Sometimes Alec needs a push when it comes to certain things...I mean, just think about how he came out. Do you really think that he would ever have admitted he was gay if Clary hadn’t outed him? Because I know him. He wouldn’t have!” she said insistently. “I just think you should try to talk to him about it. Even if you’re just planting the seed. Things are...extremely weird right now, but...Look, you could even do it for me as a favor!” she continued eagerly, gesturing excitedly with her hands. Magnus lifted his brows.

“How so?”

“I really don’t want you to meet my parents for the first time the week of my wedding. I’ll be stressed enough, I don’t want Alec acting crazy too.”

That...that was actually a compelling argument on top of everything else. It’s not like she was wrong either. Alec was outed by Clary. They first slept together after Magnus had a meltdown because of Camille. It did seem like outside forces were dictating a lot of the terms of their relationship without their say so. And Magnus didn’t like that idea at all.
Chapter 38

He waited until the next night. It was early evening, they hadn’t eaten dinner yet. There was a small debate as to what they were going to eat, but it was abandoned in favor of Magnus’ bottomless inbox and Alec’s reading. Magnus responded to roughly ten emails before he couldn’t take it anymore. His nerves were getting to him, and he wanted to just do it, argue, and get it out of the way. Then he might have 25% chance of having a pleasant weekend.

“So I have a question,” he said slowly, setting aside his phone. Alec, predictably, didn’t look up from his book. Isabelle was right, he definitely was a nerd. Before Alec, Magnus spent Thursday nights in clubs, drinking, surrounded by beautiful people. This was very, very different for him. And he liked it a whole lot better.

“Uh-hmm,” was Alec’s only response, barely curious at this point.

“Okay, it’s not really a question, more like a request. Something for you to think about.”

The gloves came off and Alec set his book aside to sit up straight. Magnus wasn’t surprised. They were usually pretty blunt with each other. Alec was a nosy motherfucker and had absolutely no problem asking Magnus a million questions until his curiosity was satisfied. Magnus had little to no impulse control and didn’t favor a verbal filter.

“Now you’re being squirrely.”

“Cause I don’t think you’ll like it too much.”

“All right.”

“I’d like to meet your parents.”

“No.”

Magnus slumped, “Really?” Well, that was quick. He thought there might be at least some back and forth, or that maybe Alec would agree to think about it to placate him for the next few months.
Then again, Alec wasn’t really capable of that kind of deception.

“Yes, Magnus, really. I do feel like that’s my call to make.”

“Of course, yes, but--”

“But what?”

Magnus wanted to tread carefully, he really did. He’d rehearsed this a few times in his head, but it wasn’t exactly going according to plan. Alec had that tendency. He was starting to feel a little defensive about it now.

“But we’ve been together almost six months. You see them once a week and I’ve never met them.”

“I haven’t met Ragnor,” he argued petulantly.

“That is completely different and you know it.”

“I don’t see how.” Well, neither could Magnus, actually. Ragnor was the closest thing Magnus had to family, and he was still feeling a little weird about introducing them. It was slightly different, however, because Cat wasn’t hounding Alec to have a conversation about it. Naturally, his response was sarcasm.

“So that’s what this is, I have to show you all of mine before you show me yours?”

“Don’t be stupid.”

“Seriously? I’m stupid for wanting to meet your parents?”

“Frankly, yes.”
“Wow--”

Alec got up, already escalating. “Why are you pushing this?”

“Alec--”

“You don’t get it. And you don’t get to make me feel bad about it.”

“I’m not trying--” It didn’t matter, Alec was grabbing his jacket and out the door already. Magnus clapped hands over his eyes and fell back against the sofa cushions. With a growl of frustration, he grabbed the closest object, a vase, and flung it against the wall. It shattered loudly, startling Chairman Meow.

*

You wanna tell me why Magnus suddenly wants to meet mom and dad?

#

Alec it’s time

#

Stay out of my relationship

Alec didn’t have anywhere that he wanted to go. He’d spent almost no time in his apartment in the past few weeks. He didn’t want to go to the precinct. He definitely didn’t want to talk to anyone. So he paced. He walked a square mile around Magnus’ neighborhood at a furious pace, his brain racing out of his control. He didn’t like not being in control. Magnus didn’t get it. Magnus didn’t know what his parents were like. Magnus didn’t know what his father was like. Sure, his history was far worse than Alec’s, but Alec couldn’t handle it. And it was stupid, he knew, which is exactly why Izzy stuck her nose where it didn’t belong. She thought she was being helpful, sure, but she’d always been that way and he never appreciated it. As kids, they’d fought about it all the time. Alec had always been quick to forgive because that’s just how he was and none of it had ever been important. But this was Magnus and she had no damn right.
Alec was gone for three hours, and Magnus was losing it a little. He did his best to keep himself occupied, mostly by cleaning things that were already clean. The bathroom first, and then the kitchen. He was scrubbing behind the faucet when the door opened. Immediately, he threw down the gloves and walked around the corner. Alec was coming through the foyer, and quickly changed direction once he caught sight of Magnus, heading right for him.

“Are you--?” Magnus didn’t get to finish his question because he collided with Alec, who wrapped him in a tight hug, curling around him. Alec clutched him tight, swaying from impact. Magnus melted into it, his mind flashing back to his conversation with Jace. *He’s fragile*. A detail he’d overlooked during his conversation with Isabelle. It was easy to forget. His parents and his time overseas were seemingly separate issues, but maybe they weren’t as separate as he thought.

“I’m sorry,” Alec muttered into his shoulder.

“Don’t be.”

“Shut up and let me apologize.”

Magnus laughed and kissed his neck. “Go ahead.”

He pulled back, hands on Magnus’ shoulders, clutching at his shirt. “Look, my relationship with my parents is...complicated on a good day.” Magnus nodded, electing not to speak and ruin his chances. “My mom is...she expects a lot, and she doesn’t approve of anyone, let alone her own children most of the time. You should’ve seen her with Clary.”

“I heard plenty,” Magnus mumbled. He certainly had. Clary had bit her nails down to stubs the week before she went to her first family dinner and cried to Magnus about it for an hour the day after. And Clary was a cop. He didn’t even want to consider what happened to poor Simon on a regular basis.

“And my dad…” he said with a shake of his head. He dropped his hands from Magnus’ shoulders, running a hand over his head to tug at his hair. “We are not on great terms right now, and if he said something to you…”
“Alexander, there’s very little anyone could say to shock me anymore.”

“That’s not my point,” Alec said with a rueful smile. “A part of me is always going to want their approval. And trust me when I say, my dad will not approve.” He wiped at his nose. “I shouldn’t give a shit, but I do. It’s an ugly side to me I’m not proud of.”

Magnus grinned a little at that. “Well it’s about damn time I found something unattractive about you, it was getting ridiculous.” That earned him a small laugh and a faint blush. He held up a hand to Alec’s cheek, brushing his thumb over his cheekbone, like that blush belonged to him. Alec turned his head and kissed the center of his palm, lips brushing over the skin several times before he nuzzled there. Magnus’ heart shattered in that split second.

“Family isn’t really my forte,” Magnus whispered, “but they are yours and you are mine, so I’ll do whatever you ask me to.”

Alec shuddered. “I couldn’t stand it if you hated each other. I just couldn’t.”

Magnus smiled sympathetically. “Oh Alexander, I’m fairly certain that I could find something to like about anyone who loves you.”

Alec nodded quickly and bent to kiss him. “Come to dinner with me on Sunday?”

“Of course. Anything you want.”
Alec was sprawled out on the Magnus’ bed, trapped there by Chairman Meow. He’d been dressed for his parents’ dinner for roughly two hours. Magnus was on outfit number 10.

“You’re overthinking this,” Alec called out, dropping an arm to his face.

“No’m not. Be quiet or help.”

“I thought I was pretty helpful for the first three.”

Magnus poked his head out of the closet. “No. You were not.” And he disappeared again. Alec looked at Chairman, who looked even more bored than he did.

“Your father is nuts.”

“Not helpful!”

“Jace showed up in gym shorts one week. The standards are not that high.” Magnus stalked out of the closet to stand in front of a mirror. Outfit 11 was much more sedate than the previous ten; he wore slim fit slacks which were black with silver detailing, a black button up, and black brocade sports jacket with silver and navy thread. He wore his necklaces but not nearly as much makeup, just some eyeliner. Alec knew sometimes he downplayed his sartorial instincts when going to certain business meetings, but he didn’t like the idea that he thought he had to do the same for his parents. He dropped his head to the side, watching him fuss and primp.

“All right. All right. How do I look?” Magnus turned spreading his arm wide for inspection. Alec felt the tug of yet another stupid grin on his lips.
“Gorgeous. As always,” he answered softly. Magnus sighed impatiently and looked back at the mirror. “I thought I was the one who was supposed to be anxious about this.”

“Just because I insisted,” Magnus intoned, “doesn’t mean I don’t want to make a good impression.”

“Well,” Alec said, swinging his legs to the side of the bed, effectively dislodging Chairman Meow, “my siblings love you, so do Clary and Simon.” He went over to pluck Magnus’ hands away from his hair, holding them. “If it gets bad, we leave. It’s that simple.” Magnus looked at him, pulling his lips in, still thrumming with nervous energy. Alec leaned forward to kiss him soundly. “It’ll be fine.” Magnus didn’t look convinced, so Alec resituated himself, kissed him again, and reassured him between lips, “Come on, papi, it’ll be fine.” Magnus inhaled sharply, nervous energy still thrumming in the air around him.

“Okay.”

“Yeah?”

“Yeah.” Magnus kissed him once more and then turned on his heel to head for the door. “Let’s go.”

*

Raphael once told Magnus that he had a “battle” face. He claimed Magnus went into this battle warrior mode when they met with certain clients or investors. For Magnus, it was as natural as slipping on a jacket. He’d spent years making himself inscrutable to foreign entities, not wanting anyone to get a drop on him too soon. It made for good business, good first dates, good fundraising. People wanted The Magnus Bane, and he very easily slid into that role at a moment’s notice.

Meeting Robert and Maryse Lightwood was slightly different. It required more finesse than business, more honesty than a first date, and less showmanship than a fundraiser. The last thing he wanted was to come on too strong and scare them off, or worse, come off as a soft touch and let them think he was intimidated. It was a very fine line to balance on. So yeah, he was pretty nervous. Alec was trying to be reassuring, but it wasn’t helping much. Even if Magnus was going in with plenty of backup, Alec still didn’t seem overly optimistic about the evening’s outcome. Not if he already had an escape plan. But he turned those soft, pretty eyes on him and kissed him with so much sweetness that Magnus’ determination redoubled.
Robert and Maryse Lightwood lived in a three-story brownstone on the Upper East Side of Manhattan. Robert Lightwood, even though he was a cop, came from old money. The Lightwood estate was worth millions, not that you would know that after meeting their children. Izzy may have had expensive taste, but she was as grounded as grounded could be. Alec lived in a hovel, and Jace pretended money didn’t exist. No doubt, these attitudes were direct responses to growing up with exorbitant wealth. Magnus spent many years in poverty; you’d have to pry his luxuries from his cold, dead hands.

Alec didn’t bother knocking or ringing the doorbell, he just punched in a security code, and they went in. The foyer was far more extravagant than Magnus’ and bespoke family heirlooms centuries’ old. Alec didn’t seem fazed by it, he just helped Magnus remove his overcoat and scarf, hanging them in a closet while a woman in a neatly pressed uniform rushed forward to stop him.

“Señor Alec, how many times?” she scolded gruffly, snatching Alec’s coat from him and nudging him aside to straighten Magnus’ things.

“Sayda,” Alec said, dropping a kiss to her cheek, “come meet Magnus.” He tugged at her hand, turning her around to face Magnus. She dropped her head deferentially. She was slightly older than middle age, with graying roots and lines around her mouth and eyes. All signs pointed to affection between her and Alec, which meant she’d probably been with the Lightwoods for some time.

“Señor,” she greeted politely.

Magnus reached out to shake her hand, “It’s a pleasure to meet you, Sayda.” She flushed under his attention, a pleased smile on her lips. But then she turned back to Alec, straightening his shirt and speaking in rapid Spanish.

“I’ll bet she is,” Alec answered gently, but she kept talking. “You don’t need to worry about that. I know--Sayda, I know, I promise. Okay? Hand to God.” She spoke a bit more firmly, and Alec ran his hands up and down her arms, soothingly. “I’ll handle it, I promise, I’ll talk to him. Okay?”

“Bueno,” she grumbled.

“Bueno,” he said bending to kiss her cheek. “Now get out of here before my mother finds something else for you to do.” She looked ready to argue. “I don’t need you to baby me, Sayda, go home to Gabriel.” She kissed his cheeks hurriedly and turned to Magnus.
“Mucho gusto, Señor,” she said quickly, kissing his cheeks as well before she hurried out the door. Alec watched her go, shaking his head. Magnus lifted his brows with some amusement.

“She worries too much,” Alec informed him with a shrug. Magnus wasn’t buying it though.

“Alec?” a deep, feminine voice called out, followed by the clacks of heels on wood. “Is that you?”

“Yeah, Mom, be right there.” He turned to Magnus, took his hand and threaded their fingers together. “You ready?” he muttered.

“Absolutely,” Magnus answered easily, battle face sliding into position. Alec grinned and kissed his cheek, then led him into the sitting room.

It was beautifully done room, with hues of blue, gold detailing, and antique furniture. Clary and Simon were huddled by the drink cart, Izzy sat with a young man who must have been Max, Jace spoke with a man who must have been Mr. Lightwood, and Maryse Lightwood stood in the middle of it all, hands clasped tightly at her waist. For a woman with four grown children, she looked impeccable. Her skin was a few shades darker than Alec’s, closer in hue to Izzy’s, and her hair, pulled back into a ponytail, was the same black as Alec’s. There was no trace of gray and no telling signs of wrinkles. She was slim and well-dressed, but there was a hardened look in her eye Magnus recognized all too well. He would’ve known this was Alec’s mother in a crowd full of women with similar features, just from the eyes.

Izzy obviously took more after her father, with the same dark eyes and sharp features. Robert Lightwood looked more his own age. Balding with a graying beard, he still looked distinguished, but had the air of one of those men who had trained hard as a younger man only to let it go with age. He had deep lines around his eyes and brows which spoke more of stress than laughter. He stood up when Alec and Magnus came in, hands in his pockets, and moved to stand behind his wife. Mrs. Lightwood greeted Alec first.

“You had me worried,” she said with a little too much tension after kissing Alec’s cheek, “you’re never the last one here.”

“Sorry about that,” Magnus said smoothly, extending his hand. “It’s entirely my fault. I’m notoriously late.” Maryse shook his hand with a short exhale; she seemed a little relieved.
“Mom, Dad, this is Magnus Bane, my boyfriend. Magnus, my parents, Maryse and Robert
Lightwood.”

“I’m really happy you’re here,” Mrs. Lightwood said a little too eagerly. Mr. Lightwood reached
around to shake Magnus’ hand with a nod.

“I’m happy to be here,” Magnus answered automatically. “Your home is...beautiful. Truly. Those
Mechelen buffets in the foyer? Exquisite.”

Mrs. Lightwood brightened even as Mr. Lightwood frowned. “You have a good eye!” she said,
sounding pleased. “We got those on our honeymoon in Cannes.” Magnus could see Clary glaring
at him out of the corner of his eye and he had to stifle a snort. Of course, she probably hadn’t made
nearly as good of a first impression. Magnus did possess a unique skill set.

“Well you have impeccable taste, which isn’t surprising after meeting Isabelle.” The woman in
question was all but skipping towards him. She was wearing a long-sleeved red bodycon dress and
heels with a ruby pendant on a silver chain around her neck, a silver snake cuff on her wrist, and
her hair arched in a complicated twist of braids which ended in a ponytail. She planted a kiss on his
cheek, tugging him away from Alec.

“Such a tease,” Izzy laughed. “Come meet Max,” she said, smirking over her shoulder at Alec.
Max Lightwood was six feet of boyish charm with sandy brown hair and dark brown eyes. He had
Alec’s smile and Izzy’s cheekbones, and Magnus thought he was probably the most adorable kid.
He held his hand out jauntily, grinning broadly.

“Nice to finally meet you, man. I’m Max.”

“Magnus.”

“Dude. I know. These jerks don’t talk about anything else but you.” He leaned forward, lowering
his voice. “By the way, Clary says you own Pandemonium—”

“Max!” Alec snapped, “You ask for free tickets and I will end you.”

Max froze in place, jaw still hanging open with his hand in the air, mid-request. Magnus snorted
and leaned in to whisper.
“Just let me know when and how many.”

“Magnus,” Alec complained. He whirled around, shrugging incredulously. Like he wasn’t going to take the opportunity to bribe his way into Alec’s brother’s affections? Did Alec not know him at all? Mr. and Mrs. Lightwood looked a little confused even as Alec rolled his eyes.

“Well!” Jace said loudly, clapping his hands together, “Now that we’re all introduced and sufficiently tense, let’s eat!”

Magnus barely contained his mirth as every Lightwood rolled their eyes skyward and Clary facepalmed. Evidently, they all agreed, though, because they filed into the adjacent dining room, which was set for dinner. Mr. Lightwood sat at the head of the table and Mrs. Lightwood sat opposite him. Jace sat to his left, with Clary next to him, Izzy beside her, and Simon closest to Mrs. Lightwood. Alec sat to Mr. Lightwood’s right and pulled out the seat next to him for Magnus. Max sat next to Magnus, closest to Mrs. Lightwood. Magnus was under the impression that this seating arrangement had been in place for some time, shifting only to accommodate Clary, and now him. It was an odd feeling.

That feeling got odder when a man and a woman, dressed in the same uniform as Sayda came out with their food and drinks. Magnus had no intention of drinking that evening, but noticed that Clary had finished her glass of wine in the sitting room and was now refilling. That didn’t bode well. Alec was the only other person to refrain from alcohol. Inhaling steadily, Magnus slid a hand onto Alec’s thigh, and found himself much calmer when Alec’s hand immediately dropped over his own.

Conversation was light and scattered as they were served. The servants seemed to be on familiar terms with the Lightwood children and their significant others, but were deferential to Mrs. and Mrs. Lightwood, which was expected. Magnus was surprised as they gave him a thumbs up once out of Mr. and Mrs. Lightwoods’ lines of sight. Alec snorted and batted a hand in their direction. They laughed silently and disappeared through a door.

“I take it they approve?” Magnus murmured as he reached for his glass of water.

“Don’t listen to anything they say,” Alec shot back.

“I smell dirt,” he sang into his glass. Alec snorted.
“You always smell dirt. It’s your sixth sense. Resist the impulse.”

“I shall try.”

“So, Mr. Bane,” Mr. Lightwood interrupted gruffly. “My children inform me you are a businessman. They’re a bit vague on the details.” Inwardly, Magnus cringed at the heavy-handed demand for information. Mr. Lightwood was so painfully a cop that it bled into his personal life, apparently.

“Yes, I’m the CEO of Bane, Incorporated, which owns and operates approximately 200 subsidiaries.”

“That’s a lot for one man,” he commented.

“I have an excellent CFO. And top-notch accountants, like Simon here.” He winked at Simon, whose jaw dropped because that was the first time he hadn’t called him Sheldon first. It was hilarious how low his expectations were. He saw Mrs. Lightwood roll her eyes slightly and take a long drink of her wine. Thankfully, Simon didn’t notice.

“Magnus owns a lot of small businesses,” Alec added, a thread of defensiveness in his voice. “Bars, restaurants, stores.”

“Some of the best clubs in New York,” Jace added, lifting his glass. Magnus tilted his head with a small smile of thanks.

“Wasn’t someone murdered in one of those clubs?” Mrs. Lightwood asked airily.

“Pleasant, Mother,” Izzy drawled.

“I’m just saying--”

“Yes!” Clary jumped in eagerly. “Jace and I caught that one. It was actually a bouncer’s
girlfriend’s bookie who showed up looking for money, roughed up the wrong woman, and *that* woman’s boyfriend beat the crap out of him.”

“Tore a tumble down the stairs, cracked his head open,” Jace finished. “We made the collar and finished the paperwork in two hours.” They touched the outsides of their fists together in such practiced synchronization that Magnus scowled. Surprisingly, Alec chuckled at their boasting, not at all upset with the change in the direction of the conversation. Jace easily dominated it, talking about their best and worst cases. Thankfully, Izzy and Max had morbid curiosities, even though Simon looked a little green around the gills. Magnus wasn’t thrilled about cop talk, but it was better than being interrogated himself. Every once in a while, Mr. Lightwood shot him a disgruntled look, like he was smelling something foul. Mrs. Lightwood consistently drank, but was nothing but pleasant throughout the meal.

Once Jace ran out of stories to brag about, he set his sights on Alec, eyes gleaming wickedly. Magnus felt Alec tense next to him, so Magnus slid his hand over to Alec’s on the table, squeezing lightly.

“You know what, guys? Alec’s never brought somebody over. I do believe this is prime time for embarrassing Alec stories.”

“Two can play that game, Jace,” Alec shot back, brows straight up.

“Do we need to have a conversation about the oak tree in the backyard?”

“Do we need to have a conversation about Grandma Sanverdad’s mirror?”

“Dad, remember that scratch on the Caddy?”

“Mom, remember that burn in the library carpet?”

“Oh, would you two stop it!” Izzy interjected as the brothers stared each other down, unfazed by her protest. Max was cackling to himself, probably an accomplice to their shenanigans. There was weird, silent exchange of eyebrow raises and chin jerks which was evidently some kind of communication that resulted in a truce.

“So Si,” Jace said lightly, a smirk plastered on his face as he poked at his food. “How are we liking
the new job?"

The conversation easily changed again, this time including Magnus’ input. Simon and Raph were getting along fairly well. Raphael complained of course, but complaining was his favorite activity. Raphael was actually pretty fond of Simon, and obviously thought he was extremely competent otherwise he would have fired him immediately. Simon evidently had a lot of thoughts.

“Well...no offense Magnus, but Raphael is scary intense. He runs a pretty tight ship. And, the accounts we’re working with? I mean...Fineberg had some pretty big clients, but you guys? The numbers alone are insane.”

“There are a lot of moving parts,” Magnus explained dismissively. “And trust me when I say that Raphael has mellowed a good deal since I met him in grad school.”

“I find that so hard to believe,” Alec grumbled.

“Like I said,” Magnus intoned quietly, “you’re both salty.” Across the table, Izzy giggled at Alec’s expense, barely covering it when her mother glared at her. Alec shot him an exasperated but fond look that had him preening under the attention, and then lifted his hand to lightly kiss it. Whether or not his family noticed, Magnus neither knew or cared. He liked having Alec’s attention and he was not shy about letting people know it.

“So Magnus,” Mrs. Lightwood said slowly, “Alec’s told me that you met through Clary?” Magnus lifted his brows at Alec who shrugged, and then looked at Clary who was onto her third glass of wine and looking a little glassy-eyed. So she wasn’t going to be any help.

“Yes, she set us up. What? Almost six months ago?”

“Five months, two weeks, and four days,” Alec corrected under his breath so only Magnus could hear. He tried very hard not to snort at how dorky it was that he knew that.

“That’s so interesting. So how did you and Clary meet?” Mrs. Lightwood followed up. It was a reasonable question, actually, but based on Clary’s reaction it was overstepping. Poor biscuit nearly choked on her wine, prompting Jace to pat her on the back. Magnus paused briefly, not sure how much he should say.
“It’s okay, Magnus,” Simon interjected, “Raphael told me. Something about transparency or whatever.”

“Oh,” Magnus said, thoroughly shocked by that. Raph really did like Simon, then. “Well, my friend Raphael had some trouble when we were just getting started in New York. Clary was a rookie officer and helped us out of a jam.”

“I helped?” Clary laughed. “More like I showed up, cuffed the guy, and wrote a report. Magnus had everything under control before I got there.”

“Sorry, Magnus what?” Alec asked, turning to him suddenly, brow furrowed. Oh, that was right. Alec didn’t know all of the sordid details of that particular day, especially not Magnus’ involvement.

“Funny story--” Magnus said, holding up a finger. Clary cut him off.

“So I got the call at like 3 in the afternoon, right? Domestic disturbance. I assume that me and my partner are walking into some kind of fistfight between husband and wife who are probably drunk. That’s usually what happens. Not this time. I show up and Magnus has this big time dealer at gunpoint on the sidewalk.” Magnus winced. “There’s like five neighbors telling me that this guy showed up, beat the crap out of one of the residents until Magnus and Cat showed up. Magnus had hauled the guy out of the house, pulled a gun on him, and called the cops while Cat took care of Raphael inside.”

Alec swatted his arm sharply.

“Hey!” Magnus protested, “I never said who had the gun, just that there was one.”

“Guilt by omission.”

“I was trying to be discreet.”

Alec clicked his tongue at him, and everyone else at the table looked mildly impressed or confused. Magnus spread his hands placatingly. Freaking cops.
“Raphael had some not so great habits when he was younger. Joe happened to be one of them. When he came back to New York, Joe came looking for him. I did warn Joe what would happen if he came near Raphael, and he chose not to listen.”

“So you pulled on a gun on him?” Mrs. Lightwood asked incredulously. Ah, yes, that did sound bad.

“Technically, I pulled his own gun on him. I merely...removed him from the situation.” Alec whacked him again. “I never said whose gun it was!” he insisted again.

“Still omitting,” Alec shot back with a shake of his head.

“There is no pleasing you.”
After that, there was significantly less tension in the room and the conversation was much lighter. Magnus made some headway with both Max and Mrs. Lightwood, but Mr. Lightwood was stubbornly silent. All the remaining tension was between Alec and Mr. Lightwood. Magnus noticed them make tense eye contact before completely ignoring each other several times over the course of dinner. Magnus wasn’t one hundred percent certain, but he had a feeling that tension wasn’t entirely due to his presence, which was interesting.

Dinner itself was paella with a thick crusted bread, homemade tortilla chips, and spinach artichoke dip. Mrs. Lightwood did insist that he at least taste the wine because Jace and Clary had informed her Magnus was a drinker and a wine expert. It was an excellent Spanish vintage that paired perfectly with the food. She really did have good taste. Dessert, much to Magnus’ chagrin, was flan. He scowled so hard that Alec burst into laughter.

Mrs. Lightwood looked devastated. “Alec said you liked flan!”

“I hate you so much,” Magnus muttered while Alec cracked up. “It’s nothing, Mrs. Lightwood. I do like flan. Your son, right now? Not so much.”

“What could possibly be so funny about flan?” she followed up, baffled. Alec broke into a new fit of giggles and Magnus clenched his jaw, tongue shoved into his bottom lip.

“Oh huh, laugh it up, Lightwood.”

Mrs. Lightwood looked to her other children for help, but they obviously knew nothing about it. Magnus was not going to supply them with that information. One day, he would pull one over on Alec in retaliation. One day.

“Aw, Magnus, don’t be mad,” Alec said with no sincerity whatsoever.
“You’re the worst.”

Much to Magnus’ surprise, it wasn’t servants who cleared the table, but the Lightwood children. Jace, Max, and Izzy took the bulk of it, while Clary and Simon grabbed the glasses. Alec was helping his mother with the serving dishes when Mr. Lightwood came over, clapping him on the back.

“Alec, you can spare Mr. Bane for a moment, can’t you?” he asked, looking at Magnus instead of Alec. Magnus did his best to keep his expression neutral, as this was obviously some kind of game of chicken he hadn’t consented to.

“Sure, just remember what I told you.”

“Whatever you say, son. Mr. Bane?” he said, gesturing toward the hall. So Magnus nodded and went, following Mr. Lightwood into a side room. It looked to be some kind of study with a desk and a small book collection. And a pool table. Magnus automatically drifted toward it, realizing its value came from its age instead of quality.

“Do you play?”

“Better than you, most likely.”

“Jace said you were okay.”

Magnus scoffed, thinking of that first night at Dilly’s. Since then, he’d pretended to take pointers from Alec and hustled half of the Brooklyn police force. With Alec’s blessing, of course, and never for money. Just drinks or dares. He occasionally “lost” to Jace just to keep himself sharp. People didn’t realize how difficult it was to intentionally lose. Besides, it entertained Alec to no end, especially because Jace was so encouraging and excited whenever Magnus “almost” sunk a shot. Clearly, Alec hadn’t bothered to enlighten anyone as to his real skill level.

“Mr. Lightwood, there’s a billiards philosophy I’ve based my entire life on: if you can’t tell who’s being hustled in a pool hall, it’s probably you.”
“All right then. Let’s play.”

“After you.”

“I insist.”

So Magnus racked the balls and broke, pocketing three solids.

“Nicely done.”

“Thanks.”

“So here’s the deal, Mr. Bane. Every time you shoot, I ask a question, you answer. Vice versa.”

Magnus nodded thoughtfully, lining up his next shot. “Fire away.” He sunk the shot.

“Have you always--?”

“Liked men?”

“Yes.”

“Yes. And women. I’m very open-minded.”

He sunk the shot.

“How’d you make your money?”

“Daddy’s trust fund. Two exceptional business partners. Loyal employees.”
“The mob?”

“Not in this country,” he answered with a shake of his head. Sunk another shot. “Too disorganized.”

“Are you sleeping with my son?”

“Absolutely. And frequently.”

He sunk another shot.

“Do you intend to marry my son?”

He straightened, chalking the cue. “Mr. Lightwood, I have cat food older than my relationship with Alexander. Not to be cryptic, but how the hell should I know?” He lined up for another shot.

“Do you intend to sleep with other men while sleeping with my son?”

Magnus scowled. “No.” He sunk the ball in the corner pocket.

“Do you have any STIs? Venereal diseases?”

He actually looked up at that one, “No.”

“Do you use drugs recreationally or therapeutically?”

He pocketed the last two solids.

“No, and I don’t think that’s any of your concern.”
“It is if you’re hooked on something that could ruin my son’s career.”

Magnus bristled. For one, he didn’t like this weird overuse of the possessive “my son.” As if Alec wasn’t his own person who could make his own choices and figure these things out for himself. He took a moment to concentrate on his next shot, sinking it, and quickly lining up the next one.

“I can’t decide if I’m more offended on my own behalf or Alexander’s.”

“What’s that supposed to mean?” He sunk the next two shots before answering.

“It means, Mr. Lightwood, that I’m astonished you believe that he hasn’t asked me most of these questions himself. Do you actually think he’d risk his career on someone like that?”

He turned red.

“I don’t know what to think! All I know is suddenly he’s a flamer and he’s bringing home a man wearing makeup, who probably turned him in the first place!”

Magnus stretched his lips thoughtfully, lining up an angle for two different stripe balls. “Two notes on that. One, I met Alexander months after he came out, so the whole ‘turning him’ thing is definitely not on me.” He sunk the two he aimed for. “I would blame that on Jake Gyllenhaal. Maybe Brad Pitt. Two, you really could’ve driven home that queer-fear rant better by saying fag instead of flamer. But I’m guessing that one’s progress for you, no?”

He lined up the next shot and sunk it, leaving him with 8 ball. Mr. Lightwood deflated.

“Look, I have no interest in debating gay politics with you. None at all, actually. In fact, I find it entirely inappropriate. Which, as your children can attest, is odd for me. I came here to meet you because Alexander places family above all else. The last thing I want is to sabotage my relationship with him by being at odds with you. So I will suck up your homophobic bullshit, if you cool it on the macho discomfort.”

“Family above all else,” Mr. Lightwood repeated.
“Just as he wants.” Magnus sunk the 8 ball, leaving the felt empty. At that, Mr. Lightwood came around to his side of the table and extended a hand. Magnus shook it.

“Call me Robert.”

They were interrupted when Alec stuck his head in through the door. He opened his mouth to say something, but froze and frowned at the two of them. He came fully into the room, jabbing a finger in their general direction.

“Did he hustle you?”

“No!” both of them answered indignantly, turning to look at each other in surprise. Alec angled his head skeptically, but refrained from further commentary.

“Mom’s getting wine,” he continued slowly, “wants to know what you want from the cellar.”

Robert rattled off something that sounded expensive, and Magnus said he would have whatever was already open. Alec took a couple of steps into the room, holding his hand out to Magnus but watching his father.

“You done interrogating?” he asked, voice dripping with sarcasm. Robert gestured that Magnus was free to go, so he took Alec’s hand and let himself be led back into the sitting room where the others were drinking and chatting. Alec did mention that Mrs. Lightwood liked to keep them for a few hours. Surprisingly, Magnus didn’t mind.
Alec walked into the precinct the next morning and handed Lydia her coffee like he did every Monday morning.

“How was dinner?” she asked blandly.

“Shockingly neutral.”

“Neutral? Not good?”

“Not great, not terrible, just neutral. Which was impressive. I mean, Mom was terse, Dad was silent, Clary drank a bottle by herself, and Jace tried to be comic relief, but Magnus handled it pretty well. Everything was good.”

“Wow. That’s good.”

“Yeah,” Alec said, feigning cheerful agreement, “Now we just have to keep it at neutral once a week until we all die or Magnus dumps me.”

“They aren’t that bad.”

“You went once. Did you want to come back?”

“Yes, well Dad asked Magnus if he had venereal diseases during a pool game, so you’re in good
company.”

Lydia collapsed onto her desk, laughing.

“IT’s not funny.”

“IT’s kind of funny.”

“He asked him if he took drugs.”

Lydia sat up straight, “I mean, looking at Magnus that’s a fair question.”

“Sure. Fair. But totally inappropriate. Mom was nice, though.”

She leaned forward. “Do you think it’s because Magnus is a guy? Like she’s less threatened by a man in your life instead of a woman?”

“You’re losing it, Lyds.”

She sat back nodding, “I’m really glad I chose not to be your beard. It was a good decision on my part.”

“Get outta here, you didn’t even know I was gay back then.”

“I so did.”

“Lies.”

She nodded, shoving her tongue in her lip, “All right. You wanna do this? You wanna know how I knew?” Alec lifted his hands in a bring it on gesture. “Since we were partnered up, you have never tried to make me prove myself physically. You’re always trying to one-up me mentally.”
“Bullshit.”

“Hand to god, it’s a guy thing with female cops. You’ve always got to make us jump through hoops. Straight guys do it physically, gay guys with intelligence.”

“How many gay cops do you actually know?”

“Four.”

“Bullshit.”

“I swear on my dog.”

“Bullshit, you did not know.”

“You’re not that good of a liar, Lightwood. Remember our first stakeout?”

“Vividly.” Because Lydia’s car was disgusting and she ate like a pig. Junk food, too.

“Yeah, I asked you about girls you’d dated and you made up some blonde named Jessica. Not two seconds later you were checking out some guy in the side mirror.”

“Bullshit!”

It was probably true.
Chapter 42

Izzy didn’t spend a lot of time in Brooklyn even though two of her brothers lived and worked there. So when she entered through the doors of the 70th precinct, she wasn’t expecting the rush of familiarity in her system. Ever since Magnus came to Sunday dinner, things had been off between her and Alec. He’d canceled Monday Happy Hour at the last minute. Not that she blamed him, exactly. But there were just some things that a sister had to do when her brother was being stupid about his personal life. It needed saying, so she’d said it, and everything worked out for the best. Alec would come around. Right?

Part of the reason she was in Brooklyn was to hasten that process. The other part was because she had a professional quandary, a quandary Alec could solve. If he didn’t help her, then she had a lot of work to do. Personally, she was erring on the side of optimism, hoping that Alec’s big brother instincts would override his irritation about her meddling. It had worked in the past, so in theory, it could work again. Magnus was sort of a different beast, though. The last time he was this angry with her, she’d just told him she thought it was a mistake for him to enlist. At least this had a happy resolution.

She checked in with Patty, the receptionist, who knew exactly who she was. She gushed about Jace and Alec for a good five minutes before handing her a visitors pass and buzzing her through. Jace and Alec were in the bullpen at their respective desks, passing a nerf ball back and forth. Lydia was going over a case file while Clary pinned up details on their board. It was completely unsurprising that the women kept up the organization in the place. She walked forward with a quick two-step and batted the ball out of the air.

“Izzy!” Jace squawked indignantly.

“This is not a playground, Wayland!” Aline snapped as she came out of the breakroom.

“Alec was doing it, too!”

“Only because you hit him in the face first,” Lydia chimed in, not at all paying attention to them. Alec was chuckling and getting out of his seat to get the ball.

“What brings you to our neck of the woods, sis?” he asked coolly.

With a sigh, she held up a file folder and held it out to him. He pinched his brows together and
flipped through it.

“A case?” he asked rhetorically. Clary darted to his side, trying and failing to look over his shoulder to get eyes on it. He jerked it away from her, holding it up high enough that she couldn’t see. She jabbed him in his exposed stomach and grabbed his wrists so that she could read.

Quickly, Izzy explained the situation: “The guy’s a veteran, came into the morgue last week. They asked me to do the autopsy because he was in relatively good health, and the family wanted some answers. Fine, whatever, but look at this.” She pulled the file to her, flipped to the autopsy report and jabbed a finger at the guy’s torso. “I found a burn on his torso. He was an electrician, so my boss is attributing the burn to that.”

Alec arched a brow. “But you think not?”

“I’m pretty sure that is a burn from a stun baton. Not military grade, more like something they’d use in animal control. But we don’t handle criminal cases, and my boss won’t sign off on sending it out.”

“So why bring it to us?” Clary asked eagerly, all but bouncing on the balls of her feet. Izzy laughed to herself when Alec rolled his eyes. No matter how hard Clary tried, Alec was never going to be totally on board with her bubbly personality. Too much of a wild card, in his opinion, or so he said.

Izzy folded her arms with a shrug, “I thought maybe you could open an investigation without the forensics, then request the body? I don’t know, but someone has to do something. I really think this man was murdered, and he’s one of our own, I can’t just ignore it.”

Alec took a long moment to flip through the file, reading over it as carefully as he could given the circumstances. He was nodding to himself. Then he pulled his lips in and flipped the file shut.

“This is out of our jurisdiction. You absolutely should take this back to your boss and go through the proper channels with the 55th precinct, since that’s protocol,” he said as he handed the file to an overeager Clary. She was basically frothing at the mouth and would definitely investigate because she had no qualms about breaking rules and her stepfather was her captain. Jace read over her shoulder, grabbing for pictures. Clary slapped his hand away and they bickered over the file.

With a smile to cover how touched she was that he would help her, Izzy held her arms out. Alec immediately hugged her, even lifting her off her feet like he always did. She almost cried.
“Thank you,” she whispered when he set her back down. He pulled back and held up a warning finger.

“I did absolutely nothing and don’t you forget it.” She laughed, slapping his chest, stupidly pleased that they were back to normal. He sat back against his desk, folding his arms. “Please tell me you didn’t come all the way to Brooklyn to hand off a case file.”

“No!” she said with a bounce, “I’m actually meeting Magnus for lunch. He said he’d meet me here and we’d go to Mario’s.” Alec was already shaking his head at her. “What?”

“First Max, now you?”

“He offered!”

“Magnus always offers, Iz,” Alec grumbled.

“I’m actually going to insist on buying. As an apology…” she said slowly, gauging his reaction. He shoved his tongue into his bottom lip, nodding his head a little as he considered her. When he didn’t say anything, she kicked at his foot. “While I’m thinking about it: you got any idea if they need a medical examiner here?”

“You want to work here?”

She shrugged. “Maybe? I mean, I feel useless with the Army, you know? My skills would be put to better use here. Maybe do some good.”

Alec beamed, his whole face lighting up, “I would love that.”

Izzy smiled back, proud of herself for even saying it. “Yeah? It wouldn’t be weird? Me, you, and Jace? God, and Clary?” He was doing that more, she thought quietly to herself. Smiling. He never used to smile. It took effort to get him to smile, and she and Max were the only ones who could do it. Maybe they were the only ones who tried, she didn’t know for sure. But as he grinned at her, lips stretched wide and unselfconsciously, Izzy flashed back to Sunday dinner, to watching him laugh. It was just some stupid inside joke with Magnus about flan, of all things, but he’d laughed.
It occurred to her that Magnus was probably unaware that Alec didn’t do things like that most of the time, that he didn’t just relax and giggle about things. He probably didn’t know Alec was so different since meeting him. A good different. A better different. A different that was more natural to who he was and healthier overall. Izzy felt her heart clench just thinking about it.

“I think it would be awesome. Because Clary wouldn’t be able to flirt you into signing off on a completely unwarranted investigation.”

“I heard that Alec!” Clary snapped from across the bullpen.

“That’s why I said it, Clary!”

* 

Magnus was running late meeting Isabelle. For whatever reason, she’d suggested they meet at the precinct. Not that Magnus was going to argue with a chance to see Alec in the middle of the day for no reason. He blew a quick kiss to Patty, who buzzed him in, and Magnus wound his way through the bullpen to get to Alec’s desk. Izzy was at Jace and Clary’s cluster, going over an intense-looking file. Magnus quickly darted for Alec’s desk and hopped to sit on the clearest spot. It dislodged a couple of pens and some papers, along with a post-it attached to the computer monitor. Alec scowled up at him, but Magnus was inordinately pleased with himself and smiled innocently.

“Hello, darling,” he intoned, kicking his legs out. Alec’s smile was exasperated but fond, and he rolled his eyes.

“You could greet me like a normal person, you know.”

“Absolutely not. What would your co-workers think?”

Alec lifted his brows, unimpressed, “That you were normal?”

“Perish the thought,” he said with feigned disgust. He bent forward to smack a kiss to Alec’s head and then plopped his hands in his lap.

“What are we working on?” he asked airily. Alec just blinked at him, a small, thin smile on his lips, and then tipped his head at the skinny black kid handcuffed to his desk. Magnus bristled.
“What, did he skip out on Algebra?”

“Hey man!” the guy protested, “I ain’t no kid.”

“Shut up, John,” Alec said tiredly.

“You can’t talk to me like that!”

“If you don’t want me to call your aunt right this second, then yes I can, so hush .”

Magnus cackled and put a hand on Alec’s shoulder, “You tell ‘im, baby,” he teased. Alec shook his head at him once more, but insisted he had to finish processing John so that he could be released into his parole officer’s custody. For the next five minutes, Magnus picked things up off his desk, asking a hundred questions about the whole process and trying to lace innuendo into every single comment. Alec didn’t seem annoyed by it at all, he just plucked his things from Magnus’ hands and put them back, answering every question as calmly as possible.

“You’re so hot when you talk about protocol,” Magnus teased, winking at him.

“Magnus--”

“Do you still have your patrol uniform?”

“Dude!” John shouted in exasperation, slumping in his chair and throwing a wayward hand up, “he is working .”
Chapter 43

Chapter Summary

TW: guns, panic attack

Alec was doing his best to concentrate while Magnus sat on his desk, being stupidly cute and flirty in the most inappropriate place ever. The squad was used to him, though, so Alec didn’t really care. Not to mention, Little John was so annoyed by the whole thing, and it was hilarious. Served him right for taking up Alec’s time with this bullshit again. Kid had boosted yet another car, and Alec was about ready to strangle him.

Magnus’ comment about Alec’s old uniform sent the poor son of a bitch over the edge, and Alec briefly wondered if he was doing it on purpose. He didn’t have a lot of time to wonder about it, though, because Patty buzzed someone through that looked...weird. He was walking with a slight limp and was sweating through his hoodie, which was weird because it was fairly cold outside. His eyes were wide and darting around the bullpen like he was looking for someone. That’s when he caught a glint from his pocket.

“Did anyone ask you?” he heard Magnus snark. “Who’s chained to a desk, me or you? I know it’s not me cause a) my hands are free and b) I’m not in the habit of stealing cars.” He trailed off, hand coming to Alec’s arm. “Alexander?”

Alec immediately stood and fluidly pulled his gun, pointing it in the direction of the man as he called out: “1-4-7 at 3:00! We’ve got a 1-4-7 at 3:00!”

Alec didn’t need to look to know that the ten other cops in the room, immediately swiveled toward the entrance, guns drawn. Alec’s own eyes were locked on the suspect, but Lydia was behind him, getting John and Magnus out of the line of fire. Jace got Izzy out of the way, while Clary covered Alec. The guy pulled his gun from his pocket, pointing it at Alec.

“Sir, you need to drop your weapon,” he said evenly.

“Hell naw! Where’s Ricky? Where’s that son of a bitch?!” he screeched waving the gun. He was obviously high out of his mind and behaving erratically. As far as Alec knew, there was no Ricky in holding, though, it was possible.
“Sir, if you don’t put the gun down now, I will not hesitate to drop you,” Alec answered. “There are at least ten armed officers who will do the same. Put the gun down.” He enunciated each word exuding all the authority he could muster. In reality, his stomach had dropped through the floor and he thought he would puke. Almost everyone he loved was right there in that room and if a single one of them took a bullet…

He was so focused on the perp, that he hadn’t noticed Magnus inching his way forward. After that, everything happened really fast. Magnus came into view, the perp swung the gun in his direction, but before Alec could shout, Magnus was swinging out with an arm and foot, effectively disarming the perp and putting him on his knees. Alec kept his gun trained on the man while Clary darted out to get the gun and Helen and Raj rushed forward to restrain the perp, shouting warnings at him to stay down and put his hands up. The second he was cuffed, Alec was lowering his gun and trying to get control of his breathing, while John cheered from where he sat.

“Damn, son! Did you see that judo-ninja shit? Motherfucka just--! Whoo! That was some shit right there!”

Garroway’s voice boomed from his office doorway, “Why did a civilian just disarm a man in my police station?” Alec turned his head to see a furious Garroway, who was actually glaring at Jace. It wasn’t effective though. Jace was helping Izzy jump to her feet, smiling brilliantly like it was the best thing that had ever happened.

“Cause he’s a badass, that’s why!” Jace informed him giddily. He was watching Magnus like a little kid watching their favorite wrestler on TV. Alec scowled, grabbed Magnus by the arm, and dragged him to the locker room before he lost his shit. He shoved him into the room, and then pushed past him, pacing in hope that his breathing would even out and his hands would stop shaking. Didn’t happen. He was going to start hyperventilating soon, and he’d probably pass out before he could decide whether to yell at Magnus or kiss him. So, he did what he’d learned to do in the army.

He punched a locker.

His eyes glazed over in a hot flash from the pain, but his mind cleared and he inhaled fully. It was such relief that he barely heard Magnus’ loud cry of protest. He was so focused on getting oxygen back into his system, that he let Magnus grab up his wounded hand. He let Magnus sit him on the bench and examine it, while he just breathed and calmed himself.

“I don’t know what the fuck that was,” Magnus snapped, “but you’re lucky your damn hand isn’t broken.”
Alec jerked his hand back and glared.

“Says the guy who just jumped in front of a loaded gun,” he sneered. Magnus had the decency to look sheepish.

“He was pointing it at you,” he offered weakly.

“I was handling it!” Alec snapped, getting back up to his feet to pace. He really didn’t want to look at Magnus right then. If he did, he was going to replay that damn moment in his head, watch that gun swing in his direction again, and he rather liked breathing, thanks. “There’s a protocol, Magnus! What if he’d fired? If he fires, then everyone fires, and who the hell knows who’d get caught in the middle!”

“I just reacted, I wasn’t thinking!”

“No! Obviously, you weren’t! Obviously, you weren’t thinking about me having to watch you get shot right in front of me!” he shouted, voice hoarse with rage. He turned and caught sight of Magnus, face blotchy and eyes wide with shock. Alec’s heart clenched and he lost his breath again. He bent over, hands to his knees, all but collapsing onto the bench.

“Oh, shit--shit shit shit!” Magnus tried to touch him, but Alec swatted him away, pushing at his arms. His skin was hot and oversensitive, and he hated feeling crowded when this happened.

“Alec, you’re having a panic attack,” Magnus said calmly.

“I know that!” Alec snapped unevenly, inhaling sharply and coming up with nothing. His brain panicked and he reached out to steady himself, finding Magnus was already there. Then Magnus’ hand was firm against his diaphragm.

“Inhale hard,” he ordered. Alec didn’t argue this time, just did as he was told. Apparently, there was an authority override in his brain. It kind of worked, but he was starting to feel dizzy. “You’ve got to slow your breathing down.”

“Ca-n’t. Ca--” He inhaled sharply again.
But then his breathing stopped altogether because Magnus was there, invading his space, and sealing his mouth over his. It was a deep kiss, unschooled and hasty, but Alec’s breathing evened out, and he could feel the calm settle over him. They broke apart, and Alec realized Magnus’ hands were on his face. He examined Alec intently, looking past him, into his eyes, checking for...something.

“Better?” he asked Alec breathlessly, almost whispering. Alec nodded, trying to find his voice.

“Yeah.” He took a couple of deep breaths. “Yeah.” He shuddered. “Why--why’d you do that?”

“You hold your breath when I kiss you.”

“Huh?” Alec blinked his eyes quickly to see that Magnus was kneeled down in front of him, and his hands had moved down from Alec’s face to his thighs, which he was rubbing.

“Yeah. Every time since our first date. I was watching this show and…” He shook his head, like he was clearing it. “Doesn’t matter. Holding your breath can stop a panic attack, so--”

“Oh,” Alec sighed, “cool.”

“It’s better than slamming your fist into a locker.”

Alec let out a long exhale, feeling his shoulders relax and loosen. “Well,” he laughed, “you weren’t there to kiss me in Afghanistan. Had to learn to make do.”

That pulled a half-hearted smile from Magnus, who still looked a little frazzled. All Alec could think was that he really wanted to kiss him again. Somehow, Magnus figured that out and leaned forward to capture Alec’s bottom lip between his own, their mouths lingering sweetly. Alec put his hands around to cup Magnus’ head, keeping him there.

“Please,” he said, voice whinier than he would have liked, “no more jumping in front of crazies with guns.”

“You do it all the time,” Magnus grumbled. Like there was no difference when there absolutely
was a difference. Alec ground their foreheads together, letting out a pathetic groan. Because he had absolutely no control over what Magnus did, and even he knew that.

“Okay, how about not doing it in a room full of armed cops?”

Magnus let out a chuckle on a sigh, “That I can do.”

Alec kissed him gratefully. “Thank you.”

“How long has that been going on?” Magnus asked. Alec frowned, not sure what he was talking about. “The panic attacks?” he prompted.

“Oh,” he nodded, “right. Uh. Ten.”

“Ten years?”

“Since I was ten,” he clarified.

“Alexander,” Magnus sighed, chastising with a single word.

“Are you really going to give me a lecture on mental health right now?”

“No.”

“Good.”

They were staring at each other now, and broke into small smiles. It was sad, really. One second Alec was ready to throttle him, lock him in a padded vault somewhere, or just punch him in the face, and in the next, he never loved anything or anyone more. And that was just it, wasn’t it? That stupid word had popped into his head twice in less than fifteen minutes. Twice more than he’d ever allowed himself to think in Magnus’ general direction. He brushed a thumb along Magnus’ cheekbone, considering him. He knew he was frowning, that his brows were furrowed, that he probably looked like a psycho, but he was still waiting for his heart to stop throbbing painfully. He
had a feeling that wasn’t going to happen anytime soon. Alec sat back, gesturing uselessly with his hands before dropping them to Magnus’ shoulders.

“I love you.” Magnus’ face went blank, like he’d been slapped but more subdued. Alec didn’t know what to do with that, so he barreled through it. “I do and I know it’s like... a stupid time to say it and I can literally see Hodge’s underwear out of the corner of my eye because he’s a pig, but I do. I love you. I am stupidly in love with you. Stupidly enough to completely screw up the romantic gesture portion of this thing because after that, I really can’t go another day--”

As was becoming fairly typical of them, Magnus stopped his words with his mouth, kissing him with an intensity that was absolutely inappropriate for a workplace, let alone a locker room. But Alec didn’t bother stopping him, instead, he was pulling him closer, helping him clamber up to straddle his lap. Alec tilted his head and tangled their tongues together when Magnus’ arms wrapped tightly around his neck. Magnus absorbed his gasps, all but stealing his breath. Shit, it was hot and messy and perfect, and Alec wasn’t sure how he was supposed to function after a lapful of Magnus trying to crawl into his skin. A shaking Magnus. A Magnus who was biting and tugging at Alec’s lips, soothing it over with his tongue, completely dominating the exchange. Alec just submitted and rode out the wave Magnus was creating. They were both breathing heavily, the wet slide and suction of their kissing getting recklessly loud for such a public space. Alec wrapped his arms tightly around Magnus’ middle and attempted to slow their kiss, bringing them to a lingering, languid stop. Magnus didn’t relent though. He just kept pressing kisses to Alec’s cheeks and jaw and chin, only to go back to his lips.

“Magnus--”

“I love you, too. So much.”

Alec let out a soft snort. “Couldn’t tell-- ow! No pinching, damn it!”

“Then don’t be an ass--”

“I was--”

Magnus cut him off for another thorough kiss, sliding his hands into Alec’s hair to wrench his head where he wanted it and holding him in place. Alec indulged it for a moment before he broke out into a smile, ruining it.
“You’ve got to stop doing that.”

Magnus kissed him sharply again. “Never.”

“Fine,” he said, letting himself be kissed again. “But not in front of Jace.”

“Deal.”

“We have a lot of new rules today,” Alec teased. “You got ‘em all?”

“No saving your life or kissing you in front of cops,” he deadpanned. Alec dropped his head into the curve of his shoulder to laugh. Full-bodied, shuddering laughs that erased all the tension he was holding onto.

“Close enough.”

Magnus nuzzled against the side of his head. “What do we do now?”

Alec let out a heavy sigh and lifted his head, feeling dazed and exhausted. All the adrenaline and the panic had emptied from his system, and he knew he either needed food or water, or else he’d pass out. Unfortunately, their circumstances favored none of those options.

“We’ll have to give statements. Especially you, Jet Li.”

“That is so racist.”

“Well, maybe you should have warned me that you’re a ninja.”

“I asked you to come to the gym with me.”

“You said you were going to a spin class.”
Magnus bobbled his head, “True. But that’s a warm-up.” He swung his leg so that he could get up from Alec’s lap to stand. Alec stayed seated for a moment while Magnus fussed with his hair, dragging his fingers through it to fix whatever damage he’d inflicted. Alec just watched while he did it, let this insane, beautiful, brilliant man fix his hair in the middle of the precinct’s locker room where they’d just made out. What was his life? Magnus took a step back to admire his work.

“You’ll do.”

Alec snorted, “You’re incorrigible.”

Magnus smirked right back at him, “Yeah, and you love me.” But it was the way he said it. His voice wavered just slightly. There was a small inflection at the end, just enough that it was almost a question. Alec made a few really important decisions right there. He nodded, mostly to himself as his resolve cooled to steel. Then he stood, wrapped Magnus up in his arms and just held him for a long moment. He felt Magnus’ hands flutter and land against his back, but he just held him like there was nothing more important to do. Eventually, Magnus just settled into it, relaxed against him, so Alec shoved his face into the crook of his neck and squeezed. Then he pulled back, brought his hands to cup his face and pressed a lingering kiss to his forehead.

“Yes,” he agreed finally, pressing their foreheads together again, “yes, I do. I love you more than anything.”
After the squad finished gushing over Magnus, they gave their statements to an IA investigator. Captain Garroway chewed Magnus out for being “so damn reckless,” but he seemed to try too hard to keep a straight face, in Alec’s opinion. He was obviously extremely impressed and had no desire to show it. That would have ruined his hardass facade he’d cultivated over the years. Alec understood the impulse. When his anger and frustration finally melted away, he would probably decide that Magnus disarming someone in a hostile situation without a shot fired was the hottest thing he’d ever seen. He just wasn’t at that point yet.

Garroway sent them all home early, and Izzy rescheduled her lunch with Magnus, so they went back to his place. Alec didn’t spend much time there anymore, as Magnus’ apartment was much nicer, but his was closer. He didn’t consult Magnus on that decision either because he’d lost his preference rights when he stepped in front of a loaded gun. Magnus didn’t argue that point.

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So while Alec made them an early dinner, Magnus sat on the counter and explained.

“Okay, I’ll tell you why I learned Hapkido, if you finally tell me about your tattoo,” Magnus offered, reasonably, as he reached down to snag a piece of cooked chicken. Alec lightly elbowed his leg with a scowl.

“Really? That’s how you want to play this?”

“Absolutely, yes. This whole month of confessional bullshit we have going needs to be on a level playing field.”

“You learning self-defense is level with one of my war stories?” he asked skeptically, obviously not believing him. To be fair, he had the high ground here, and Magnus did have to play catch up. But he thought it was a good idea. At least it sounded good to him. Mostly because he didn’t want to be pouring his guts out all by his lonesome. He lifted a hand up.
“Hand to god, they are probably equal.”

Alec tilted his head and focused on chopping the onion in front of him. “All right, but you start.”

“Fine.” He clasped his hands to hide his nervousness and put them in his lap. “Do you remember that Raph and I had another business partner?” He did not miss Alec’s squirrely, suspicious reaction. Sheepish was the appropriate term. “You looked him up, didn’t you?”

“Well--”

“Now you have no choice but to tell me about the tattoo. And how you got your Purple Heart! I know you have one, so don’t deny it!”

Alec slumped and kept chopping. “Fine,” he grumbled, “but I don’t see how you can blame me for being curious about him. You and Raph are really close, but you barely say anything about Will. I get why…” He shrugged, not looking him in the eye. “I didn’t really expect to find anything.”

But he had found a lot, which was probably why he looked so guilty. Magnus had met both Will and Raphael at Harvard. Will was charming and intense, exceptionally intelligent and Magnus had always been a little in love with the guy. Alas, Will was in love with his brother, Jem’s, girlfriend, Tessa. He also had a congenital heart defect, so considered himself “cursed.” He claimed that he didn’t want to be in a relationship just to leave that person behind. Turned out, his heart didn’t matter much in that decision.

Jem had always been a problem-child, always getting into trouble and making messes he expected Will to clean up. They weren’t so different from Jace and Alec in that regard. Two years prior, Jem got himself into a situation not even Will could fix. He got into it with some bad people, and when Will went to confront him about it, get him somewhere safe, both brothers were killed in a drive-by shooting. Will left everything he had to Tessa, ensuring her stability in case anything ever happened to Jem. Tessa was pregnant at the time, so she left New York to be in Maine with her family. Magnus hadn’t seen her since.

Magnus gave Alec the gist of it, knowing a lot of the details were probably in the report, but the circumstances had been kept relatively quiet. Magnus and Raph had been devastated. Raph nearly relapsed, and Magnus channeled his frustration into Hapkido.
He shrugged as Alec handed him a glass of wine, “I don’t know. I guess I just wanted to feel like I was in control of something. I still run that day through my head sometimes, trying to figure out if I could have done something differently.”

Alec took a drink of his wine and shook his head. “No. I know the family responsible. They would have tracked his brother down and killed anyone who got in the way. Including you.”

Magnus shrugged and drank his wine. He sometimes fantasized about having the power to move heaven and earth to save Will. It was stupidly unfair.

“You okay?” Alec followed up, dipping his head to catch his gaze. Magnus nodded with a sad smile, not feeling the heavy weight in his chest which usually accompanied thoughts of Will and Jem.

“I just miss him.” He reached out to tug at the hem of Alec’s shirt playfully. “He would have liked you.”

“You think?” Alec asked, sincere hopefulness lacing his voice.

“Absolutely. He came from a cop family, too, actually. Obviously, he and Jem didn’t get into the family business, but he talked about it sometimes. You remind me of him a little.”

“Yeah?”

“Yeah,” Magnus followed up softly.

Alec put a hand to Magnus’ hip, squeezing gently. “Well, I take that as a sincere compliment because you cared a lot about him. Those are big shoes to fill.”

Magnus smiled and leaned to peck his lips. “Since you’re sleeping with me, you do have an advantage here.”

“I do what I can.”
“You do it very well,” Magnus agreed, kissing him again. “Now quit stalling and fess up.”

Alec pulled back with a groan, “I need food first. Please?”

“How about food and story at the same time?”

“God, you’re worse than Izzy.”

“I take that as a compliment.”

So they grabbed Alec’s excellently made food, set themselves up on the sofa, and Alec told him all about the Lightwood family tradition. Apparently, it was a tradition, even before they came to America, for children of the House of Lightwood to have the crest tattooed on their person when they came of age. There were a lot of rumors about how it had become a tradition, but no conclusive answers.

“One of our distant cousins claim we were part of a secret organization that hunted demons, so we had to identify ourselves that way. My great-great-grandfather said that his great-great-grandmother had a lot of affairs, so her husband tattooed the children he accepted as his, and that’s how they distributed inheritance.”

“Wow, that is fucked up,” Magnus chimed in around bites of delicious chicken. Why was Alec wasting his talents on catching criminals? He really needed to convince him to let him open a new restaurant just for him to cook in.

“Tell me about it. Yet, here we are…”

“Okay, okay, so why do you have army mottos and a date on yours?” Alec paused mid-bite, clicking his tongue. “What? I can google too…” He decided immediately to let it go, seeing as he had dug up Will’s file without telling Magnus.

“All right,” he answered, “Jace and I got the Special Forces motto when we passed the Q course. The “Duty First” and date…” he cleared his throat and took a sip of wine, “I had that added when I came home.”
The shift in the mood was palpable when Alec started talking about the date portion of his tattoo. He’d expected that. Alec twisted his head in his discomfort, cracking it, and all Magnus wanted to do was massage it and forget the whole thing. But somehow he knew it was too important to ignore.

“Uhm,” Alec continued, setting his plate down and wiping his hands. “The date is actually...it’s the day I earned my Purple Heart.”

“Oh.”

“Her name was Veronica Lyle. Nicki. She came through West Point,” he flapped a hand, “old Army family. Dad, brothers, grandfathers, the lot. Most of them served in the 1st Infantry Division.”

Magnus nodded, “Hence, Duty First.”

“Yeah. That’s what she said whenever we caught a shitty job. She was a lot like Jace, you know? Always able to laugh everything off. She was the only woman in our unit, and I’m pretty sure she knew I was gay, so we stuck close together. When Jace went home, she was the person I was closest to. We served together all five years, right up until the end.”

Magnus set aside his wine glass, bracing for impact. But Alec’s expression was steady, his tone even. He wanted to believe that Alec had talked to someone about all of this, but he really, really doubted it.

“It was a routine escort job. Just a convoy of supplies from one base to a nearby village. We found out later that some higher up was on the take…”

“You were attacked?”
Alec nodded, looking away, “Explosives in the cargo. Snipers. The other guys in our unit were wounded, two died. I managed to cover my guys long enough so they could get out, but I had to carry Nicki back to base myself. I caught a bullet in my shoulder, got sent home.”

It did not escape Magnus’ attention that Alec didn’t say what happened to his friend.

“So they gave you a medal.”

“Yeah,” he dropped his head back against the sofa, “my best friend dies in my arms, and they make me go to an awards ceremony to talk about how great I was.” Magnus winced regretfully and reached out to stroke Alec’s hair, wishing there was something he could say to make it better. There wasn’t. Magnus knew better than anyone that there was nothing anyone could say.

“You know,” Magnus mused, putting his legs over Alec’s lap, smiling when Alec immediately dropped a hand to his thigh, “for two people, we have about six centuries’ worth of baggage.”

Alec snorted, “Only six?”

“Approximately. Three each.”

“I’m okay with that,” Alec concluded. He sniffed and nodded quickly. “Yeah, all the bullshit led to you, so...whatever, you know?”

Magnus hummed, “I love you.”

Alec answered as Magnus reached for him, “I love you, too.”

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Alec wasn’t sure how he felt about having sex after talking about Nicki. He hadn’t really talked about Nicki with anyone but Jace, and Magnus just accepted his story for what it was with so much grace and calm. People tended to react in the same ways; tell him that he was a hero or rant about
the military. Alec didn’t care for either reaction, and Magnus gave neither.

They kissed lazily, each of them trying to take a moment to let the baggage fall away. Alec picked up Magnus’ hand, threading their fingers together for a moment before guiding it up to his shoulder. Magnus instantly latched onto his neck, and Alec supported his movement by holding onto his hip. He focused all of his attention on Magnus’ lips, layering kiss after kiss there.

Alec melted when Magnus snaked his tongue into his mouth. He sucked on it, twining their tongues together, and pulled Magnus onto his lap. Magnus deftly maneuvered their bodies so they were situated comfortably even as they made out at a furious pace. Their noses crushed together, lips chasing, and teeth clacking. It harkened back to their early make out sessions when they were sexually frustrated and trying not to let things escalate. That same edge was there, just laced with more familiarity, with the relief of knowing they didn’t have to stop themselves.

Alec tugged at Magnus’ shirt, having enough thought left in his brain to pull it over his head instead of fucking with the buttons. He’d destroyed enough of Magnus’ shirts to know he would not appreciate it, no matter how good the sex was. Magnus was grabbing at him, shifting him to work his shirt up and off his body, barely breaking contact before they were slotting back together. Alec pushed himself toward the end of the seat, Magnus grunting a little in confusion. This wasn’t a sustainable position, and he had no desire to have couch sex. He wanted to take his time, be comfortable, and make sure Magnus was comfortable. Apparently, Magnus didn’t understand his intention until the last moment. He cursed, wrapping around Alec like a damn koala, as Alec lifted and stood them up.

“Alec!” he gasped, “Damn it, don’t you dare drop me!”

With a low chuckle, Alec hiked him over his hips, resisting the impulse to pretend to drop him.

“I got you, papi,” he teased, kissing at Magnus’ chin and the corner of his mouth.

“Don’t get cute with me,” Magnus hissed, crossing his ankles behind Alec’s back. Alec just laughed and walked them toward the bedroom with steady steps. He paused only to press Magnus up against the wall just outside the door, kissing him roughly and readjusting his grip. Magnus tilted his hips forward, his hardness pushing against Alec’s stomach. Alec groaned in response, shoving his tongue into Magnus’ mouth, trying to get impossibly closer.

“Bed ,” Magnus panted out, jerking his mouth away. Alec’s response was to trail wet kisses down his jaw and neck. He sucked at the hot skin above his clavicle, eliciting a high pitched whine from Magnus, whose nails dug into his shoulders. “Alec !”
With a growl, Alec jerked him away from the wall and used that momentum to get them to his bed. Before they got there, Magnus was squirming, trying to get down, but still kissing Alec like he was trying to consume him. Alec smiled at the inherent contradiction and released him. Because he was a freaking ninja Magnus was able to lower his legs without loosening his grip around Alec’s neck, moving down Alec like he was a goddamn pole. He immediately went for Magnus’ pants, undoing them and shoving them down without ceremony. Magnus kept his arms around Alec’s neck, so Alec had to remove his own pants while Magnus moved them toward the bed. He nearly tripped, smiling as Magnus laughed into his mouth. When the pants were gone and the underwear down, they fell clumsily onto the bed.

“You’re so graceful.”

“Fuck you, you’re no help.”

Magnus rolled himself on top, straddling Alec’s hips and swiveling his own.

“You know this about me,” he said with a wink, and Alec grabbed his hips to keep them still, fingers gripping so hard that Magnus would probably bruise. Wouldn’t be the first time. “You better have lube.”

Alec lifted his arms in a lazy shrug and put them behind his head, lacing his fingers together. “You’re on top, papi, you check.”

Magnus snorted, too giddy to be annoyed, “Wow. Just--wow.” Still, he leaned over to check, and Alec took that moment to appreciate the cut of his abs, how flexible he was. It was a little unfair how hot he was. How was Alec supposed to function under these conditions? Briefly, his mind’s eye flashed back to when they first met. His brain had malfunctioned then, too. Magnus had just been so goddamn beautiful, looking sleek and perfect like he’d stepped out of a magazine. Alec loved Magnus glammed up, decked out for whatever occasion, but he liked this better: Magnus naked and in his lap, watching Alec like a cat after its prey. He loved him, and that thought played on repeat in Alec’s head as Magnus tugged at Alec’s arm to get access to his hand. He coated Alec’s fingers with the thankfully-present lube, and guided his hand back to where he wanted it. Magnus did the work, holding Alec’s hand in place as he sunk back on his fingers.

Alec immediately twisted his fingers, scissoring him open, eyes locked on Magnus’ face as he did so. There was something intense and private about the way Magnus looked when they were together like this, the way he bit his lip and stubbornly kept his eyes open. When Magnus pushed down, Alec uncurled his fingers, reaching to brush over his prostate. Magnus let out a breathy sigh every time he did, and Alec was getting painfully hard, lifting his hips in the direction of Magnus’
“Magnus--Magnus are you--?” he broke off with a frustrated growl, twining his fingers sharply so that Magnus shouted out a curse. Then he lifted himself off Alec’s hand, positioned himself, and sunk down onto Alec’s dick. They moaned in unison, with Magnus dragging his nails down Alec’s chest. Alec nearly jerked himself into an upright position, but Magnus shoved him back down, following to kiss him filthy while rolling his hips.

“A Goddamn--” Alec grunted, and planted his feet on the bed, knees bending, as Magnus pushed himself back on his dick. Magnus pushed up on his hands, giving himself more leverage, and tossed his head back. All Alec could do was guide him with his hands, keep him steady, hold on for dear freaking life. Because then Magnus was sitting upright again, forcing a grunt from Alec, and swiveling his hips, grinding down with his mouth hanging open.

Alec blacked out for a short second when he came, completely helpless to Magnus’ whims. He woke to find Magnus sprawled out next to him, breathing hard and shallow, evidently just as affected. Alec rolled over, half-blanketing him, to kiss at his face and neck, nuzzling against him like a damn cat. Magnus responded with barely-there kisses, a hand in Alec’s hair while he tried to get his breath back.

Usually, they would talk after. Magnus was always crazy energetic after sex, barring a few certain instances. But this time, they languored in the silence, curled together. Alec pulled the sheets up around them, pressing kisses to Magnus’ chest, burrowing into him like he was a body pillow. He drifted off to sleep thinking that he’d fallen in love with the most perfect man, thinking Nicki would make so much fun of him for how soft he’d gotten.
Weeks went by and Magnus expected Alec to stop saying it. Or, at the very least, to taper off saying it. He didn’t. He said it every day, no matter if they saw each other or not. He said it over text, over the phone, by email, he even left notes if he had to leave Magnus’ place before he woke up. It was consistent, and Magnus felt like he was drowning in it. He loved it, he did, but he was concerned about the why. Very concerned. It was like someone had punched a hole in the Hoover Dam and now half the countryside was flooded. He was worried that it was just a first relationship thing, years of being repressed, an adrenaline high because of the weirdness in which it was first expressed. He wanted to say something, but he wasn’t sure how, not without hurting Alec’s feelings or making it sound...bad. There was nothing bad about it. He just didn’t want Alec to feel obligated, didn’t want him to think Magnus expected it. So he decided not to say anything, just let it rest. But with every day that passed, Alec didn’t let up. He didn’t stop.

It culminated in a weird dinner, where Magnus stared at him while he talked and ate, barely touching his own food. He wanted to chill out and just let it be. He wanted to do that and enjoy himself and let Alec express his feelings how he wanted to express them, but his brain just wouldn’t shut up.

“You know,” Alec said interrupting his train of thought, “it doesn’t matter how hard you try, I’m fairly certain my head won’t explode.”

That was enough to shake Magnus from his inner ranting.

“What?”

“You’re staring.”

Magnus tried to seem dismissive and relaxed, so he focused on his food. “So?”

“So you’ve been doing that for a week.”

Magnus scowled, “Cop.”

“Yeah,” Alec shot back sassily, pointing his fork in his general direction, “an annoyed but infinitely patient cop who waited a week for you to bring it up instead of asking.”
Magnus frowned, shoving his tongue into his bottom lip while he mindlessly twirled his fork, considering Alec all the while. He did, in fact, make a valid point. Alec rarely pushed Magnus to talk about anything he didn’t want to, especially his past. Did this pertain to his past? Maybe. Probably. Most likely. But the overarching point was that he didn’t know what to do about it. There were just these thoughts bouncing around in his brain with no signs of slowing down, and he didn’t want to instigate a fight just to avoid actually talking about it. But he also didn’t know how to tell Alec about it without starting a fight. So it was this weird, emotional Catch-22 that helped no one, and maybe this was why he’d ended so many relationships before it got to this point? Or maybe they’d gotten to this point and he’d handled it by breaking up with them? Ever since he’d met Alec, he’d become so much more self-reflective, it was such bullshit. Absolute garbage. He wanted to hide in a hole and die.

“Magnus?” Alec prompted gently. Damn him and his sweetness. Magnus tossed down his fork and crossed his arms petulantly. Alec rolled his eyes, set his own fork down, and turned his head to the side as he leaned back in his seat before turning his full attention back to Magnus. “Here we go.”

“What is that supposed to mean?”

“Nothing. I’ll tell you in a minute. What’s going on?”

Magnus twisted up his lips. “You’re gonna get mad at me.”

“Did you kill someone?”

“No.”

“Did you try to kill someone and now they’re coming after us?”

“This is not a Liam Neeson movie.”

“Then we’re probably good,” Alec said matter of factly, crossing his own arms. Magnus felt stupidly warm because the big dumb idiot didn’t even ask the question most people would ask in this situation. He wasn’t even sure what to do with that amount of trust. And respect. And love. Like, fuck him for not following the very predictable script that he’d been practicing and executing perfectly for decades. And fuck himself for being stupidly pleased about it. Magnus childishly kicked at the leg of the nearby chair.
“You keep saying it.”

“Uh huh,” Alec said, like he knew what the hell he was talking about. “Keep saying what?” Magnus scowled like Alec was the one being slow. “All right, I’m gonna get mad if you keep being weirdly vague like you’re trying to start a fight.”

Magnus jabbed a weak finger in his direction, “Stop doing that.”

“Doing what?”

“Predicting me.”

Alec threw his hands up in defeat. “I have no idea what’s going on. If I need to apologize for something, you’re just gonna have to spell it out for me.”

“You don’t--argh!” he growled out his frustration, tipping his head back against the chair. “I’m not trying to start a fight.”

“Okay.”

“It’s not important.”

“It is if it’s upsetting you this much.”

“Can’t you just leave it alone?” he begged, pathetically. Alec snorted.

“No. Because as you’re constantly reminding me, I’m a cop.”

“Alec-”
“Don’t give me that crap.”

“Alexander -”

“Better.”

Magnus inhaled huffily at the interruption. “It’s stupid and I’m being ridiculous, and I’d rather not embarrass myself by telling you about it.”

Alec stared at him, unimpressed, for a very long thirty seconds. Magnus knew it was thirty seconds because he counted every single one of them. People did not entertain Magnus’ nonsense for this long. Ever. Not even Ragnor or Catarina. Will certainly never had. They would tell him to go have a drink or sleep it off, and then come back and act like a human person. Magnus was never sure what Alec would say. He’d tried to predict him, which got him nowhere. Less than nowhere. If that was possible.

“Have I mentioned lately how much I hate your exes?”

Silence reigned for another thirty seconds as Magnus tried to figure out the direction of this conversation. It wasn’t going...well, he couldn’t even evaluate how it was going because he had no clue what was going on anymore.

“What?” he spluttered out eventually.

“Yeah,” Alec answered matter of factly. “Every single one of them. I hate them. I’ve thought about it, I really have, and I would set all of them up for murder. Without remorse. I’ve thought out how I could do it, too. Especially Camille, but to be fair that’s as much because of how she treated you as it is about my personal experience with her. I’d full on Mondego her ass and I wouldn’t lose a wink of sleep. No. I’d sleep better. Yeah.”

Magnus held his hands up, trying to slow him down. “You have officially lost me.”

Alec shoved their food to the side, reached across the table, and grabbed his errant hands, much to Magnus’ bewilderment.

“Alec-” He pulled a *what the hell* face, like Magnus had lost his mind. "Alexander, you don’t need to do this.”

“Oh, apparently I do. Because apparently, I have years of conditioning to undo.”

“I’d be offended-”

“Except I’m right,” Alec interrupted, nonplussed. Magnus scowled. “Does this need to be a drunk conversation?” Magnus shook his head. “Does it need to be a naked conversation?”

Magnus groaned, “Why are you like this?”

“Because I love you, dumbass!” he snapped back. Magnus pulled his lips in, trying to keep his expression as neutral as possible. Alec froze. Damn it.

“Oh my god,” he muttered, starting to pull his hands away. “Do you regret saying it?”

“No!” he all but shouted, pulling Alec’s hands back more firmly into his own. He was a little shocked that’s where his brain went, but how could he blame him? “I don’t regret anything. At all. I love you.”

Alec shook his head, obviously flustered, “Magnus…”

“It’s just--argh,” he grumbled, wriggling in his seat. There was an issue here. They were too far apart. There was a table between them. Alec looked like he wanted to run. This was exactly the opposite of what he’d wanted. With a resolved sigh, he released Alec’s hands, got up, circled around the table, and slid onto his lap. If Alec was startled by it, then it didn’t show. His arms immediately went around Magnus, settling comfortably. Actually, his hand rubbed up and down Magnus’ back, soothing and warm.

“Better?” Alec murmured. Magnus pressed his face into the side of Alec’s head and nodded. Not only because they had physical contact, but also because Alec’s all-too-knowing gaze wasn’t
directed right at him.

“You keep saying you love me.”

“Yes, I do.”

“You always say it.”

“That was the plan, yes.”

Magnus pulled back, incredulous, “You’re doing it on purpose?”

Alec didn’t look remorseful in the least, he didn’t even seem all that upset about Magnus being upset about it. What the actual fuck?

“Yes, Magnus, I’m doing it on purpose. My plan was and still is to say it as much as possible until you believe me.”

“That’s…” he trailed off, causing Alec to lift his brows. Magnus shrugged. “I don’t know what that is.”

“It’s me,” Alec answered, “attempting to undo 50 relationship’s worth of conditioning until you believe that I love you just like this. Even if you drive me nuts and leave your clothes everywhere and spend too much time on your hair and turn every workspace I have into a disaster area. I love you. And I absolutely refuse to let you doubt it even for a second.”

Magnus drew a hand down Alec’s face, tipping it up so he could get a look at the eyes he hadn’t wanted on him. They were stupidly pretty. Sonnet-worthy pretty. Too bad Magnus was a terrible writer.

“Pretty sure I don’t deserve you,” he mumbled.

Alec’s lips tightened briefly, an almost smile. “Then lucky for me it’s not your decision.”
He drew that hand down his neck, thumb tracing over the cord of muscle there. He was weirdly fixated on Alec’s neck, and the idle thought struck him that in another life, he would look damn good with a neck tattoo.

“I keep waiting for this to go away,” Magnus confessed gruffly. He traced the lines on Alec’s face. “It’s too much, right? And it keeps happening so fast. Can’t seem to get my footing.”

“I’ll catch you.”

“That’s what scares me,” he told him breathlessly.

“I’m scared too. I’m pretty much always scared you’re gonna wake up and realize I’m a dumb cop who can’t handle expensive restaurants and fancy parties, and you’ll run off with somebody better.”

“Call yourself dumb one more time, I dare you.”

Alec bounced his feet to jostle him. “See? You’re always taking care of me. You don’t let me talk bad about myself. You’re always making sure I eat.”

“You forget,” Magnus mumbled.

“Magnus, you’re always making sure Church is eating and he’s a stray cat.”

“He was looking thin last week!” he said defensively. Honestly, how that cat was still alive was beyond him.

“You take care of me,” Alec repeated seriously, “You make me laugh. You make me feel safe and sane. I don’t know how else to say it, but I’ll repeat myself every day for the rest of my life if I have to. You’re it for me, Magnus.”

“I love you.”
“I love you, too.”

Magnus drew a thumb over Alec’s chin, ran a finger over his lips. “Yeah. You do.”

“I really do.”

“Really?” he teased.

“Really really,” Alec shot back gravely.

“I really really love you, too. Sorry for being such a freak about this.”

“Magnus, you can tell me anything. Seriously. I don’t care how crazy you think it is, I want to know.” They kissed, light and slow, with no intent. Magnus thought these moments were probably the most intimate of his whole life; these light, chaste kisses with this beautiful man who loved him so fiercely. It was much more intimate, more exposed, than any of the kinkiest situations he’d found himself in with strangers. Alec could crush him like this, utterly ruin him with a mere press of lips, and Magnus was certain he’d never recover.

Magnus nuzzled his mouth against Alec’s. “Aku cinta kamu.” He kissed him again, lightly sweeping his tongue through Alec’s mouth. “Wǒ ài nǐ.” He bit tentatively at his bottom lip, making Alec smile. “Ai shiteiru.” He cupped Alec’s jaw, lifting his face to kiss him thoroughly, their tongues tangling briefly. “Main tujhe pyaar karta hoon.” This time Alec anticipated him, mouth open, and Magnus pressed their chests together. “Je t’aime.” Magnus barely got the words out this time, and Alec’s hands slid up under his shirt, flattening along Magnus’ spine. “Ana bahibik,” he breathed out, unable to pull his lips away. Magnus pushed against him again, slid his hands down to wrap his arms around Alec’s neck and press into the kiss. “Ya lyublyu tebya.” His voice was so low and raspy that he hardly recognized it, he hardly recognized himself as Alec thoroughly wrecked him. “I love you.”

Alec smiled against his lips, “You really need to learn Spanish.”

Magnus groaned with a small laugh, feeling a little too raw to be teased. But leave it to Alec to deliver just the right amount.
“Oh fine, what is it?”

Alec layered slow kisses on his cheeks and lips, before kissing him properly.

“Te amo.” Magnus tried it out, attempting to imitate, but was distracted by Alec’s hot mouth on his neck. He chuckled.

“That was terrible.”

“Well, maybe I need a better teacher.”

Alec pulled back, eyes flashing at the sound of a challenge. Magnus rolled his hips, adjusting his position on Alec’s lap in a teasingly sinuous move.

“You’re gonna get yourself in trouble, papi,” Alec warned.

“God I hope so.”
Chapter 47

Chapter Summary

Holiday party, to prove time has passed. Short and pointless, just as I like it.

“Magnus, I already told you twenty times, I want to go.”

“It’s just a company thing. I’ll have to talk to everyone, there’s gonna be kids.”

“I’m not hearing a downside.”

“I just think you’re gonna be bored.”

“Would you just pick out my clothes already?” Alec griped from the bed. He pointed uselessly in the direction of the closet even though Magnus couldn’t see it. “And they better come from that stuff we got--”

Magnus popped his head out, “Wear the suit.”

“The suit? For a holiday party?”

Magnus tilted his head, “It’s perfect.”

Alec went back to reading, “Fine, if that’s what it takes to get you to stop asking me if I’m sure I want to go.”

The suit was the one Angolo designed specifically for Alec. It was a beautiful suit, and Alec had gone in for three fittings before Angolo was totally satisfied with it. It fit Alec perfectly. Magnus was obsessed with Alec wearing it. The fabric was a very dark forest green which Magnus claimed brought out Alec’s eyes. Alec didn’t really care except that Magnus liked it. He came over to Alec’s side of the bed, bending to kiss him thoroughly. Alec got a little caught up in it, dropping his book in favor of reaching up for Magnus’ face.
“Thank you,” Magnus murmured against his lips. He dropped an arm, sliding it around Magnus’ waist comfortably, pulling him in closer. Magnus complied, getting onto his knees on the bed. When he was just unsteady enough, Alec surged up and tossed Magnus down onto the mattress, spreading out half on top of him. Magnus let out a yelp of surprised and Alec took advantage and slid his tongue into his mouth, rolling his hips down in tandem.

“This is not--not gonna help us get ready,” Magnus rasped out, fingers threading into Alec’s hair as he kissed his neck.

“Definitely helping me,” Alec teased, sliding a hand down Magnus’ side and pulling his thigh over his hip and slotted his own leg between Magnus’. “You need to relax, papi.”

“Love you,” Magnus said as they rutted together, “love you.”

Alec brought his mouth back to Magnus’, open and messily, pushing together. Alec slid his hand into Magnus’ sweatpants, clutching at the curve of his ass and using that leverage to grind them together. Magnus jerked his mouth away to gasp sharply, hips stuttering. Everything escalated so quickly that Alec could barely think straight; he just wanted Magnus to come, and that was his single focus.

“Come on, papi,” he said, latching back onto his pulse point. “Let go, let go.” Magnus lifted his hips, rotating them as he got himself off with Alec’s thigh. “There you go, there you go.”

….

Magnus shook himself out of it. Thinking about how Alec had fucked him into oblivion after that. He rolled out his shoulders, looking around the ballroom at his employees and their guests. It was a good turnout. But all Magnus could think about was how Alec brought him off three times before dragging him into the shower. They’d cleaned up and took a little too long to get dressed. Alec had spent most of the time distracting Magnus, blanketing himself around his back, kissing at his neck and ear while he put on makeup. Just thinking about it made Magnus down his second drink for the evening. He really needed to focus.

Alec was making that exceedingly difficult. He stood talking to one of the store managers and his wife, making gestures and smiling brightly. And that damn suit. It was so well-tailored to his body that it left little to the imagination. He wore a charcoal gray vest and a slightly darker shirt. His tie was thin-striped green and black, with the silver tie bar, cufflinks, and watch Magnus had bought
“He looks good,” Raphael said drollly, coming to stand next to Magnus, eating from a small plate of desserts. “You dress him?”

“Obviously,” Magnus answered. “Are you going to eat like that all night?”

“Oi, tiene cuidado, hermano. I’ll kick your ass, cop boyfriend or no.”

“Just because Alec is making me learn Spanish--”

“I told you to learn it years ago.”

“Yes, well, you never gave me three orgasms in one go.”

“Ugh! God, Magnus--”

“That’s what he was saying--”

“I hate you so much. Stop talking.”

“You started it.”

They were interrupted by Alec’s sudden appearance at Magnus’ side.

“What did you start?” he asked, brows furrow. Magnus smiled, unnecessarily adjusting the lapel of his jacket, and went up on his toes to kiss him.

“Nothing. Ignore him.”
Alec frowned. “I always ignore him. That’s our thing.”

“Oi, 5-0, tell your boyfriend to stop telling me about your sex life,” Raphael snapped, biting into a cream puff.

“I don’t know what makes you think I’ve got control over his mouth.” Magnus snorted. He looked at Raphael’s plate, lifting his brows. “You gonna eat like that all night?” Raphael let out a string of expletives and stormed off, leaving Magnus cackling in his wake. Alec put his hands up in confusion, turning to Magnus. “What? I thought he was on a diet?”

Magnus reached up to kiss him again. “You are my favorite thing ever.”

Just then the party planner was on the platform, speaking into the microphone to announce that dinner was about to be served. Magnus grinned so wide it hurt when Alec slid an arm around his waist to usher him to their table. Usually, he made rounds during the dinner, talking to everyone, getting face time with the families. That definitely wasn’t going to happen with Alec. He was going to make him eat first.

As a result, people came up to the table to speak with him and introduce their spouses. One man brought his twin babies over. Magnus watched with some amusement as Alec kept pushing food at him, asking people to wait for a second while he ate quickly. Raphael sat watching, highly entertained by Alec’s antics and Magnus’ fond irritation. He barely got two words out before Alec was putting something else onto his plate or into his hands.

“I can eat myself, you know.”

“Apparently not. No. No, he cannot hold your baby until he finishes his fish. Here, I’ll hold the baby, you talk, he eats.”

Alec did eventually release him from the table after he’d eaten, so he quickly made his rounds to tables with people he hadn’t spoken to yet. Surprisingly, Alec came with him, shaking hands and making small talk like he didn’t absolutely hate doing it. After a while, people got up on the small platform to make toasts, congratulating everyone on another good year with Bane, Inc, praising their CEO, and wishing everyone a happy holiday. Magnus was content, pleased with how everything had turned out, but there was a heaviness in the chest.

“How are you frowning at your own party?” Alec asked against his temple, handing him a bottle of
water. And just how did he know Magnus was at that point in the night where he got mopey due to alcohol? He didn’t want to think about it.

“Will always loved the holiday party. He insisted on karaoke, danced with everyone. It was the one time of the year he actually relaxed enough to enjoy himself.”

“He’d want you to enjoy yourself and celebrate.”

“I know.”

“Good,” Alec said before pecking his lips and pushing him in the direction of the platform. “Now go make an inspirational, holiday-related speech to make them love you.”

“Right, no pressure.”

“All the pressure. These people have children to feed.” He nudged him again. “Good luck, papi, love you.”
Chapter 48

Chapter Summary

The last time I talk about Camille, I swear.

Magnus had dressed a little more casually that morning, his cobalt shirt with the sequined collar, a silver braid belt, and his more comfortable combat boots. He had no intention of the leaving the Brooklyn office for some time, wanting to shut himself away in order to finish a proposal for his board of investors. Raphael had threatened him with bodily harm for the third time citing the damn thing, so he figured he’d have mercy on his CFO and complete it sooner rather than later.

What he did not expect was to find Camille Belcourt lounging in his desk chair, smirking at him. Magnus froze in the doorway, took a moment to process her presence, leaned back to check the hall and see if he was hallucinating, and then looked back at her. He scowled, shutting the door behind him.

“And here I thought vampires had to be invited in,” he snarked, heading right for his drink cart. It was barely 10 AM, but forgive him if he needed liquid fortitude.

“I think it takes just one invitation,” Camille mused blandly, tossing one of his files back onto his desk. Who knew how much information she had gleaned from one reading? Most of his confidential stuff was locked away at his apartment, but there was no telling with Camille. “I need a favor.”

Magnus scoffed, “You always need favors. Try again.”

“I miss you?”

“Ha.” He downed his drink. “The only thing you miss about me is my Visa.” She didn’t respond to that, but she didn’t deny it either. “I’m not inclined to do you any sort of favor for any reason. So if you could kindly scoot back to whatever hellhole you crawled out of, I’d appreciate it.”

“Magnus,” she whined at him with a pout, moving around the desk to reach out for him. Magnus dodged it and retreated behind his desk to keep a barrier between them. Better safe than sorry. She crossed her arms petulantly. “It doesn’t have to be like this, you know.”
“Oh, I do not know that at all. It’s like this because I desperately want it like this.”

“Well, I think it’s ridiculous that we can’t even have a civil conversation. All those years together and you think so little of me that you won’t even hear me out.”

Magnus felt a tiny crack in his resolve. That was why he intentionally avoided contact with Camille. She had the uncanny ability to make him feel guilty for things he hadn’t done and subsequently use that guilt to manipulate him into situations he would later actually be guilty for. One thing fed into another like a vicious cycle until Magnus blamed himself for the whole thing, instead of her. Part of him still wanted her approval, even just for a second, and to deny that part of himself would be a mistake. Overlooking that disease and swollen graft of his heart would ultimately affect his relationship with Alec. He had to lance the motherfucker.

“Fine,” he snapped, sitting down. “You have five minutes. Total. Including my answer. So choose your words wisely.”

With a far too peppy smile, she slid into the seat across from him and quickly explained the situation. She had a client, for what he didn’t know and didn’t care to ask, who was accused and being put on trial for fraud. She insisted he was innocent and a stand-up guy, but was being framed by the police. Essentially, she wanted Alec to locate and destroy evidence proving his guilt so that he could be acquitted and sue the police department. Magnus had a few different thoughts about that. For one, there was no telling what this guy was actually guilty of, but he knew for damn sure he hadn’t been accused of fraud. That was a straight up lie. For another, well, did he really even need to say it?

“Even if I ever for a second, considered asking him, Alec would never do that. He doesn’t bend when it comes to morals.”

She scoffed. “Oh please, Magnus, don’t be stupid. Everyone bends for the right price because it’s easy.”

“Not Alec. He’s incorruptible.”

“Oh Maggie, you always did get it bad for the pretty ones.”

“You should leave.”
“Magnus, come on. Just this one little thing.” She shrugged. “For me.”

“Camille, once upon a time, I would have destroyed the ground I stood on to make you happy. But you burned that feeling right out of me. Deal with the American legal system on your own.”

She folded her arms. “You’d really pick some cop over me?”

Magnus shrugged with his eyebrows. “We had some good times. In the past. Alec is my future.”

“Maybe I’ll just ask him myself.”

“Go right ahead,” Magnus said, tossing his arms uselessly. “Go on and ask him. Because I can promise you, he won’t do it. He cares about his job. He cares about me. And helping you would hurt me. So he won’t do it. It’s that simple.”

“We’ll see about that.”

“Camille, leave before I sic Raphael on you.”

“You’ll be hearing from me, Maggie.”

“Don’t hold your breath. Or do, I don’t really care.”

*

“So--” Alec started, drawing out his vowel for a long second.

“So?”
Alec and Magnus sat on the sofa facing each other, legs tangled together. Alec’s nose was buried in a case file while Magnus flipped through a magazine. He wasn’t sure when they’d gotten so domestic, so casual with each other, but it was a while back. This just felt normal, to spend evenings together, doing work or telling each other about terrible texts from their friends. Jace was constantly complaining about wedding planning while Cat sent cute pictures of Madzie or Ragnor entertained them with excerpts of his students’ papers.

“So Camille showed up at the precinct today.”

“Did she?” he mused, “And what did Elvira want?”

“You should know, she said she saw you, too.”

Magnus tossed aside his magazine to pay more attention, “Oh joy, we’re discussing Camille.” Alec looked unimpressed. “She came to the Brooklyn office this morning, I told her to fuck off. I didn’t think she’d actually have the nerve to go see you.”

“You did tell her to come see me, then?”

Magnus scowled. “Me saying go ahead and don’t hold your breath is not me condoning her asking you to commit a felony.”

Alec lifted his brows in agreement. “True.”

“She asked you to do it, then?”

“And then some. She also said I was stupid to think that you wouldn’t get tired of me and that one day you were going to ask me to do something similar...or something like that. I was focusing a lot of my attention on not slapping her at the time.”

“Camille has that effect on people.”

“Okay, so can we agree to notify each other if she shows up in the future? I’d really prefer not to be blindsided.”
“Absolutely.”

“Excellent,” he said, kissing him quickly. “What do you want for dinner?” he asked getting up and going to the kitchen. Magnus whined at the sudden loss of contact.

“Can’t we just order takeout?”

Alec spun on his heel and Magnus winced when he realized what he’d said.

“I’m sorry, is that what your doctor said you should do?”

“Oh my god--”

“No please, explain to me what you heard. Did he say greasy, fatty carbs were good for your stupidly high blood pressure or bad for your stupidly high blood pressure? And did I mention that your blood pressure is high?”

“Alec --”

“No, I’d really like to know what you heard. Because I’m starting to think it’s not a blood pressure issue. Maybe we should take you to a neurologist--”

“Fine, just boil me chicken, and put me in a home already!”

“Uh huh, yeah, I’m the crazy unreasonable one here. It’s definitely me.”

“Would you just--?”

“Start organizing the twenty different pills you’re gonna have to take, and buy more health insurance? Sure, yeah, I’ll get right on it.”
Magnus threw his hands up. “All right, I give up!” He got to his feet. “Do you want help?”

“Yeah, go defrost your chicken.”

Magnus scowled and did as he was told. Alec swatted at him as he went by, so Magnus doubled back to shove him, only to dart out of his reach. Alec retaliated by throwing a potholder at his head, which Magnus easily ducked. He grabbed a wooden spoon and chucked it at him, which Alec, of course, caught and pointed at him threateningly.

“Don’t mess with me, Bane, or I’ll make you eat cardboard.”

“Oh please, Raph orders in every day.”

“I will make that phone call.”

“You wouldn’t. And Raph wouldn’t betray me.”

“He so would.”

Magnus changed tactics, sidling up to Alec with that smirk he knew drove him a little nuts. Alec pursed his lips, pretending to be unaffected, but couldn’t hide the way his muscles leapt when Magnus teasingly slid his hands over the sides of his torso.

“I think I could change your mind,” he offered. But before Alec could respond, he squeezed down on his sides, tickling. Alec shouted in protest, scrambling to get Magnus’ hands away, and they ended up in fighting positions, play squabbling and taunting each other. Magnus succeeded in edging Alec out of the kitchen. Alec almost got the upper hand by knocking Magnus to the couch, but he backrolled and landed on his feet. Alec vaulted the couch, lost his footing, and crashed into Magnus, sending them both to the floor. Naturally, they each tried to pin the other, resulting in a wrestling match that was more giggling than wrestling.

Alec ended up on top, but Magnus somehow had his arms pinned, making it a draw. They managed to keep straight faces for all of three seconds, when Magnus lifted his head to kiss Alec’s nose. Alec broke first.
“Goddamn it, you’re such an idiot!” he scowled. Magnus dropped his head down to the floor and cackled, feeling the way Alec moved against him in reaction.

“I so win.”

“Nuh-uh, I’m obviously on top here.”

Magnus lifted his hips teasingly, “Power bottom.”

Alec laughed through his nose. “Perv,” he said before leaning down to kiss him lightly. Magnus absorbed it like a blow to the stomach, as those kisses of his had the same effect. If Alec held his breath, Magnus got dizzy, even when he was flat on his back. “Love you,” Alec said between kisses.

“Love you more.”

“Love you most,” Alec shot back, lifting his brows. Magnus’ jaw dropped and he wriggled in his excitement.

“You watched it!”

Alec snorted, “We are nothing like the Reagans. That show is nonsense.”

“I’m sorry, rich, white cop family in New York?”

“And the resemblance ends there,” Alec argued, rolling off to the side when Magnus released him. They sat up, using hands and leverage to get back to their feet while they bickered. They straightened out each other’s clothes, and Magnus attempted to argue his side while Alec tried to straighten his hair. He’d gotten to the point of trusting Alec’s judgment on that front, which was weird for him. Well, no one was there anyway.

Alec made dinner, following Magnus’ doctor’s orders, while Magnus sat on the counter,
chattering. If Magnus thought about Camille for the remainder of the evening, it was a passing thought and he couldn’t remember it.
Chapter 49

Chapter Summary

Ragnor! Finally!

Alec was running late. He knew it was going to happen, so he’d texted Magnus to meet him at Mario’s. He thought for at least an hour that he was going to have to reschedule again, but luckily the captain saved his ass five hours of paperwork with a little-known shortcut. Thank god for grouchy administrators. He stalked into Mario’s at a furious pace, tightening up his tie and looking around to zero in on a familiar shape. The hostess, who was new, glared at him strangely, but Helen saved him. She swanned in from stage left, grabbing his elbow and dragging him in the direction of where he assumed Magnus was waiting.

“You are so late!” she hissed under her breath, pinching him.

“Ow! Quit it!” he snapped back quietly, barely avoiding running into another patron. “I know, Helen, and I called him first.”

“I’m sorry have you met Ragnor Fell? No, I have. I’ve met him. And you’re crazy!” She tugged him out of the way of another waiter and shoved him in the direction of the booth where Magnus was sitting with the infamous Ragnor. He was a handsome middle-aged man with dark eyes and sharp features. His forehead and jawline were remarkably pronounced, and Alec thought he’d look amazing photographed. What’s more, he was definitely dressed like a teacher instead of Magnus’ usual crowd. Alec found himself relaxing at the thought.

“Alexander,” Magnus said, catching sight of him and brightening. “What are you doing? Get over here.” Magnus’ voice brought his muscles back to life and set him in motion. He moved right to his side, greeting him with their usual kiss, and slid into the booth. Ragnor watched him like a hawk.

“So, Detective Lightwood,” he drawled, “do you always leave my friend waiting for you like some tawdry housewife in a poorly written rom-com?”

Wow, he went right for the jugular.
“Ragnor!” Magnus scolded incredulously. Alec took comfort in the fact that he dropped a hand to Alec’s thigh and didn’t seem tense at all.

“Magnus, it’s fine,” Alec said, keeping his eyes on Ragnor, who gestured a See? movement at Magnus. “I’m sorry I’m late. And no, I don’t usually let him wait. One time is a time too many, in my opinion. Unfortunately, my job doesn’t lend itself to a reliable schedule.”

“So you admit--”

“But neither does Magnus’,” Alec continued, reaching for his water glass. “It works out.”

Magnus beamed at him and looked over smugly at a very stoic-looking Ragnor. Alec wouldn’t say he was afraid of the man, but he definitely wasn’t totally comfortable either. There was a reason Magnus had put off their introduction for so long, and Alec really didn’t want to screw it up.

“Well,” Ragnor said, flipping out a napkin and dropping it into his lap, “Shall we order?”

Magnus patted his thigh as he waved Helen over. Apparently, silence was a good sign. Alec let out a short sigh and settled in.

Helen, of course, was obnoxious and embarrassing as she pretended to talk up Alec like she was his elderly aunt. She even ruffled his hair at one point, making Magnus hide his laugh in his drink. Alec spread his arms in his best, what the fuck, I hate you gesture he could manage. Helen just spat her tongue out at him and left him to Ragnor’s confused staring.

“Obviously you get along with the staff here,” Ragnor commented after Helen brought their food. “Do you come here often?”

Alec frowned. The question was laced with so much tension, but he had no clue where it was coming from.

“Every once in awhile. Magnus forgets to eat sometimes--”

“I do not--”
“Halloween,” Alec interrupted shortly.

“That was--”

“Last Tuesday.”

“I--”

“This morning.” Magnus snapped his mouth shut and went back to cutting his fish. “I rest my case.” He picked up his own silverware. “Mario’s is one of the few diet-friendly places he can eat from last minute.”

It was Ragnor’s turn to frown, eyebrows pinching together. “Diet? What?”

Magnus flapped his hand dismissively, so Alec nudged him with his elbow. “He’s got high blood pressure, so he’s on diet restrictions until he gets it under control.”

“It’s ridiculous,” Magnus groused.

“Shut up, and eat your fish.”

“Tyrant.”

Alec cut his glance over to Magnus, who was smiling to himself, before looking over at Ragnor. The teacher was watching him contemplatively. Alec was trying not to be annoyed by it, but he and Magnus had been together for nearly seven months. The overprotectiveness was late in the game and strange, but he attempted to restrain the feeling of defensiveness. He’d met Camille, and Ragnor had every right to be wary of any new person in Magnus’ life.

“So, Alec, as an ex-military man, what do you think of this push to arm teachers with handguns?”
“Christ, Ragnor, must you soapbox--?”

“I think it’s stupid,” Alec said flatly, continuing to eat. Ragnor’s brows shot right up, obviously not expecting that answer.

“Oh?”

Alec looked up at him briefly, realizing he wanted more explanation. He shrugged.

“I was trained with the philosophy that if you pull a trigger, you’re taking a life. Teachers aren’t prepared to do that, and they shouldn’t be.”

“Interesting point.”

“It’s just the truth. We don’t need more or nothing solutions when it comes to gun control. And I sure as hell didn’t serve to watch more kids die for nothing over somebody’s hobby.”

“I’m surprised to hear that coming from a veteran. Most of you lot are so patriotic, you’d shoot eagles out your arses before letting anyone speak a bad word about America or the second amendment for that matter.”

Alec huffed a laugh and answered: “I love America more than any other country in the world and, exactly for this reason, I insist on the right to criticize her perpetually.”

“James Baldwin,” Ragnor said with a nod, “Color me impressed.” He shot Magnus an inscrutable look. Magnus barely reacted. Alec turned his head between them like it was a ping-pong match.

“I told you he reads.”

“You also said he bypassed a higher education,” Ragnor shot back.

Magnus shook his head, spooning up rice, “I told you he reads.”
“He’s a cop, what was I supposed to think?”

“I told you. He reads. Did you assume I meant *Twilight*?”

Ragnor crossed his arms. “The Apple Exec?”

Magus threw down his fork and tossed a hand in the air, “Oh for-! Why does everyone insist on bringing that up? How is a week-long affair the yardstick now?”

Ragnor leaned toward Alec conspiratorially, and suddenly the air in the room shifted toward something more positive.

“He was the absolute worst.”

“I have heard,” Alec said with a grave nod.

“He wore nothing but suits and talked about himself in the third person. Called me *bro* once.”

“Reprehensible,” Alec replied with a shake of his head.

“He put his mother in one of those terrible homes for half dead people, and left Magnus at my birthday party to meet his frat brothers on a yacht on the Hudson.”

Magnus flung his arms up. “What have I ever done to you?!?” he demanded, a little hysterically. Alec was desperately trying to hold in his laughter. Magnus had dated the absolute worst people he’d ever heard about, and it was *awesome*.

“Wait,” Alec said, feigning offense, turning a sneer on Magnus. “You went out with this frat star for a *week* and he got to meet Ragnor?” Magnus immediately opened his mouth to drag him, obviously aware of Alec’s teasing.
“Actually, that is an excellent point, Alec. Why is it, Magnus, that I’ve had to endure the scum of the colonies after days, and haven’t had the pleasure of meeting this gentleman for months?”

Magnus gaped at the pair of them in turn. Alec wasn’t sure if he just didn’t have a good answer, or if the turn in atmosphere was so unexpected that he didn’t know how to react to their teaming up against him.

“Yeah, Magnus,” Alec followed up, taking a bite of his potato, “why do the colony scum get to meet Ragnor first?”

He scoffed, staring at him indignantly for another moment before returning to his food, lips pursed in sheer petulance.

“I hate you both.”

So Ragnor went back to interrogating him about the things he’d read and the places he’d been. Alec fielded those questions easily enough, now that he knew he wasn’t going to be thrown into a political quagmire of a conversation. Magnus was shockingly quiet for most of the dinner, making the occasional comment or correcting Ragnor’s interpretation of their shared history. Ragnor had a plethora of Magnus stories, and thoroughly enjoyed sharing them. Eventually, Ragnor excused himself to the restroom, although Magnus openly mocked him for still calling it the loo after so many years in the US.

When Ragnor was out of sight, Alec angled himself toward Magnus, caught his chin, and tipped his face up. Magnus submitted to this in silence, letting Alec examine him. It was right then that Alec realized this was Magnus at his most comfortable, caged in by the two people who knew him best and loved him for it.

“I like him,” Alec offered quietly. One corner of Magnus’ mouth quirked up.

“I know.”

“Good,” he answered, lifting an arm to slid it around Magnus’ shoulders. They moved together easily, mouths meeting in the middle for soft, open presses. Magnus clutched at his free hand, lacing their fingers together. Alec thought he would die about how piercingly sweet the moment was. Instead, he focused on kissing Magnus, lightly massaging lips, nuzzling together. He couldn’t help but smile when Magnus did.
Ragnor came out of the restroom, turned a corner, and met Helen, who was on her way back to the table. However, she was stopped, as if waiting, holding the water pitcher and looking at her phone. Ragnor bristled at the girl’s impudence, but then caught sight of his own dinner party and immediately understood. Alec and Magnus were sitting closer together, curled toward one another, kissing and smiling at each other. It looked sweet, like two puppies snuggled together, instead of disgusting, like all of Magnus’ other partners. Bugger him, Magnus looked happy for once.

“Oh bloody hell,” Ragnor grumbled, “They’re adorable.”


Ragnor glared at her. “That is not a word.”

She rolled her eyes, “Yeah, and bloody isn’t an adjective.”

“Just because you colonists--”

“Here we go.”
“Alexander, I’m fine, stop fussing.”

“Just because you have someone driving you around doesn’t mean you shouldn’t bundle up. For moments exactly like this. It’s freezing, Magnus.”

Magnus scowled and submitted to Alec’s ridiculous quest to keep him warm. He’d forced a hat and scarf on him and now stood rubbing his hands while they waited for Ernesto to pick them up from Mario’s. Dinner with Ragnor had gone exceedingly well; they were already co-conspirators and loving it. Apparently, no one else quite embarrassed Magnus the way they could. Magnus huffed and finally swatted Alec’s hands away. Instead, he pressed up against him with his hands between them, so Alec couldn’t complain, and sighed when Alec put his arms around him.

Despite all evidence to the contrary, that had been the most stressful dinner of Magnus’ life. If ever there were two people more important to him, he had yet to find them. Putting them together at a table and hoping for the best was the scariest thing he’d ever done. And he’d done some ridiculous things in his illustrious past. But no, Alec handled Ragnor like it was old hat, and the two of them bonded over books Magnus had never heard of, let alone read. It was...wonderful, really.

“So I need to tell you something.”

Magnus groaned. God, of course something would swoop in to ruin the perfectly good moment he was having.

“Is it going to make me more happy or less happy?” he asked petulantly, knocking his forehead to Alec’s shoulder. He let out a slow exhale when Alec shrugged.

“I don’t know. Both, neither?”

“Can you tell me later, then?” He felt Alec shake his head no, so he tipped his head back to look up at him. The line between his brows was fairly deep and he looked tense. Magnus wanted to stamp his foot like a brat because it really wasn’t fair. “All right, go ahead,” he said with a sigh.

“Right after we started dating, I found out my dad was having an affair.”
Magnus froze, trying to process and change direction at the same time. That was quite unexpected. He flipped through his mental notes on the Lightwoods and felt himself relax. No storm was coming for him that night.

“Oh, thank god,” he breathed out in relief. Alec pulled a face.

“What?”

Magnus pulled back a little, bobbling his head dismissively. “That answers like ten questions I have that I had no desire to ask. Your family happens to be a minefield.”

“Okay?”

“Darling, I love them, but they are a little nutty.” He flattened his hands on Alec’s chest, thumbing over the collar of his pea coat. “Any reason you decided to tell me right now?”

Alec sniffed and looked away over Magnus’ shoulder, eyes searching for an answer that probably wasn’t there. This explained much of the tension between him and Robert, for sure, but Magnus could only wonder if the others knew. If Maryse knew, if she did, why was she still with him? Magnus tipped his head thoughtfully, money probably. Reputation. Maryse may not have been raised with it, but she had definitely earned it over the course of her life. A cheating husband was no credit to her.

“I’ve spent my whole life looking for something permanent, you know? Like them. Their relationship, their careers, all of it just felt solid and lasting. I made so many decisions trying to get to that place, and it wasn’t real.”

“Alexander…”

“Maybe it was before. But if it was real before, it would still be real now. It can’t be both.”

“So what are you saying?” Magnus asked with a frown, feeling a weight sink into his gut and take hold there. Sometimes when Alec got philosophical, it was difficult to know which direction he would take. But then he looked back at Magnus with such an intense gleam in his eye; that
determined gleam which always meant some complicated plan or more work than strictly necessary for a Saturday morning.

“I still want it. I thought it was because of them, because of what they had and our family, but it’s not. I want that permanent thing...I want forever because of you.” Magnus couldn’t have been more shocked if he tried for it. How was it that he kept saying things like that? Just throwing those words onto the table between them like it was nothing? Magnus was so accustomed to people measuring their words, making vague promises so they could change their minds later. Did Alec know nothing of loopholes? Because Magnus couldn’t process the idea that he didn’t want or need one. He must have been quiet for too long.

“Are you okay?” Alec probed, his tone wary but tinged with humor.

Magnus snapped out of it. “Well, considering I thought you were about to have a meltdown and break up with me, yeah I’m fantastic.” Alec scowled, looking ready to hit someone, but Magnus scoffed. “Yes, yes, you hate my exes, I get it.” Alec fixed him with a pointed glare.

“I really hate them.”

“Yes, but if they weren’t exes, then I wouldn’t have you, so who cares?”

Alec smiled and kissed him quickly. “Good point.” Magnus’ head was spinning a little from the onslaught of Alec. He was constantly too much and not enough all at once. “I don’t know, I guess watching my parents made me realize how fragile this could be and...Magnus, I wouldn’t ever want to do anything...I don’t think I could live without you. I don’t want to know what that’s like.”

“Alec--”

The moment was ruined by two simultaneous events: Ernesto pulling up at the curb and Alec’s phone ringing. Alec let out a rueful laugh, clearly frustrated, but moved away to answer his phone. His physical absence felt like a mosquito bite; ever-present and irritating, just wanting some relief. Unfortunately, the phone call sounded like work. He hung up the phone and turned to Magnus with a wide shrug. Magnus reached out to pick up his hand.

“It’s okay. Go do your job, detective. I’m not going anywhere.”
He sighed, using their clasped hands to bring Magnus in for a kiss. It was intentionally short. He had a job to do, and the sooner he finished, the sooner he was home. He kissed him one more time before letting him climb into the car and shutting the door behind him. Magnus knocked his head back against the headrest and pointedly ignored Ernesto’s suggestive grin.

“No Señor Alec?”

“No,” Magnus answered with a miserable sigh, “just got called in.”

“Ay Dios, all these people killin’ each other.”

“Tell me about it.”

“Señor Alec is good man. Good cop. Not like some of these men shooting people. He’ll catch the bad guy, make ’em do right.”

“He does his best, Ernesto.”

“Good man like that, he raise good kids.”

“Ernesto,” Magnus started warningly, pulling out his phone to text Ragnor.

Ernesto briefly lifted his hands in defeat. “I just say it, I just say it.”

“Uh huh, you just keep that baby mojo to yourself, sir.”
Chapter 51

Chapter Summary

New chapters: 42-51
Smut ahead.

Chapter Notes

How has this fic gotten this long? I do not know. I did not plan this. I have planned none of it. It simply happens. Sigh.
At any rate, this continues for some time. I have about 20 pages of unfinished content left to go. That’s if I don’t add any more subplot.

So if you have thoughts or a wishlist for this fic, comment in the thingy.

After Ernesto dropped him at the apartment, Magnus fed Chairman Meow again and poured himself a drink. He grabbed his laptop and took everything into the bedroom, and changed into his sleep clothes. The living room felt too open and empty. He got settled in the pillows and blankets, slid on his reading glasses, and let Chairman climb onto his lap while he read reports.

When he started, the clock read 9:32, and when he checked it again, it was coming on midnight. Work had a way of sucking him in that way. Unfortunately, Alec still wasn’t home either. That meant he would probably crash at his own apartment, as it was closer to the precinct. Magnus sighed and took off his glasses so he could pinch at his eyes. Whatever, that was the job, right? It would be stupid to get upset now, after months of knowing that. And actually, he wasn’t entirely sure why it was just now bothering him. He set his laptop aside and got up to wash his face and brush his teeth. It was ridiculous...why the hell would it suddenly bother him now? How many dinners had Alec left early? How many dates had he canceled near to last minute? How many times had they gone a week without seeing each other because their schedules were too complicated? All of those things had happened more than once, and Magnus had been disappointed, but it never bothered him. It never bothered him because he knew Alec would prefer to spend time with him. Because they would make time for each other after. That would still happen. Alec would still come back to him. Alec still preferred to be with him.

Magnus barely had time to close his eyes, to get settled into sleep when he heard the door open. Alec’s dark shadow walked through the room and straight for the bathroom. The shower turned on. Every time he caught a case, Alec would shower before seeing Magnus. Not that Magnus believed it was a conscious decision to do so. He figured it was just another way for Alec to keep parts of his life separate; to protect Magnus from the ugliness.
When the bathroom door opened, steam and the smell of sandalwood shampoo came with Alec. The light that framed him was quickly extinguished and Magnus heard the sound of clothes being moved around. Next thing he knew, the bed next to him was shifting and Alec’s hands were reaching for him. Magnus immediately moved into his arms, adjusting his position to accommodate him. In the dark, Alec’s mouth descended to his.

“Bad one?” Magnus asked him. Alec nodded, slanting his mouth over Magnus’, arm gripping him closer.

“You should be asleep,” he chided between kisses. Magnus just hummed, pushing himself into Alec’s warmth, feeling calmer.

“You weren’t here,” Magnus grumbled, catching Alec’s bottom lip to tease it.

“That doesn’t mean--” Alec laughed through his nose. Magnus cut him off with a searing kiss, sweeping his tongue through Alec’s mouth thoroughly.

“Move in with me,” he said on a whisper. The second those words were out of his mouth and between them, Magnus knew it was exactly what he wanted. He knew that’s what was bugging him at the end of everything. Alec should have been coming home to where Magnus was. Everywhere else was a stop off, a temporary space. Apparently, it was Magnus’ turn to completely floor Alec. Finally.

“Sorry-what?” Alec followed up stupidly, pushing up on his elbows to look down at him. Magnus nodded, lightly tugging at his shirt.

“Yeah. Keep your place or whatever, but move in with me. I want you coming home to me.” His hand moved up to Alec’s neck, nails dragging over skin. “You want forever? Prove it.”

Slowly, a smile dawned on his face, opened mouthed, his nose and eyes crinkling. Magnus wasn’t sure he’d ever seen that smile. It was this combination of awe and joy and love. Just completely unfettered, and it was as lovely as it was heartbreaking. Alec did wear a mask, you just didn’t know that until you made him happy.

“Yeah?” Alec breathed out, barely vocalizing. Magnus nodded quickly, not able to say anything back when he was just so damn happy. Overwhelmingly happy. Alec answered by diving down to kiss him fiercely, stealing the breath right from his lungs. Alec kissed down his neck, making
Magnus squirm against him, lifting to put a leg over his hip.

He didn’t keep him there long, though, because Alec kept moving down his body. He shoved up Magnus’ shirt, biting and licking as he went, so Magnus pulled it off and tossed it. Alec teased down his sweatpants, pressing kisses to his hips and thighs. Magnus let out a whine, moving his hips to get Alec’s mouth where he wanted it. Alec hummed and obliged, bringing Magnus to full hardness with lips and twirls of his tongue. Magnus gasped when that pretty mouth vanished, only to find itself lower. Magnus groaned when Alec, sitting back on his knees, hauled Magnus into a better position and applied his mouth to prepping him. Magnus was sure that Alec would prep him and then move along, but instead, his hand reached up to Magnus’ dick, holding him firmly and bringing him off so quickly that Magnus didn’t have time to adjust.

Then Alec was bending Magnus’ legs, back, gently bringing his knees to his shoulders. In retaliation, Magnus hooked them over Alec’s shoulders, urging him closer. Alec did one better and bent forward to kiss him messily, tangling their tongues together. Alec sucked his bottom lip, biting down a little and soothing it with his tongue.

“I love you,” Alec said, “love you.” Magnus cupped his head, keeping his mouth with his for a while longer, repeating those words back to him over and over. He cut off with a groan as Alec slid into him, rocking their bodies together while Magnus rolled his hips up to take him in deeper. Magnus loved the burn, loved the way Alec ground into him, swiveling his hips. Magnus let out a choked gasp as he hit his prostate, moving over it repeatedly. He clutched at Alec’s shoulders, knowing he was digging into skin. Alec moved over him, punctuating every movement with a roll of his hips.

Magnus got his second wind, feeling himself harden again as Alec picked up speed. At that point, he lost track of his mouth. It was just an outpouring of love and encouragement, spurring Alec on. Alec’s teeth were gritted together from effort, but even in the strain, he was smiling. He kept bending forward to catch Magnus’ lips for kisses, short, messy kisses that bent Magnus in half but felt amazing anyway.

“You feel so good, papi,” Alec rasped out, “Fuck, I love you, love you so much--”

Magnus strained his neck to kiss him and sunk his fingers into his hair, with that angle he clenched down as Alec pulled out. It drew something low and guttural from Alec’s throat, and he shoved into Magnus sharply, once and then twice, hips stuttering as he finished. Magnus grabbed his own dick and brought himself off watching Alec that way.

They didn’t bother cleaning up, just buried themselves under the blankets, cuddling together face to face. Their hands wandered, groping each other’s planes and curves while they whispered between light kisses.
“I’m throwing away all of your furniture and keeping your books.”

“You have no shelf space.”

“I’ll build more.”

“You do not know how to build bookshelves.”

“Pssht, yes I do.”

“Bullshit, name one thing you’ve built ever.”

“Bookshelves.”

Alec snorted.

They fell asleep talking logistics, holding onto each other until they were too tired to keep their eyes open.
Chapter 52

Chapter Summary

More smut ahead.
Dear readers, I shall be ranting at the end notes of this chapter. Feel free to skip it, as it is not pertinent to the story.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Alec, as usual, was awake before the sun rose, and even though Magnus could feel just how awake he was, he staunchly ignored all six feet and two hundred pounds of him. Magnus kept his eyes stubbornly shut, turning on his side even as Alec slid his arms around Magnus’ waist to haul him in close. He grumbled a little, but settled back into the curve of his body, submitting even while ignoring. Alec wasn’t content with that, however. Magnus felt him nuzzle into the side of his head, nip at his ear, kiss along his jaw, and his neck. He hummed in response, but kept his eyes shut.

“Papi,” Alec whined, “wake up.” He nuzzled at Magnus’ jaw and licked the sensitive skin underneath.

“Too early,” Magnus groused, trying to move away, “need sleep.”

Alec laughed through his nose and hitched a leg over Magnus’, essentially trapping him there. Magnus squirmed, turning in Alec’s grasp to face him. Alec kissed him before he could even settle. Magnus snaked his arms up around Alec’s neck, ignoring the morning breath in favor of pushing his hips against Alec’s.

“Still too early,” Magnus muttered, shoving his face into Alec’s neck and snuggling there. He didn’t mind morning sex in general, but he preferred the extra, half-conscious snuggling instead. Alec loved cuddling, which would surprise most of the known universe, and Magnus had never been with someone like that. He found he really liked it. Really liked it.

“Nuh-uh,” Alec said laughing through his nose. “Six-thirty is the best time. Hands down.”

For a very long few seconds, Magnus was confused by the look on his face. But then he actually processed the words he’d just said and cringed.
“Oh my god,” he said, dropping his head.

“I’ve got like a hundred more.”

“You are such a fucking dork. How did I not know about this?” he said whiningly, pushing out of his grip. Alec grabbed at his sides, mostly groping and tickling instead of trying to hold onto him.

“I’ve been hiding my true self from you,” Alec laughed, rolling to trap him on the bed. “How do you cut Rome in half?”

Magnus struggled not to laugh, to keep a straight face, and struggled to get up, “Oh my god, do-oh-ohn’t--”

“With a pair of Caesars,” Alec finished smugly. He snorted at Magnus’ wince.

“I can’t believe this--”

“Why do cows have hooves?”

“Is this really how you want to spend the morning?”

“Because they lactose.”

“Oh dear god, I have to dump you now. I can’t date such a dork.”

“I would tell you a construction pun, but I’m still working on it.”

He looked so proud of himself for that one that Magnus just lost it, collapsing onto the bed and covering his face with his hands. Alec kept telling him stupid pun jokes, trying to pry his hands away from his face. Magnus eventually caved, if only to push Alec’s hands away, and Alec tried kissing him, but they were laughing too much for one to properly land.
“If you say one more, I will dump you--” Alec cut him off with a thoroughly messy kiss, licking into his mouth like his life depended on it. Magnus hummed into it, tired but content from laughing, and already hard. Apparently, Magnus’ dick liked Alec’s stupid sense of humor. “You are the weirdest,” Magnus said pulling back from the kiss.

“Uh-huh, but you’re stuck with me,” Alec said, pecking his lips sharply. “Cause you love me. And you want me to live with you.” He paid more attention to Magnus’ neck, nuzzling, and licking.

“Horrible mistake. I take it back,” he teased with a snort, cutting himself off with a groan when Alec latched onto his pulse point.

“Mmm, do I need to get back into your good graces?” Alec asked. He went for the lube on the nightstand and then was moving over him, lining their bodies up. He slid his hands under Magnus’ thighs, lifting them so they were slotted together. “I can do that.”

“The court will consider it.”

Alec smirked and bent forward to kiss him messily. He sat back on his knees and patted the side of Magnus’ thigh, so he did as he was asked and got on his hands and knees, pushing his ass back into Alec’s hands. Those hands smoothed over his skin, clenching his fingers into the muscle there, massaging. Even for a gay man, Alec was obsessed with Magnus’ ass. That was the first place his hands went, that’s where they liked to stay. But then his hands were gone and was replaced with his mouth. Alec kissed and licked at his hole, supplementing with fingers to work him open. Magnus groaned and hung his head, doing his best to breathe properly.

“Why did the coffee file a police report?” Alec asked laughingly, biting the curve of Magus’ ass. He tried really, really hard not to laugh and shook from the effort. “Cause he got mugged.”

“You are the fucking worst,” Magnus managed to get out as he laughed.

“Why did the picture go to jail?”

Magnus twisted his head around, “You do know your face is buried in my ass, right?”
“It was framed!”

“Oh my god, stop punning around and fuck me already!”

Alec collapsed against his back, giggling and kissing along Magnus’ spine. He muttered some things in Spanish Magnus didn’t pay attention to because Alec brought his hand around to Magnus’ dick, thumbing over the tip and stroking him firmly. Alec bit at his shoulder blade once more before pulling back, drawing his hands down Magnus’ back, stopping at his hips. That’s when Magnus felt pressure at his hole and did his best to relax into it. He relished that burn, grunting as Alec slid in. Of course, Alec moved maddeningly slow, barely pulling out before pushing back in. Magnus arched his hips, trying to spur him on, but Alec clenched down on the give of his hips.

“I don’t think so, papi.”

“Alexander,” he whined. Was that really his voice right now? Ugh. Pathetic. Alec had that horrible, horrible effect on him. He’d had more lovers than he could remember, been in kinkier, more intense sexual situations, and yet being with Alec made him forget every single one. He couldn’t think about anything but Alec when they were together. Hell, he rarely thought of anything else when they weren’t together.

Alec kept his pace slow and steady, humming contentedly and telling Magnus how perfect he was, how good he felt. Magnus keened out when he brushed against his prostate and tossed his head back. Alec’s hand came around to his sternum, holding him up at that angle as he shoved in balls deep and ground himself deeper, moving his hips in a circular, undulating motion. He had his other arm braced at Magnus’ hips, pulling him in closer as he pushed in. Magnus grimaced, letting out a gasp and whimpering. He turned his head, lips searching, and Alec met him. They kissed hurriedly with teeth and greedy tongues, until Alec shoved into him sharply, wrenching a grunt from Magnus. He dropped his head back against Alec’s shoulder, and Alec picked up the pace, returning back to even thrusts, all but growling as he did. He braced a leg on the outside of Magnus’, changing the angle so that he had better leverage. He let his mouth drop to Magnus’ neck, thrusting into him harder but slower. The slap of skin on skin sounded so vulgar, but it was sending Magnus over the edge, exciting him to the point that he couldn’t catch his breath.

Not that Alec would have let him anyway. When Magnus cried out, his orgasm ripping through his body like whiplash, Alec shoved him back down to the mattress, a hand squarely between his shoulder blades, the other on his hip. Alec moved in him so hard and fast that Magnus was being edged toward the headboard. Alec followed, putting a foot flat on the bed, keeping pace. Magnus felt himself getting hard again. Seriously, whoever did physical training for cops was an angel. At that point, Magnus felt the base of his spine light up, and he lost complete control of his body, pushing back against Alec erratically, and of his mouth. So he leaned into the feeling, letting Alec get him there for a second time.
When he did, Magnus lifted to his forearms to change the angle and clenched down on Alec, who growled in response. Magnus still had no control of his mouth, and didn’t even know what he was saying as Alec chased his own release, uninhibited. When he finished, it was with hard thrusts, just this side of painful to Magnus’ oversensitive body. He pushed in, leaning over Magnus as he held and let himself ride out the high. After a long moment, Alec pulled out and threw himself to the side, cursing as he went.

“Shit,” Alec breathed out. Magnus turned over, rolling into Alec’s side. They were hot and sweaty, and Alec’s skin flushed blotchily. They both were panting heavily, trying to catch their breath. Magnus slapped a hand to Alec’s chest, patting it weakly.

“God damn you are amazing,” Magnus said, snuggling against him. “Was I talking? What was I saying?”

“No clue,” Alec answered, stroking Magnus arm, his legs spread out wide and limp. “You went Asian.”

“Mandarin?”

He felt Alec shake his head. “Indonesian, I think.”

“Oh god,” Magnus said, squeezing his eyes shut and turning into Alec’s shoulder, “can’t see straight.”

Alec snorted and Magnus was immediately suspicious.

“That’s cause you’re bi,” he said very quietly.


Alec laughed, curling his free arm around Magnus to bring him into a sweaty, heated hug, and kissed his face over and over. Magnus laughingly tried to squirm out of his grip again, but Alec had his arms pinned and his stomach ached from laughing so hard.
“No way, papi, we’re just getting started.”

Magnus nearly protested, but then Alec was kissing him, tangling their tongues together and sucking at his lips. Magnus snaked his hands up to cup Alec’s head and pulled his mouth away to kiss Alec’s neck. He sucked a hickey at his pulse point, knowing Alec would be only a little annoyed about it. In the moment, he whined, pulling Magnus’ legs wider and over his hips. Magnus wrapped his arms around Alec’s back, hands splaying out over his shoulder blades. Shit, he had such nice muscles, he felt amazing. Alec pushed up onto his forearms, nudging at Magnus’ jaw to get his mouth back on his. They kissed frantically, and Alec leaned forward to push back into him again. He whined, still feeling raw, but lifted his hips into it anyway. He crossed his ankles over Alec’s back, digging his nails into skin as Alec moved on him.

Alec moved slow and shallow, rocking their bodies together, until Magnus was at full hardness. Then he rolled Magnus’ hips back, giving him a vertical angle to pound down into him. They nuzzled their cheeks together, pressing wet, open kisses to skin.

“Love you,” Magnus rasped out, undulating up against his downward thrust. “Love you so much.” Alec’s grip on him tightened. “Get it, come on, fuck me. Harder.” With a growl, he sat back quickly, hooking his arms around Magnus’ legs and pushed them back to Magnus’ shoulders. He fucked into him with renewed vigor, lips in a grimace and eyes locked on Magnus’. They were burning hot coals, keeping Magnus trapped there with him in that moment. Magnus tossed his head back, and pushed up with what leverage he had, clenching down, drawing a quick orgasm from Alec. He pushed into him twice more before he let Magnus unfold and slide down to swallow his dick down. Magnus howled and thrust deeper into Alec’s mouth, knowing he could take it. It took three of those thrusts before Magnus came again, Alec sucking him off.

This time when they rolled away, there was some space between them, too hot and too tired to cuddle. Magnus did reach over to slap Alec’s ass when he rolled onto his stomach, though, earning him a half-hearted swat.

“We need to shower,” Magnus said eventually. Alec snorted and rolled his head to the side to look at him, eyes crinkled in a smile.

“Yeah, you’re going to have to feed me first,” Alec countered sleepily. He reached over to tangle their fingers together. Magnus held it, playing with it lazily while Alec not-so-subtly stared at him.

“You’re staring.”
“You’re beautiful.”

Magnus huffed a laugh through his nose with a grin and dropped his head to the side to smile at him. He moved to budge Alec over and climb on top of him, kissing him sweetly, light but lingering.

“Shower first. Then breakfast,” Magnus said against his lips, rubbing them together teasingly. Alec smiled into it, nipping at his bottom lip.

“All right, but no funny business.”

“I’m not the one obsessed with my ass.”

Alec’s brows shot up. “Is that a challenge?”

“Loser makes breakfast?”

“You,” Alec said, stretching up to kiss him soundly, “will be making me french toast.”

Magnus smiled, continuously pressing their lips together.

“Don’t count on it.”

* 

Chapter End Notes

So ya'll, here's the thing I want to address: gay sex. I am not a gay man, I am a bisexual woman, ergo, I have never felt I had a platform to comment on the subject. However, I did receive a comment that I felt merited more of a response. I feel bad calling this out, as I don't want the commenter to feel bad about it, but I just needed to
get this off my chest. I do not know the politics of top/bottom. I really don't know how that gets worked out in relationships. I imagine some people have strong preferences and others don't. If someone feels the need to correct me on this, please do so.

So when I write fanfiction, I tend to write switches. Why? Well, I perceive it as a mood thing. Also, I'm pandering to a pretty wide crowd. Some people prefer a character to be a top over a bottom. I don't know why. So whatever, I write it that way. That being said, I don't write that way because I perceive bottoms as being the "more feminine" character. That's bullshit. When you're writing two men, you're writing two men. So I don't really appreciate anyone trying to layer gender politics into fanfiction. Because fanfiction, like everything else, is an interpretation. If you have an issue with someone being labeled a top or a bottom specifically, then that is your issue.

My apologies for ranting and being weird about this, but the comment bothered me a little more than I expected it would.
Chapter 53

Chapter Notes

My bad ya'll. Just didn't have it in me to finish this section over the weekend.

I have no idea if the Arabic in here is correct. It's from google translate, so it's probably not. At all. But it's really not that important to know exactly what they're saying. I honestly don't remember, anyway.

In Jace’s not so humble opinion, there were three seriously annoying things about Alec and Magnus’ relationship. For one, they were stupidly cute. Couples were supposed to be gross and annoying at first in front of other people. Alec and Magnus never went through that phase. Their PDA was all sweet and adorable, and you just wanted to pinch their cheeks and keep bad stuff away from them. And that wasn’t just Jace’s opinion, either, because everyone gushed over their stupid, perfect relationship.

The second annoying thing about their relationship was that they never fought because of sex. And they’d waited months, literal months, to have sex! How did no one fight because of sex? It was ridiculous. So not only were they not concerned about getting pregnant, but they also went at it like rabbits without a single argument about it. He and Clary argued for sex-related reasons all of the time. She was extremely vocal about what she needed and if he wasn’t giving it, which led to some seriously in-depth, blow out fights. It really wasn’t fair. They hadn’t had a single, ugly, blow out, knock down, bitterly heated, throw-your-stuff-out-of-my-apartment fight.

And when they did fight in front of other people, well it was worse than them not fighting at all.

Jace was hanging out at Magnus’ place, flipping through his billions of channels while Alec sat next to him reading. Clary was away at some art retreat thing she’d decided to go to last minute. She needed a break from wedding planning. And from his mother. Luckily, the retreat had a strict no cell phone policy. Which meant his mother wouldn’t be able to get to her, especially since not even Jace knew where the retreat was being held. Upstate somewhere, yeah, but she wouldn’t even tell him the town. Whatever, the important thing was that Clary was getting a much-needed break and Jace was getting to hang out with Alec. Things had just gotten so crazy with the wedding planning and Alec being so focused on Magnus. They barely saw each other outside of work or family dinner, which was never ideal. Alec and Dad had been so tense lately that it was irritating being around them. Clary and Magnus ignored it by drinking. Jace tried to help, but he had no clue what was going on. Anyway.

He was sitting there, minding his own business, watching a seal eat a penguin in the most horrifying way possible, when Magnus stormed into the living room and tossed a balled up piece
of paper at Alec’s head.

“Limadha hi al’ashya’ alkhhasat bik fi jmye ‘anha’ almaktb?”

Yeah, that was the annoying thing about their public arguments. They did them in Arabic.

Alec answered back something, barely looking up, and threw the paper ball back at him. They went back and forth like this, Jace looking between them like he was watching a tennis match. Their tones were tight and guttural, and they gestured widely as the volume escalated. Jace spread his hands out, pulling his best what the fuck face he could muster, but was solidly ignored.

“Ldhlk nahn nuqatil ‘amamah alan?”

“‘iinah ghbiat wala yaerif aleearabia!”

“Limadha hu muhimun jda?” Alec asked sharply, sitting forward.

“Ladayh hadhih aldaewat fi waqt lahiq allaylat wa’ana la ymkn ‘an tajida taqrir saymun!”

“Kayf hdha khata’ay?”

Magnus threw his hands up, looking absolutely despondent, and Jace watched Alec completely deflate. He got up and went over to him, still speaking in Arabic. Jace had never learned, except for a few words that helped him navigate his time in Afghanistan. But Alec was one of those fastidious, over-dedicated types. He spent all of his free time learning Arabic and could translate if necessary. It was impressive, for sure, and kind of endearing, but it was super annoying right in that moment.

They went into the office, switching between English and Arabic when they got too loud. Apparently, Alec’s stuff was everywhere? And Magnus had lost something? It sounded important and he heard Simon’s name a couple of times. Maybe Simon had messed something up and now Magnus was just being bitchy about it.

“Well yes, a cabinet would be helpful!” Alec snapped, walking back into the living room. “And if you’d leave things in designated spots, this wouldn’t be such a problem!”
Alec flung himself down onto the sofa, looking grouchy as hell. Jace had heard rumors that they bickered like this, but he rarely experienced it himself.

“Everything good?” Jace asked slowly, darting his eyes over to Alec with some trepidation. He didn’t want to set him off, or say something to make it worse. Alec grumbled something he didn’t quite understand. “Huh?”

“It’s fine. Magnus is just mad because he’s sloppy!” he shouted over the sofa. It sounded like a drawer slammed in the office.

“There’s a system! You messed it up!”

“Real systems are not that easy to mess up!”

“I will burn your case files, I swear to god!”

“And then I’ll let Jace arrest you for destroying police records!”

“Move them into the guest room or so help me--!”

They immediately switched back to Arabic. Jace groaned, slumped down into the sofa, and covered his face with a pillow. It ended when Magnus went out the front door, slamming it behind him, a bunch of files under his arm.

He immediately came back in, and snapped, “I love you!”

“Love you too!”
Jace tossed the pillow at Alec. “Well, I hate the both of you.”
Chapter 54

Chapter Summary

Alec moves in

Since Aline owed Alec a favor, and Jace threatened Raj with bodily harm, Alec had plenty of people to help him move the rest of his stuff to Magnus’ without a problem. It was mostly clothes, books, kitchen stuff, and the other kind of junk you accumulate over the years without knowing how it got there. Jace and Raj had frequently crashed at Alec’s place after a particularly grueling day or an all-nighter, since it was so close to the precinct. Aline, however, was a little stunned at how Spartan Alec kept everything.

“How are you a human adult? You have no stuff,” Aline said, looking around as if she’d find some secret stash of basic amenities. Alec scowled and dropped a heap of undone cardboard boxes on the ground.

“A lot of it is at Magnus’...our place? Man, that’s weird to say.”

“Lightwood, how old is that couch? It looks like something died on it,” Raj chimed in helpfully.

Jace was in the bathroom, for whatever reason. “You have no hair product. You are gay, dating Magnus, and you have no hair product. What kind of fuckery is this?”

“Are we done criticizing the place I don’t live in anymore? Yeah? Good. Let’s get to work.”

It took a few hours to pack everything up and discard what he didn’t want. Although it was easy enough, Jace and Raj complained the entire time. Aline was probably the only helpful person there, but at least the whiners could carry boxes. As born and raised New Yorkers, none of them had their own cars, so he’d rented a van. Of course, Jace insisted on driving. Of course, Aline and Alec insisted on critiquing said driving because they were fairly certain they were going to die before ever reaching Magnus’ building. When they did, Raj all but leapt from the car, praising God for their safe delivery.

“You guys suck,” Jace sneered as he slammed the door shut.
“Ohmygod Magnus lives here?” Raj asked when he finally took in the building itself. Alec tilted his head in consideration, the building was a bit impressive. Magnus had mentioned it was formerly some lavish hotel they’d converted into luxury apartments. He supposed he’d just gotten used to it.

“Magnus owns here,” Jace said, nudging Raj.

“Oh. My. God.”

“What did I tell you? Alec’s got a sugar daddy.”

“Shut up, Jace.”

“So Magnus doesn’t shower you with expensive things and take you out to expensive dinners?”

“Magnus buys me things against my will, and I usually cook him dinner.”

“Of course. You can’t be a kept man and not contribute sex and food.”

“That is fucking absurd. Are we done asking stupid questions now?”

The doorman immediately had the door opened for them and went out to help them move the boxes in. He and Alec moved maybe two boxes before they stood around in the lobby chatting. Jace and Raj started whining until four people emerged from the elevator.

“Alec!” one of the women, Wendy, said cheerfully, “Is it move in day already?”

Alec smiled at her and nodded, “This is the last of it. Oh, this is my brother Jace, by the way. These are my co-workers Raj and Aline.”

“Pleasure!” she chirped back. He introduced the rest of them to Raj, Aline, and Jace. Wendy and Talia were the couple who lived below them, and Seth and Dylan lived two floors down. They were cousins who ran one of Magnus’ subsidiaries. Dylan asked if they needed any help.
“Yes!” Jace answered, cutting Alec off. “Anything to make this go faster.”

“Oh please. It’s not that bad.”

“They’re not heavy,” Aline chimed in, “but there’s a lot.”

Seth looked between them, “I’ll help, but you better be cooking sir,” he said pointing at Alec directly.

“Yeah, yeah, I’ll cook. But you’re bringing your own wine, Brogen!”

Jace wandered over to Alec’s side as everyone started loading boxes into the elevator. Ever since he’d started dating Magnus, Alec’s life had become a little removed from Jace’s. They used to have all the same friends, do all the same things, spend all of their free time together. It was nuts how much things had changed. It wasn’t that Alec felt any differently, but Magnus’ influence on his life had just been all-consuming. He felt its effects everywhere.

“So I know you like...pick up strays all the time, but how do you even know these people? Don’t you usually go straight to the penthouse?”

“I see them around. I’m here a lot.”

“But aren’t they all like...rich, snobby people?”

“Eh, some of them. Some are Magnus’ employees and their families. They’re cool.” The quiet between them felt a little too heavy. Alec hated that. At one point in time, he’d been able to figure out what Jace felt with just a look. One look, that was all he needed in order to know. It wasn’t that their connection had gone away, but it was different. Altered. He didn’t think Jace had changed, so maybe it was just him. Was it a bad thing? There was really no way to know that. Alec didn’t know what else to say. Jace saved him.

“So what are you doing about your old place? Gonna sublet or what?”
“Nah.”

“Nah?”

“I’m letting Rodrigo stay there. Paying for it, too, while he looks for a job. Magnus got him into a rehab program and he just got out of the halfway house. Magnus doesn’t pay rent here, so I can afford the rent for a while.”

“Dude, that’s—”

“He’s one of us,” Alec said incredulously. Jace clapped him on the shoulder.

“Yeah, he is.”

Maybe not everything had changed. Not the important things anyway.

*

It took all of three days before domestic bliss deteriorated into domestic bickering. Alec was a tidy creature of habit. He put things back where they were supposed to go, kept things in order, kept things clean. Magnus played a little fast and loose with the rules of housekeeping. His clothes were everywhere in the bedroom, and no amount of organizing would resolve that situation. He was notorious for letting dishes “soak,” and he never, ever, ever organized his toiletries. Now, Alec didn’t care much about this dishes. He liked to do them by hand anyway, since he found it relaxing. The clothes, he organized by habit, not really paying attention to where he moved Magnus’ stuff. But this was old news, and almost a constant argument/conversation. Magnus would demand to know what he did with some item of clothing, and Alec would have to think about it. Occasionally, he forced him to retrace his steps to find it. While annoying, it wasn’t really a problem.

The bathroom, however, was a problem.

“You spend all your time here, and you’ve never complained.”
“I didn’t live here. Now I live here, so it’s an issue that needs to be resolved.”

“Oh my god!”

“Don’t you walk away from this shitshow! Magnus Bane! Put things in drawers, god damn it!”

He popped his head back in, “I’ll do that when you organize your case files in the guest room.”

“Hey! You told me to stop working weekends at the precinct!”

“I didn’t mean turn my guest room into file room of horror!”

“Well, then you’ll have to clear out a cabinet in your office!”

“Well, I would have to put a cabinet in my office first!”

“Fine!”

“Fine!”

“Why are we yelling?”

“I don’t know!”
Chapter 55

Magnus had to leave to take care of his stepfather’s property in Indonesia. It had been planned for months. The tickets were bought, the meetings were scheduled, everyone was waiting for his arrival so they could finally put an end to Magnus’ ties there. He wanted to feel good about it, he really did, but it meant two weeks away from Alec. Sure, they’d spent a few days apart. Magnus traveled for work and had conferences to attend, and Alec’s job kept him away for days at a time. Preoccupied, at the very least. This was different, though. Two solid weeks without seeing each other, without being able to touch or kiss him, was upsetting. And Alec certainly wasn’t making it any easier. He’d kept Magnus up all night, with sex and massages and a bath. He’d been too cute to resist and was worse in the morning, essentially whining when Magnus got up to start packing.

“I told you this was coming.”

“Knowing it ahead of time doesn’t make me happier about it.”

“It’s only two weeks.”

“Uh huh, and how many times a week have we been having sex?”

Magnus tallied and dipped his head. “Fair point.”

“Oh god, you’re going to murder someone.”

“I’ll be fine.”

“Yep, you’re gonna kill someone and I’ll have to move to Indonesia just to visit you in jail sometimes.”

“I’m not rescheduling this trip, Alexander.” He really wished that he could. But he’d been putting off this trip for years. Part of him thought he just wanted to stay connected to his homeland, but that was nostalgic bullshit you read about in books. Indonesia had chewed Magnus up and spat him out into one worse place after another. Since his mother had died, the whole of the land was tainted for him, and he’d felt nothing when he left. Returning wouldn’t be easy, but it would be the last time.
“This is cruel and unusual punishment, you know.”

Magnus rolled his eyes and shot a look over his shoulder. “Enlighten me.”

“Gladly. You got me hooked on your body heat. And now you’re taking it away.”

“Oh huh.”

“Yeah, and my bed isn’t as comfortable as yours and it’s gonna be cold and I have bad circulation so I’m not gonna get any sleep.”

“Oh really?” Magnus said turning around. Alec was spread out on his bed, wearing his sleep boxers, hands under his head. Magnus made one move toward the bed and Alec was automatically reaching for him.

“Yes, really,” he groused, “C’mere, papi.”

“Absolutely not, I have to get to the airport.”

“It’s early,” he argued.

“I believe that’s the point.”

“Are you saying you don’t want to fuck me one more time before you leave me here for two weeks all by myself?” He stretched as he said it, and Magnus had a hard time resisting the pull. He climbed onto the bed, letting Alec’s hands and arms guide him where he was wanted. They kissed lazily, enjoying the proximity, until Alec’s hands slipped down Magnus’ waistband, tugging. Magnus groaned and lifted himself to put some distance between their bodies. Not much though, as Alec had a pretty tight grip.

“Are you trying to make this more difficult for me?” he whined. It lost its effect though because he kept dipping to peck at Alec’s lips.
“Am I trying to make it more difficult for you to leave me?” Alec asked around the kisses.
“Absolutely. I’m seriously considering calling in a bomb threat.”

“Ridiculous,” Magnus chuckled, sliding his tongue into Alec’s mouth. Magnus let himself get a little carried away, indulging himself for too long. But it was hard to say no when Alec handled him so sweetly, cradling him in his arms and pressing him into the mattress like he could keep him there.

“Needy,” Magnus accused breathlessly when Alec trailed kisses down his jaw to his neck.

“Just for you, papi,” he kissed Magnus’ Adam’s apple, “only for you.” Then he kissed at his pulse point, biting gently as his hands clutched Magnus close. Magnus arched up into him, back bowing without his permission.

“It could only be a few days,” Magnus reasoned, trying to downplay his gasp. “If everything goes well, I could be home in a few days.”

Alec bit down on the slope between his neck and shoulder, “Then make sure it goes well and come home.”

Magnus shuddered. “Of course.” He lifted a hand to Alec’s cheek who turned instinctively to kiss it. “Look what I have waiting for me.”

They bickered for a long moment between kisses about whether or not Alec would go with him to JFK. Alec wanted to, but Magnus presumed (correctly) that he would never get out of the car if Alec was in it. So he kissed him thoroughly one more time, grabbed his bag, and all but ran out of the apartment to Ernesto, who was already waiting on the curb. Did he look back at the turn to see if Alec had come out onto the balcony? Yes, he did. Did Alec come out on the balcony? Yes, he did. He lifted a hand in the direction of Magnus’ car, and Magnus watched him standing there until he was out of sight.
Chapter 56

Chapter Summary

Alec with his family while Magnus is gone.

“When’s the last time we’ve seen him this miserable?”

“Bitchface and all? Maybe ten months.”

“Definitely before Magnus, though.”

“Definitely.”

“And he’s been gone..?”

“Three days!” Alec snapped, irritated with both his siblings to the point of insanity. “Now will you shut the hell up about it?” Jace shook his head, pulling his lips taut in a grim expression while Izzy cooed at him like a fussy infant. Alec smacked her hand away. “Stop that!”

“It’s okay that you miss him, Alec,” she said with a little less mocking and more kindness. Alec still scowled and hid his expression in his beer. It had barely been three days, and Alec was already pretty miserable. It did not bode well for the next three days, that was for certain. Magnus had called when he landed for his layover and when he landed in Jakarta. The sound of his voice helped, but it wasn’t the same. It wasn’t enough. Jace and Izzy had dragged him out for Monday happy hour, refusing to let him be a miserable motherfucker on his own. Which was fine, he guessed, but he would have much rather been curled up with Chairman Meow and Magnus’ favorite blanket with enough cold cases to pass the time. It wasn’t that he didn’t appreciate getting some bonding time with Jace and Izzy. He did.

“I don’t like that he’s dealing with this crap on his own,” Alec said quietly. “This stuff with his dad--”

“He’s a big boy, Alec--” Jace started. Alec scowled, not at all appreciative of the reminder. Jace held up his hands in defeat. “I get it, okay? I do. Clary’s dad is a real piece of work. Hate the
fucker. She gets all messed up whenever he comes around. But it’s not like there’s anything I can
do to change it, you know? He’s always going to be a bastard, she’s always going to have this weird
love/hate thing with him. I just hug her and take her down to the sparring mats to beat the shit outta
somebody.”

Izzy snorted, “Not you?”

Jace looked at her like she’d grown another head. “Are you kidding, right now? Have you seen that
woman pissy? I’m not taking another hit for her dad for shit. She can take a swing at Wesson. He
needs some sense knocked into him.”

Alec snatched a fry from the basket and pointed at him with his beer, “That’s true love right there.”

Izzy laughed, “You just don’t like Wesson.”

“Fuck no.” Alec took a swig of his beer. “No talking about Wesson. He gives me indigestion.
Now, we’ve got six months to the wedding. Do I need to threaten Simon’s life?”

“Alec--”

“I think it’s my turn, man,” Jace said casually, pulling the fries toward him. Izzy smacked his hand
and pulled the fries back to herself. “Hey!”

“Hey yourself, jackhole. You two stress Si out about this wedding crap, and I’ll kill you myself.
His mother’s a psycho, I swear to god. She’s still pissy that I won’t convert and she’s not taking
Si’s calls. It’s ridiculous.”

Jace shook his head and stole the fries back. “Why do our people all have shitty parental figures? I
mean, Mom and Dad aren’t winning any parenting awards, but Jesus .”

Alec nodded thinking that was unfortunately true. It was a Lightwood tradition, after all, taking in
strays. He remembered a book his mother had read them when they were young, called The Little
Prince . You were forever responsible for what you tamed. Magnus wasn’t a talking rose or a wild
fox, but that’s exactly how he felt about it. Jace and Izzy obviously did too. He looked at his
brother and sister, seeing that same grim determination on their faces. They were Lightwoods.
They loved as hard as they fought. Clary, Simon, Magnus...none of them would ever be alone
again, not if they had anything to say about it.

“Well, they’ve got us now,” Alec said firmly.

“Yeah.”

Izzy lifted her glass. “To us.”

Her brothers lifted their glasses and drank.

* 

Alec was not surprised in the least when Max texted him out of the blue, wanting to come over and hang out. It was a goddamn conspiracy, is what it was. But he wasn’t going to say no to hanging out with Max when the kid was so busy all the time. So Alec ordered pizza, and Max showed up moments after like a goddamn bloodhound tracking his prey. They ate too much and drank too much and played video games with a little more intensity than was strictly necessary. Alec didn’t usually play video games, so Max had brought his stuff over. Alec didn’t know what the heck any of it was, but he definitely had better reflexes than some punk college kid.

“Is this what they teach you in college? To play like a freaking pansy?”

“Says the fruit!” Max cackled. Alec reached over to punch him in the shoulder hard enough to send him to the floor.

“This fruit is kicking your ass without trying, so fuck you. Keep your homophobic bullshit to yourself.”

“Aw,” he whined, climbing back onto the sofa, “I didn’t mean nothin’ by it.”

“Then I suggest finding a better way to insult me, Maxie-kins.” He hit the A button with a flourish, which set off a grenade in the game, blowing the building Max’s character stood in to bits and pieces. “And the gays win!”
“Ugh,” Max groaned, slumping into the sofa and dropping his controller. “It’s not fair that you’re good at this and you never play.”

“I have magical powers from the gods of gay.”

“Yeah, you’re a modern-day Achilles. Quit bragging and go get me another beer.”

Alec tossed his controller and leaned over to punch him again, resulting in a bitch fight that almost turned into the wrestling match, until Alec pinned Max to the sofa, holding his face down into the cushion.

“That coffee table is worth more than your life, you break it and I let Magnus break you.”

Max struggled, spluttering against the cushion. “You’re so damn whipped! Let me up asshole!”

Alec pushed down on his face one more time and nearly gave him a noogie, until the TV started singing. He scowled. The worst part about living with Magnus was that he was tech-obsessed. Even his giant TV was a touch screen hooked up to an extremely secure server and the internet. Magnus occasionally took conference calls from his sofa. It was ridiculous, to be honest. Now the Skype app was ringing and Magnus’ face flashed on the screen.

“Shit!” Max yelped, scrambling off the sofa. “Don’t answer it!” Alec shot him a weird look, but resolutely ignored him, taking a few quick steps to press the answer button. He was rewarded with a full screen of Magnus in real time, even if the connection was a little fuzzy.

“Hey papi,” he said, feeling himself smile like a goddamn idiot when Magnus wrinkled his nose happily. Behind him Max, groaned, asking someone to rip his ears off.

“Hello, darling, how’s-?” He cut himself off with a frown and narrowed his eyes. “Did you answer this in the living room?”

“Yes?”
“Is that Max?”

“Maybe.”

“God damn it, you’re playing video games, aren’t you?” Magnus demanded irritably, but he wasn’t looking at Alec. Actually, he was looking at Max. Alec followed his dirty glare to see Max attempting to keep himself out of the line of sight of the camera. It wasn’t working very well. He gave up completely when Alec tossed his arms up in genuine what-the-fuck confusion.

“Magnus-!” he whined, covering his face with a pillow.

Magnus grumbled something gutturally in what sounded like Russian. “I told you to get him outside, Max! Not find reasons to keep him inside!”

“What?” Alec squawked.

Max threw the pillow aside. “Mom’s gonna take him to the range later this week!” Max protested.

“What!?"

“You know what he’s like when he doesn’t get proper exercise.”

“I really think you’re worrying too much.”

“What did you feed him, then?”

“Pizza -”

“Excuse me?”

“I am not a dog you guys! Damn!”
Magnus and Max looked at him unimpressed for a moment before turning back to each other.

“You promised to check in--”

“I am checking in. He has plenty of food--”

“Bad food!”

“I mean, he’s the one who ordered in, not me. I didn’t think I’d have to watch him that closely.”

“I literally told you! I told you!”

Alec just spread his arms incredulously. “What the fuck guys?”

*

So when his mother showed up the next day, overexcited to take him to the archery range, Alec was not nearly as pleased as when they first made the plan. Archery was something his father had grown up with, coming from a wealthy family and all. When he met Alec’s mother, he taught her how, and she’d immediately taken to it. She was a part of a club and occasionally did minor competitions. She and Alec had a shared love for the sport, and used to go to the range regularly. That hadn’t happened for some time, so he’d been excited when she called asking him to go. Now he was suspicious.

“He called you, didn’t he? He called you and told you that he was going to be gone for two weeks and to check in on me.”

Maryse startled, lingering in the doorway with an arched brow. He hadn’t meant to sound so accusatory, but still, he was a little irritated.

“He didn’t...not say it,” she said slowly.

“I’m almost 33 years old! I can handle a couple of weeks by myself, you know. I did it for many,
“many years.”

“Yeah, but Magnus worries.”

“And you suddenly listen to him over me?”

“Well yeah.”

“Why does everyone think I’m suddenly going to have a breakdown if I’m left to my own devices for a few days? It’s ridiculous!”

Maryse bobbed her head. “You haven’t been away from each other since you started dating and Magnus is just worried because he’s not here--”

“It’s insane.”

“It’s sweet. He loves you and he knows we love you, too. So shut up and let it happen.”

Alec scowled and grabbed his gear. “Fine. Let’s go.”

“Yeah,” his mom said pointedly, “we’re going, and that bratty pouty face I haven’t seen since you were fifteen better be gone by the time we get there.”

“Mom -”

She turned on her heel back to the elevator and mocked him in faux falsetto, “Oh no, people love me enough to worry about me and try to take care of me, whatever will I do to get out of this horrible situation?”

“You’re the worst,” he grumbled, hitting the button for the lobby. His mom leaned over to smack a kiss to his cheek, making him wince.
“How many more days?” she asked gently as the elevator went down. Alec sighed and lifted his eyes up, trying not to think too much about it.

“Four.”
Chapter 57

Chapter Summary

Magnus comes home.

Business in Jakarta took so much longer than Magnus would have liked. It was such bullshit. These lawyers were trying to give him the runaround, operating as if he was some kind of idiot who knew nothing about how things worked there. It was such bullshit. Magnus let them talk in circles for a couple of days, but quickly lost his patience. These men were not good people. They were not honest men. They had power in their small little corner of the world, and truly believed they held all the cards. It was bullshit.

Magnus’ stepfather’s family had made their wealth during the time of the Vietnam War with the United States. They were cowards, betrayed their own people for political positions, money, and favors from the United States government. And the Viet Cong, actually, if rumors were to be believed. Magnus certainly believed them. His stepfather was a shmuck, for lack of a better word, and his mother had been a young, unmarried Malay girl with no family, no clan, and no one to help her care for her young son. He’d bought her like a brood mare, and she didn’t survive three years with him.

But Magnus had sat there and listened to his friends, his lawyers, his former business partners speak more and more bullshit, all the while holding the red and gold packet Alec had given him months before. It was one of the few things that kept him calm, that omamori charm. He kept it with him all the time, fingers on it when he was uncomfortable, in his hands when he felt the urge to hit someone. Since meeting Alec, much of his anger management issues had simmered and settled, but occasionally it lanced through him like hot knives. The omamori helped him channel that anger, focus it somewhere while he tried to keep a level head. He thought of how content he’d been that night, how utterly calm and safe.

No, it did not stop Magnus from financially eviscerating the men trying to scam him. He took double what the properties were worth, then immediately turned around and donated that money to the orphanage he’d lived in. The poor director had been so stunned that she broke down and cried in front of him. Magnus had paid for dinner for the some fifty children who lived there and the employees that night, had it brought in from one of the nicer restaurants in town. The kids got up and performed for him, singing and dancing and making paper flower wreaths to hang around his neck. Magnus had enjoyed himself thoroughly, and had a picture taken of him with the kids before he left.

Now, Magnus was on the plane, leaving out Hong Kong for New York, staring out the window with the omamori clutched in his hand. They were circling around to land in JFK. It was hard for
him to think that the New York City skyline was more dear to him that his own hometown, that
he’d felt nothing but disgust for Jakarta. He didn’t know where his mother was buried, but it
wouldn’t have been in the Malay way. Her soul was probably trapped, roaming forever in search of
home. There wasn’t anything he could do about that, but he didn’t have to linger in that place with
her. He didn’t have to suffer for the choices she’d made. Alec had taught him that. That’s why the
trip had been so important; it was the last thing in his way of being with Alec. It was the last
disruptive thread to his past which needed cutting. And he’d done it. He was finally free of it.

He immediately went to baggage claim when they were released from the plane. He was checking
his phone, not really paying attention, trying to figure out where the heck Ernesto was. Despite the
energy of the airport, and how many people were moving around him, Magnus felt that tug in his
chest. That magnetic shift which always got the full of his attention. He found himself looking up
and right at a smiling Alec, who was leaning against the baggage carousel. Magnus wasn’t sure
what he did with his phone exactly, but he was far more interested in getting his hands on Alec
anyway.

It was one of those stupidly dramatic airport greetings, but Magnus really didn’t give a damn. He
just dropped his carry on in favor of sliding his arms around Alec’s neck and kissing him
thoroughly. Alec’s kiss was just as hungry, just as eager as his own. It was like being submerged in
comfortably cool water on the hottest day of the year, and all the buzzing in Magnus’ head, all his
many thought processes, dampened in the face of it. Alec pulled out of the kiss just when it was
getting too heated for a public audience, choosing instead to nuzzle against his face, pressing tiny,
affectionate kisses to his lips and cheek, and rubbing their noses together.

“Hi,” he whispered, kissing him hard.

“Hi,” Alec answered, humming. “Missed you.”

“I can tell.”

“Let’s go home.”

“Yeah,” he agreed with a nod and a thin smile, “let’s go home.”
The hubbub in the precinct didn’t stop just because Raj was interviewing a victim. It happened pretty regularly, but this was the first man he’d dealt with. Alec kept getting distracted by it, throwing worried looks in their direction. Lydia watched her partner warily, and Alec didn’t appreciate it. Just because a gay man came in to report a rape didn’t mean he was going to have a meltdown. He wasn’t entirely sure about Raj, though, who was looking increasingly uncomfortable. The man, Javier Delgado, was a young guy, dressed like he’d been clubbing with makeup smeared on his cheek. From the looks of it, he was a hooker. And he was starting to look more and more agitated. It all came to a head when Raj reached out to touch his shoulder.

Javier leapt back, knocking his chair over, and started shouting in incomprehensible Spanish. Raj tried to calm him, hands still reaching out, but Javier lashed out. He took a swing at Raj, immediately getting the whole attention of the squad. Aline was moving forward looking ready to take the guy down. Alec got there first, stepping between Raj and Javier.

“Look man, hey, hey! Listen to me! Let’s go over here, yeah? I’m not gonna touch you, let’s go over into this room before one of these cops throws you in a cell, yeah? Good, okay, come on, follow me.” He managed to cajole the guy into following him into an interrogation room. He left the door wide open and kept his distance. He was skinny, Alec thought, skinny and tough looking. He was probably on drugs or a street kid just trying to make it. None of that really mattered though. Right then, he was just someone who’d been attacked and brutalized. He went right for the corner, putting his back to it and sinking into a crouch, all but crumbling.

“I’m sorry,” he said miserably, “I’m sorry, I’m sorry.” Alec pulled up a chair across from him, still a distance away, and sat down.

“It’s okay. It’s all right. Your name’s Javier, right?”

He nodded. “Javi,” he answered, voice thick with tears. “I go by Javi.”

“Javi. Good. I’m Alec. I’m sorry about Detective Abalck. Raj?” He jerked his thumb over his shoulder in Raj’s direction. “He’s a good guy, but I’m pretty sure I’m the only gay guy he knows. Listening to you...I’m sure that was hard for him.”
“Yeah, whatever,” Javi snapped irritably, not impressed. Alec nodded to himself. Right, defensiveness wouldn’t get him anywhere in this situation. So he took a deep breath and tried again.

“I can’t imagine what you’re going through right now. But we are here for you. We are here to help you and to make this son of a bitch pay for what he did to you.” Javi looked up at him, wide-eyed and afraid. He shrugged.

“I didn’t think anyone would believe me.” He shrugged again. “He’s...he’s my boyfriend and he’s a rich man. Has a lot of friends in high places, you know?”

Alec nodded, chest twinging in sympathy. “My friend Aline tells people that it helps to talk about it like a movie. You know, to stay calm? If you talk about it like it happened to someone else the first time, it’s easier. Because I need you to stay calm, Javi. You are safe here, I promise. I won’t let anything happen to you.”

They both turned when Raj came in with a black eye and a bottle of water. He held it up like a white flag, a call for a truce. Javi nodded and held his hand out for it. They watched him open and drink from it, hands shaking.

“When you’re ready, Javi, start at the beginning.”

So he did. It didn’t take long for Raj and Alec to sit next to him on the floor, taking down notes and asking questions. Raj led the interview, Alec just held Javi’s hand, squeezing gently when he started crying and holding on even when he had his hand in a death grip. It took hours to get all of it, and by the end, Javi was so exhausted he could barely stand. Raj got a female black and white to drive him home, and stay with him for the night.

He, Alec, and Aline watched him go with no small amount of sadness and trepidation. Aline handed Raj a file folder, which he took and read, eyes widening.

“This is our guy?”

“Yep. James Stanfield. Vice says the boys in his stable call him _Slim Jim_.”
“Gross,” Alec grumbled.

“Gets worse. He’s been accused and charged with assault, battery, rape, and attempted murder at least five times. And he’s been acquitted every time.”

“Son of a bitch.”

Alec crossed his arms. “But Javi’s a fighter. We’ve got blood, semen, and hair in the rape kit. What else could we possibly need besides his statement?”

Aline frowned and licked her lips, shifting on her feet uncomfortably. “Well, like the past fives boys, Javi is a junkie. And a prostitute. One of Stanfield’s. He never gets on the stand, but the victims either recant or break down on the stand. The attorney gets the jury to believe it was consensual sex, and the victims lied in order to extort money or drugs.”

Raj tossed the folder onto his desk. “I fucking hate this guy.”

Alec nodded in agreement. “Okay, so you need witnesses to testify. Go find those other victims and see if they’d be willing to talk. I don’t know, maybe there’s others.”

“I don’t know, Alec. We could dig up a hundred victims and this defense attorney would rip them to shreds. We need to be thorough. And we need someone who’s not hooked on crank or selling themselves for cash.”

Alec felt bile rise up in his throat. He couldn’t think straight, and his eyes ached from exhaustion. Just listening to Javi’s story had drained him of energy. For once, he was grateful that most of his victims were dead before he got there. At least he didn’t have to sit with their ruination. They were peaceful. Javi’s life would never be peaceful again.

“So do it,” he snapped. “I’m going home.”
Two weeks later, and Javi’s case was still weighing heavily on Alec’s mind. He’d been over to check on him several times. Javi insisted he was doing fine, but it was obvious he wasn’t sleeping. Alec kept trying to get him to go see a counselor, but he said it was all fine and that it would be a waste of time. Charges had been brought against Stanfield, he’d been arraigned and let out on bail, but still, Alec worried he was using. He worried Javi was using and would overdose before the trial ever happened.

That was all he could think about while he chopped vegetables for dinner with Madzie and Magnus. Cat had to work a couple of overnights, so they’d offered to take Madzie for a few days since Cat’s mother was sick and couldn’t keep her. Alec wanted to stop thinking about work, to set it aside and focus on the other two people in the room, but he was finding it hard.

Magnus noticed, obviously, but didn’t say anything. Alec had told him the details of Javi’s case, and he knew well enough to give him some space to deal with it. It was comforting that Magnus could do that much for him without making a thing out of it. Jace always told him he lived in his own head too much, thought too much, invested too much. But Javi wasn’t exactly the kind of case that went away easily.

Their evening with Madzie was pleasant enough. She was happy to be there and spent her time chattering about her friends and tormenting Chairman Meow. They ate stir fry and watched her favorite TV show before bullying her into the guest bedroom to get some sleep. Alec stood in the doorway, watching Magnus tuck her in, singing her an Indonesian lullaby. There was some comfort in it for Alec; the domesticity of it was soothing to his frayed nerves. But a lump had settled into his gut, and it didn’t bode well. These nights were few and far between anymore, but they happened. Alec knew what would come, and there was little he could do to stop it. Unfortunately, Magnus had yet to witness it. Early in their relationship, the dreams came sporadically, and always on his nights alone. The sex, the high from being in love, all of that kept the dreams at bay. But nothing stayed the same forever.

He woke screaming, the smell of blood and singed hair in his nostrils, the feeling of grit and smoke in his mouth, ears ringing loudly with muffled shouts in the background. Alec woke up fighting, pushing his way out, struggling to the surface, to safety. When he opened his eyes, finding himself not in Iraq but his own bed, he could finally breathe again. He gasped, gulping down deep breaths, trying to calm himself, to steady himself.
Magnus was there to do it. At first, Alec couldn’t feel his hands on his arm and shoulder. Couldn’t feel his hands cupping his face until he turned, forcing him to make eye contact. That’s when the ringing subsided and the numbness faded. He could still smell the blood and burning hair, but Magnus was real and solid and pulling him into his arms. Alec went willingly, collapsing limply against his chest, and let himself be manhandled into a more comfortable position. Alec squeezed his eyes shut and pressed his face into Magnus’ chest, his heartbeat slowing as his fingers dragged through his hair rhythmically. Alec was fairly sure Magnus was talking, but he had no clue what he was saying. Regardless, the sound of his voice was bringing him back to neutral, so he didn’t argue.

“Uncle Magnus?” Madzie’s little voice came from the doorway. She stood there, with her stuffed fish, waiting.

“Oh sweet pea, did you get scared?” She must have nodded. “It’s all right, Uncle Alec had a bad dream.”

“Oh.”

“Want to sleep with us?”

She must have nodded again because in the next moment, Madzie was clambering onto the bed and climbing over Alec to settle herself between them. Alec reached for her hand and squeezed it.

“Sorry, kiddo.”

“S’okay. Mama always says if you can think monsters up, then you can think them out.”

“Yeah?” he asked, tears stinging at his eyes.

“Yeah,” she answered with a yawn. “We won’t let monsters get you, Uncle Alec. Uncle Magnus will beat ‘em up.”

“As long as I can do it during a reasonable daylight hour.”
Alec smacked his chest, making him whine.

“Ugh fine, I’ll fight the monsters. But if I die because I’m sleep-deprived, you must avenge me.”

“Oh my god,” Alec groaned, “go to sleep you drama queen.”

“Yeah, drama queen,” Madzie yawned, snuggling up against Alec.

“Slander and betrayal,” he grumbled, curling so that he and Alec were face to face, Madzie slotted between them. Despite his protesting, Magnus leaned forward to press a lingering kiss to Alec’s forehead. He was safe, he was safe and with Magnus, and that was the thought that let him get back to sleep.
Chapter 60

Chapter Summary

More Madzie!

Magnus woke first the next morning. It wasn’t unheard of, but it was rare he woke before Alec. He blinked his eyes open to see Madzie sleeping on Alec’s chest with his arms around her. They were both out cold, deep asleep. Magnus let himself watch them, smiling at the sweet picture they made, for a little while before he pulled himself away to make breakfast. Not totally himself, actually. Alec was such an orderly weirdo that he would pre-make pancakes and waffles, and freeze them for later. That way all Magnus had to do was reheat instead of burning the kitchen down.

While the food warmed, he started making coffee. French press, because he felt like it. He was about to start pulling down a couple of plates and mugs, when two arms snaked around his waist, pulling him back into a big, warm body. Magnus smiled and tipped his head to the side, so Alec could nuzzle into his neck.

“G’morning,” he said sleepily, obviously not fully awake yet. And go figure, given how fitfully he’d slept most of the night.

“Morning, darling. Madzie still asleep?”

“Yeah.”

“Good.” He turned in Alec’s arms and brought a hand to his face, kissing him warmly. “How are you?” Magnus felt rather than heard Alec’s sigh. He had the tendency to do that, calm himself with these deep, silent breaths which didn’t attract anyone’s attention. He brushed a thumb along his cheek. Magnus knew about the nightmares. Not because Alec had shared them, really, but more because of Jace. He was closer to Alec than anyone, knew when these moods were oncoming. He had warned Magnus, after all. As a result, Jace would text Magnus if he thought something was up. And occasionally, Magnus would see the bruises under Alec’s eyes, feel the way his hands shook just so, and knew the monsters clawed at him. There wasn’t much to do except hold him, remind him that he wasn’t alone, and help him put down the load from his shoulders.

“I’m--” Alec answered unsteadily. “I’m sorry.”
“What?”

“I should have told you about the nightmares. They just--uh, they haven’t been happening as much lately.” He sighed. “I know when they’re coming...it’s like an itch under my skin. But I--” He broke off, swallowing hard, obviously struggling. Magnus settled both hands on his neck, thumbs stroking his jawline, just to reassure himself, really.

“Alexander, you don’t have to apologize for nightmares.”

“I know,” he said stiffly, stepping back. “I know.”

Magnus was going to press the issue, but Madzie emerged and both of them immediately went into cheerful-mode. Which was fine because Madzie deserved all of their attention, but he was concerned. This rape case had jolted Alec into a mood mimicking depression. Magnus knew better, knew it was PTSD, and that something about Javi had struck a nerve. He just didn’t know what to do about it. He couldn’t force him to talk about his time in the Army. He couldn’t force him to confide in him about some of the worst moments of his life. Magnus had shown him the ugliest parts of his life, but those were things he’d done. Things that had happened to him as a child. Alec’s time overseas was inherently different, more in his control and yet so far out of it that the whole experience would be difficult not only to qualify but explain to anyone who hadn’t lived it themselves. That isolation is what killed veterans in the end. Magnus wouldn’t let that happen.

They had a lovely breakfast, where Alec was bright and smiling, teasing both him and Madzie in turn. To Magnus’ ears, there was nothing sweeter than the sound of them laughing, even if it was at him. They decided that they were going to spend the day in Central Park, since Madzie had only been once for a field trip. But Alec wanted to stop by his parents’ place because his mother had some of Izzy’s old clothes for Madzie.

Alec shrugged, “Iz always ran around in the same jeans and sweatshirt, so I have no idea what Mom still has.”

“I get to meet your mommy?” Madzie asked, vibrating with excitement. Alec laughed and nodded.

“Yeah, if you want to.”

“Yay!” she squealed, leaping up out of her chair. She immediately darted for the guest room, fish in hand, to get dressed for the day before either of them could stop her. Magnus just shrugged and
started to clean up.

Ernesto drove them to the Upper East Side and dropped them at the Lightwood’s home. Alec asked him to wait a moment, since he was going to have him take the clothes back to the apartment so they wouldn’t have to carry it all day.

Maryse greeted Alec with a hug, and even hugged Magnus. But she crouched down and held out a hand to Madzie.

“Hi there, I’m Maryse. You must be Madzie.” She nodded, a shy smile on her face, and leaned against Alec’s leg. “I like your braids. Did your mom do them?” She nodded again. “Very pretty.”

“Thank you.”

“You’re welcome,” she said with a wide smile. Then she stood and looked at Alec, tilting her head. “You wanna come help me with the boxes?”

“Boxes?” Alec asked incredulously. “Mom, seriously?”

“Isabelle had a lot of clothing.”

“Dear god,” he griped. Then he squeezed Madzie’s hand. “I’ll be right back, wait here with Magnus?” She nodded and Alec let go of her hand to follow Maryse up the stairs. Madzie turned and lifted her hands up to Magnus, and he willingly picked her up. He still didn’t feel totally comfortable in the Lightwood family house, and it was nice to have her warm weight in his arms. So he walked her around the foyer and into the sitting room, answering her random questions by making up elaborate stories that couldn’t possibly be true. Most of them involved talking fish and trolls, some of her favorite character types. They were interrupted by Robert Lightwood’s sudden entrance. He offered them a small smile.

“I thought I heard someone down here.” He stretched out a hand, which Magnus shook. “And who is this?”

“This,” Magnus said, bouncing the girl a little, “is Madzie. Sweet Pea, this is Mr. Lightwood, Alec’s dad.”
“Hi,” she said, sticking out her hand like Robert had. “Nice to meet you.” Robert chuckled and shook her hand.

“Nice to meet you, too, Madzie,” he said. Magnus set her to the ground, telling she could wander but to keep her hands to herself. She didn’t go far, mostly looking at pictures of Alec and his siblings as children.

“That’s the Madzie Alec has been talking about?” Robert asked, a strange tone in his voice.

“Yeah. She’s staying the weekend with us.”

“Oh.” The strange tone morphed into a strange expression, and Robert kept his eyes locked on Madzie’s movement through the house, looking perplexed.

“Robert?”

“You didn’t--”

“Didn’t what?”

“You didn’t, like, adopt Madzie for you and Alec, did you?”

Magnus bristled, completely thrown off guard. There was nothing accusatory in his tone, but he was being so weird and that was such a weird question. Why would they--?

“No, Madzie is my goddaughter. Why--?”

“I mean, I’m not opposed to--you know--but I just...I guess it would be--”

“Robert,” Magnus said, putting a condescending hand to his shoulder. “I’m going to save us both right now. I’m going to walk away and pretend that this conversation never happened. Okay?”
Okay.” Magnus spun on his heel in just enough time to see Madzie dart through a door, as something had obviously caught her eye. So he followed her, trying to shake off the weirdness of that whole situation. It was hilariously annoying how easily he and Robert got along one moment, and then completely deteriorated in the next.

He herded Madzie back into the sitting room when he heard Alec’s voice coming from that direction. Not that it sounded all that great. Alec’s terse You asked him what? reverberated through the big brownstone. Even Madzie lifted her brows. Magnus paused in his tracks to look down at her and pulled an uh-oh face. She pulled her lips into a thin line, took his hand, and dragged him along into the sitting room. Alec was putting down a box in order to cross his arms over his chest and glare at his father. Maryse stood closer to the foyer entrance, holding a box herself with two behind her. All three Lightwoods were tense, and Magnus had the inane urge to walk along to wall to avoid being seen. As a child, Madzie had no such qualms. She marched right up to Alec and tugged at his jeans, forcing him to pay attention to her. She didn’t say anything, but he immediately softened. Magnus wasn’t the only one who noticed.

He dropped a hand to the top of her head and tugged lightly at one of her braids, then looked up at Magnus.

“Could you help mom with the boxes? I need to speak with my father for a moment.”

Magnus nodded and moved forward quickly to take the box he’d set down, beckoning Madzie along. He followed Maryse out into the foyer and out the front door. There were five boxes total, which was insane, but extremely generous. He and Maryse chatted quietly about what was in there and when it would fit her. Magnus was genuinely surprised at how much thought she’d put into it. But her attention was divided between Magnus and the front door, her gaze wandering in the direction of where her husband and son were probably arguing.

“I wish he wouldn’t interfere,” she said quietly after a while. “I wouldn’t have told him, but--”

“It’s not your fault, Maryse, he needed to hear that from you.” He shrugged. “And it’s Alec. He’s not happy unless he’s interfering with something.” His tone was exasperated but fond. He couldn’t help it. Alec was wonderful, truly, but he did have the tendency to unnecessarily insert himself. Maryse reached out and put a hand on his forearm, a knowing smile on her lips.

“How are you doing?” he asked her. But she only shrugged, not able to fully answer that question probably. He just nodded and let her keep her own counsel. They weren’t exactly close, so there was no need to press.
In the next moment, Alec erupted from the front door of the brownstone, hurrying down the steps. Robert lingered in the foyer, looking angry and desolate and like he’d been cut off mid-sentence. Magnus didn’t have much sympathy for him on that front, but he was concerned by the look on Alec’s face. He didn’t say anything to Magnus at first, just kissed his mother and promised to call her later. Then he went and spoke quickly to Ernesto, picked Madzie up, and started walking. Magnus turned on his heel to shrug helplessly at Maryse. They hugged and then Magnus went to catch up with Alec and Madzie.

It took at least two blocks for Alec to slow down to a human pace. Thankfully his parents lived in Carnegie Hill, so the walk to Central Park wasn’t terrible. Magnus wasn’t about to complain. Eventually, Madzie wanted walk herself, so Alec let her slide down, but held onto her hand tightly. Magnus took Alec’s free hand in his, forcing him to pause briefly so he could lift it to his lips and kiss it. Alec just nodded, tugging him closer and threading their fingers together. They continued their walk with Madzie asking a hundred questions about buildings and stores and restaurants. Alec knew a shocking amount, but he supposed that wasn’t entirely strange. Alec had grown up here, in this posh, disgusting wealthy neighborhood.

When they came up to the entrance of the park, they had to wait at a light. Alec’s eyes were fixed on one particular tree when he spoke.

“I’m sorry,” he said quietly.

“Too late,” Magnus said with an airy sigh, “I already forgave you.” Magnus felt Alec’s eyes on him, but didn’t turn to confirm it. Instead, he just leaned into it when Alec pressed a kiss to his temple.
Chapter 61

Chapter Summary

And EVEN MORE Madzie!!

Once again, they were immersed in all things Madzie. She was ecstatic anddragged them from place to place, thrilled by how much there was to see and all the people. They went to the zoo and she petted a llama who spat in some chubby man’s face. They took a picture of her trying to climb into the enclosings to nuzzle the damn thing. They went the Belvedere’s castle, and she was so focused on everything the park ranger was saying that Alec was absolutely convinced that she would be able to repeat every word of it back to them over dinner that night. They saw Jack and the Beanstalk at the Marionette theatre. Then, of course, Madzie caught sight of people out on boats and insisted they go. Magnus agreed immediately, and Alec ended up doing the rowing while Magnus and Madzie giggled and splashed water at him.

“This is bordering on abuse,” Alec protested, using the paddle to splash Magnus.

“This is silk!”

“This is fun!” Madzie shrieked at the top of her lungs.

After an hour or so, Alec was starving and dragged them to the cafe. Madzie insisted she wasn’t hungry yet, so Alec wolfed down a sub while they walked over to where people were sailing model boats. They watched until Madzie got bored and wanted to go on the playground, which gave them a short break from walking. Magnus slumped onto a bench.

“Oh my god, do you think Ernesto can land a helicopter around here?”

“Can Ernesto fly a helicopter?” Alec followed up. Magnus didn’t answer which was worse than a definitive answer, to Alec’s mind. Some of his employees had colorful histories. They sat and watched Madzie play with the other kids, holding her stuff and talking about what they’d do for the rest of the day. She’d want to go on the carousel, which was nearby, and there was a storyteller at the Hans Christian Andersen statue. That would be a good way to help her wind down. Magnus also wanted to find someone to get a portrait of her done.
“For me, not Cat. She gets school pictures.”

“You could *ask* for a school picture, you know.”

“She should offer. Nothing smaller than an 8 by 10. It’s the principle of the thing.”

“Good lord.”

Madzie did eventually get hungry and flew over to them in a hangry rage, demanding hot dogs like a power-crazed tyrant. Alec instantly volunteered to go get it, leaving an exasperated Magnus in his wake to deal with the pint-sized terrorist. He got one and a lemonade for Magnus because he anticipated him complaining about being thirsty in an hour or so. After getting through the heinous line and dealing with the rude as hell vendor, he turned around to see a skimpily clad woman talking to Magnus and gushing over Madzie. It was hot out, so whatever with the tank top and shorts, but he really didn’t think a visible thong was necessary. Alec rolled his eyes when she laughed obnoxiously and put a hand to Magnus’ chest. He backed away, but she followed, putting that hand to his arm while she talked to Madzie. Alec was not at all in the mood for this shit today. He stalked over, handing Madzie her hot dog, and inserted himself between Magnus at the woman. He kissed him soundly, pointedly ignoring her huff of irritation.

“Enjoying yourself?” he asked Magnus sarcastically.

“I am now. Meet Cindy.”

“Hi Cindy. Bye Cindy,” he answered, hooking an arm through Magnus’ and herding Madzie over to a bench to eat.

“Rude,” Magnus teased as they waited for her, grinning up at him sunnily. Alec lifted an unamused brow and passed him the lemonade, which he took with a hum of appreciation.

“I don’t think Cat would appreciate you exposing her child to a woman wearing a visible whale tail.”

“Was she really?” Magnus asked, arching to look back around him. Alec pinched him.
“Uncle Alec! No pinching!”

“Yeah, Uncle Alec!” Magnus complained teasingly. “No pinching,” which was exactly what he did as he said it. Alec yelped and squirmed away.

“Not cool!”

“Uncle Alec, I want a piggyback ride!”

“Uncle Alec, she wants a piggyback ride!” Magnus repeated smugly.

“I can hear her, you know. Are you finished?”

“Yep!” she chirped and darted over to a trashcan to discard the wrapper and then skipped her way back over, bouncing on the balls of her feet. Alec pulled a face as he squatted down so Madzie could climb on his back. Magnus wasn’t really paying attention to his snark, though. He was too busy snapping a picture of the two of them. Madzie immediately cheesed it up, and Alec shot him a close-lipped grin.

“Somebody’s cranky,” Magnus said with a pout.

“Somebody needs to shut up.”


“Sorry kiddo.”

“Uh-hmm.”

He looked back to Magnus. “It’s my dad.”
“Oh no, really? I had no idea. This is coming out of nowhere,” he deadpanned in a terribly feigned mock-surprise voice. “You hid it so well,” he said as he spun on his heel in the direction of the carousel. Alec sighed, bouncing Madzie once, who giggled and followed. It was a clear indication that they would have to wait to discuss it, but it would definitely be discussed.

“Your Uncle Magnus is a pain in the butt.”

“Butt!” Madzie screamed out giddily.

“Yep.”

Magnus turned back to look at them, skeptically. “What are you two talking about back there?”

“Nothing!” they intoned together. When Magnus turned back around, Madzie patted his head in victory. Alec squeezed her legs teasingly, making her giggle.

When Madzie got on the carousel the first time, she didn’t want to get off. They did make her get off and get back in line to wait, but she rode a few times in a row.

“Apparently, her dad missed her recital,” Magnus informed him.

“The guy’s a real charmer.”

“Speaking of charming dads…”

“I so would rather not.”

“Alexander, you’re taking your father’s affair a little personally, and it’s now fully affecting your mood. I mean it’s common for people to put their parents on pedestals and get upset when they can’t live up to that standard. It’s like what they say about meeting your heroes. You shouldn’t do it because it ruins the image you have of them. It’s the same with parents, eventually, they disappoint you.”
“All due respect, but that’s a bunch of crap.”

“Well, how should I know? My father never knew I existed and the replacement tried to drown me.”

“Neither one of us is drunk enough for this conversation.”

“Yet, here we are, having it.”

“I really don’t want to talk about my father and his affair right now.”

“Madzie can tell you’re upset.”

“Madzie has been on the carousel six times now, she can’t tell anything.”

“She’s trying to cheer you up.”

“By riding on a plastic elephant?”

“She’s seven, Alexander.”

“I’m just saying--”

“And I’m just saying,” Magnus said, holding onto the lapels of his jacket, “that you shouldn’t let this get to you. Not today at least. That’s shit you can air out at Easter.”

“We don’t celebrate Easter,” he answered flatly.

Magnus scowled, “That is the primary purpose of holidays. If you don’t celebrate them, then the family drama just sits there uselessly.”
“Remind me to kill you after we drop off Madzie tomorrow.”

“Alexander,” he pressed forward, bending back his head to look up at him, “your mother is a strong, intelligent woman. If she stays with your father, then that’s her choice. I highly doubt she’s just letting it sit like that.”

“How do you fix a marriage after an affair like that? How am I supposed to look at him, knowing what he did?”

“I don’t know, but that’s not for you to figure out. Especially not today.”

Alec sighed, slumping. “I know you’re right. Like, I know logically you’re right, but it’s just got me twisted up.”

“While I don’t condone it, I understand it.”

“I don’t. I don’t understand any of it. I don’t understand how he could do this to my mom. To all of us. I don’t get any of it. How can you lie to people who love you every day and not be a bad person? And if he’s a bad person who raised me, who made me want to be like him, then... I mean what does it make me if I can’t be mad at him about this? If I can’t hate him?”

“Nothing is ever that simple, Alexander.” Alec turned more into him, looking sad again. “He’s your dad. You don’t have to hate him just because you don’t like him right now.”

“Yeah, I guess.”

“You are really having a time of it today, aren’t you?”

“Yeah, what the fuck is with that by the way?”

“What like it’s my fault?”

“Aren’t you like omnipotent or something?”
“I wish.”

*

Madzie did eventually get off the carousel, but by the time she did, the storytelling was over. So Magnus found an artist and paid them $50 for a portrait of Madzie. She sat on their lap, wiggly, but managing to stay still. When the guy was finished, Magnus thanked him profusely. The portrait was really well done. They were about to leave and catch a train back to Brooklyn, when they were stopped a waifish-looking blonde with a neck tattoo. She handed them a canvas on which she had done a portrait of the three of them.

“Sorry if it seems weird. You guys just looked so sweet, and...well if I’d had dads like you...” she trailed off with a shrug and left without another word. Alec watched her go, brows furrowed in confusion. Magnus took the portrait more fully in his hands. It was beautifully done, actually. Not terribly detailed, but good considering the short time frame. She’d caught a moment when Alec and Magnus were looking at each other and Madzie was leaning against Magnus, looking peaceful. Huh.

“Uncle Alec?”

“Sup kiddo?”

“When my daddy makes me sad, mommy lets me have ice cream. Can we get ice cream so you’re not sad about your daddy anymore?”

Magnus watched, flabbergasted, as Alec’s entire defense system visibly deteriorated in the face of what was the most adorable request ever. She smiled up at him, batting her eyes, hugging the fish he’d bought her months ago tight to her chest. Alec had been so adamant that she wasn’t going to get sweets before dinner. So. Freaking. Adamant. And now Magnus was watching him cave into this tiny person in real time. It was sad, actually. A little sad. Because how could he fall for that? Magnus said none of this, jaw actually dropping when Alec spun on his heel and headed straight for an ice cream cart. Magnus put his hands on his hips and looked down at her, shaking his head.

“Such big evil for such a tiny person.” She smiled up at him, swinging her skirt in place, looking every inch innocent. “I’ve taught you well, sweet pea.” He pushed lightly at her head, making her laugh. “Go help him you little deviant.”
Monday morning found Alec right back at his desk in the precinct. Crime did not take weekends off. He had a few cases piled up, but was stuck on a stupid report that the weekend crew hadn’t finished. Sloppy sons of bitches. He was typing angrily, nearly breaking his backspace button when Garroway called out to him.

“Lightwood! Heads up!”

“What?” he said looking up and around. His co-workers were all looking toward the lobby, where his father was standing there chatting with Maia Roberts, who had just dropped her uncle off after lunch. If Alec was annoyed before, he was absolutely irate now. Given their conversation Saturday and lack of one during Sunday dinner, Alec thought it probably wasn’t a coincidence that he suddenly showed up at the 7-0. He looked around for Jace.

“Anyone seen my brother?”

“He and Clary took their fifteen. Went over to the diner.”

“Good,” Alec grumbled, closing out his programs. He stood, caught his father’s eye, and went over to an empty interrogation room. His father wasn’t far behind him, shutting the door and turning to face him. Alec leaned his hips back against the wall, bending forward a bit, not willing to give him an opening.

“Alec, we need to talk.”

He shrugged. “Not sure what’s left to say.”

“I need you to understand.”

“Are you still seeing her?”

“What?”
“I think it was a simple question. Are you still sleeping with this other woman?”

“You should be more understanding.”

“How do you figure?” It was so appropriate that they were in an interrogation room. They were on the wrong sides of the table, but did it really matter? Here his own father stood, begging him to understand how he could betray his own wife. But his next statement floored him, completely unraveled his patience.

“Because of Magnus! Everything you’re risking being with a man like that!”

“Magnus isn’t an affair! I’m in love with him, and we’re not sneaking around!”

“Whoa,” Jace said sauntering in with two coffees in his hands, “hey, what’s--Dad? What’s wrong?”

“Nothing Jace,” he said hastily. But Alec’s head was spinning out of control. Had he really just compared some random woman to Magnus? Had he just compared his mistress to the one person who meant everything to Alec? As an excuse, something to justify his behavior, to sweep it under the rug. To make Alec understand him better. Like he was capable of understanding the sheer dishonest, repugnant, petty--

“No Dad, maybe you should explain it to him. Jace should understand perfectly well, right? Because he has Clary and it’s the same damn thing.”

“Alec!”

“No, please Dad, explain to Jace how your affair is exactly like his relationship with Clary and mine with Magnus. Please, I want to hear it.”

“What the fuck?” Jace whirled on his father. “You’re cheating on Mom?”

“Son, you don’t understand--”
“What I understand is that you showed up here expecting Alec to clean up your mess. *Again*. So I suggest you leave before I say something I regret.”

Their father opened his mouth and closed it again. Then he turned on his heel and left. Jace and Alec stood in that room together, completely silent, staring at the door.

“How long have you known?”

“He told Mom right before I came out. Mom told me when I started seeing Magnus.”

“Iz and Max know?”

“Just Izzy.”

“Good.” Alec saw the muscles in Jace’s throat working, his chest heaving. He turned and shakily handed Alec a coffee he never asked for. “I need Clary.”

Then he was gone, the door shutting behind him with a loud thud. Alec knocked his head back against the wall and closed his eyes. He understood the feeling all too well.
Magnus wasn’t expecting Alec home until late. He rarely canceled Happy Hour with Isabelle, so it wasn’t completely strange that he’d walk in after 10 PM on a Monday night. But when he came in at 7, Magnus was startled, dislodging his laptop from his lap and knocking Chairman Meow off the back of the sofa. He watched Alec drop his bag to the floor, toe off his shoes, and slide off his jacket to toss onto the nearby bench. He walked over to the wall safe, depositing his badge, gun, and wallet. Then he immediately slid onto the sofa, moving his work things out of the way so that he could lay his head on his lap. Magnus held his arms up, waiting for Alec to settle, still a little startled, and dropped them around Alec.

“Everything okay?” he asked softly, stroking his hair. Alec shook his head, not answering. Clary had texted earlier that Robert had shown up at the precinct and Jace had found out about the affair. It wasn’t difficult to pinpoint the problem here. Magnus was quite sick and tired of Robert’s nonsense affecting his own personal life. An unhappy Alec was not ideal for his peace of mind.

“I know it’s more about your father,” Magnus started. Alec opened his mouth to comment, but Magnus dropped a finger to his lips, stopping him. “You don’t have to talk about it, all right? I don’t like that it’s upsetting you this much. I really don’t, but I know that you are, so that doesn’t matter.”

“Magnus--”

“Hush, I get to say my piece now.” Alec sighed and turned over so that he could nuzzle into Magnus’ stomach. Magnus put his hand back in his hair and talked anyway. “I don’t know what made your father step out on your mother. I don’t know why he let it continue. I do know that it has nothing to do with you, with your siblings, with your mother. It’s just him being selfish. I imagine it’s pretty much always been that way, but when you and the others were around, it was easier for him to feed that ego.” He ran a hand down Alec’s neck, tracing the lines of muscle.

“I can’t tell you if what your parents had was real love. It’s obvious they care about each other, but...everyone’s relationship is so different. And the people inside them are really the only ones who understand.” Alec turned his face up to Magnus, eyes wet, brows furrowed. Magnus used a thumb to gently smooth out that deep line, cupped his cheek. “Can you imagine trying to explain this to someone else? Because I’ve tried, and it doesn’t work.” Alec just shook his head, lips still in
a tight line.

“I don’t know, I think people just stop trying and go looking for that new feeling all over again. Which I’ve come to realize is stupidly overrated.” That got him a small, half-smile that barely qualified, but at the very least, the deep lines on his face softened. Magnus released a small sigh, a little relieved by that. “What are you thinking?”

Alec sighed and readjusted himself, wrapping an arm around Magnus’ waist.

“I’m thinking that I love you. Kind of a lot. And that I’m sick of letting him mess up our time together.”

Magnus hummed thoughtfully, fingers sinking into his hair. “It would take a lot more than that to mess up anything with us, darling.”

“I love you.”

“I love you too.”

Alec sat up, temporarily putting distance between them, but immediately crowded back into Magnus’ space, kissing him. Magnus caught him by the neck, absorbing the impact, and letting himself get swept away with Alec’s tide. It was probably one of the easiest things he’d ever let himself do, let Alec carry him off like that. Inwardly, he chuckled at the metaphor, considering their first time in this very position all those months ago. Magnus had been so concerned about not getting carried away with the physical side of their relationship. Their immediate, compatible connection had just seemed too good to be true. He’d been convinced that was the stuff of fairy tales. People just didn’t fall together that easily and last for long. Yet, here he was, living evidence to the contrary.

Magnus and Alec knew each other extremely well, especially when it came to sex. He didn’t need to ask to know what Alec wanted, didn’t need to hash out details. They had certain rhythms, certain tells. Alec was usually more aggressive, more physically assertive, while Magnus was more verbal. But right then, Alec was softer, letting Magnus take the lead, and practically begging for attention and affection. He was usually so busy giving it that he left nearly no room for receiving it. Magnus did his best to compensate, especially in times like these.

Separating, Magnus got up from the sofa and held out his hand to Alec, leading him to the
bedroom when he took it. This wasn’t going to be a quick fuck to settle nerves or prolonged, playful teasing session. It was something more intimate, more mindful. When Alec got like this, he needed to be reminded how loved he was. He was always more pliable in these moments, letting Magnus move him as he liked. So Magnus did. He carefully undressed him, slowly, conveying his intent and checking in every so often. Alec did nothing but assist him in the process, so he continued to undress himself and got on the bed. Alec followed so they were face to face on their knees. He slid his arms over Magnus’ shoulders while Magnus clasped at his hips and pressed kisses to his face and jaw. Alec submitted, tilting his head to give him more access.

Magnus showered Alec’s skin with kisses, soft and adoring. All lips and tongue, and no teeth. He kissed his shoulder and down his arm, to lave his tongue over his pulse point at his wrist. Alec cupped Magnus’ neck, fingers lightly stroking as he watched him. Magnus continued his thorough work, eventually urging Alec down to lay on his back, spread out for him. He focused his attention lower and lower, Alec’s fingers stroking through his hair. Magnus had no intention of teasing, but instead was mapping out his body, giving each plane and curve the attention it so absolutely deserved. Alec said nothing and kept perfectly still, even as his length hardened. Magnus dragged his hands over his body in time to his kisses, covering the parts left neglected by his lips.

It was worship, pure and simple. Just like Magnus, Alec forgot sometimes. He forgot that no matter what happened, they were the center. He and Alec were the center, and the center would hold. Magnus would not allow one man’s weakness to let Alec doubt what they had. He wouldn’t let anyone get to Alec in that way. This wasn’t a feeling Alec could fight off on his own, not like this. So Magnus would do it for him.

When he finally slid into Alec, feeling more at home there than anywhere else in the world, tears had slipped from Alec’s eyes. He was far from used to this much undivided attention, a situation Magnus had been adamant on rectifying. But Alec was stubborn, so Magnus would have to instruct by example. He pressed down, so they were chest to chest, but still able to see each other, and moved slowly. So slowly that it was almost painful, yet Alec accepted the pace with ease. The heat between them built steadily up, their kisses increasingly sloppy presses of reassurance. The intimacy of it was so heart-wrenchingly intense that Magnus almost couldn’t take it. He thought he’d go insane like that, sweating and groaning and straining against a flushed and begging Alec. They came together, lips pressed together and low moans escaping from their throats.

“Aku cinta kamu ,” Magnus said against his lips, offering his bottom lip for Alec to latch onto. He did, sucking it between his own, pressing and releasing. Alec brought his hands up to cup Magnus’ head, fingers clutching at his hair and ears, trying to keep him there with him. Magnus didn’t resist in the least, but instead relaxed his body down against his completely.

“Love you, too,” Alec whispered back eventually.

“Alexander, I love you more. More than anything that could…” He sighed through his nose and
ground his forehead against Alec’s. “I hope you never doubt that.”

Alec’s eyes flicked over his face and back to his eyes. His lips twitched into a half smile.

“Doubt truth to be a liar.”

Magnus smiled, nose wrinkling. “You are the only person who would think *Hamlet* is romantic.”

Alec brushed his nose against Magnus’, smiling outright. “I don’t. I think Hamlet was an idiot. He was too stupid to see how good he had it, how many people loved him.”

Magnus snickered. “You’re terrible at pillow talk, you know.”

Alec hummed shortly, stroking back Magnus’ hair and lifting to capture Magnus’ lips for a sound kiss.

“Sólo tú,” Alec whispered so softly, Magnus almost didn’t hear him. “Sólo tú.”

Magnus wasn’t really sure what was going through his head in that moment, or why he felt he needed to emphasize that point, but Magnus didn’t really care. He just kissed him and held onto him, knowing that if Robert Lightwood had experienced with Maryse even a second of what Magnus had with Alec, then there was no word fit enough to describe what a fool he was.
Chapter 64

Chapter Summary

More Lydia!
TW: suggestion of domestic violence

Henry's here.
#
Leave
#
Can't stuck in bathroom
#
On our way
#
I'm so scared
#
He's not gonna touch you ever again

*

To say that Alec was not fond of Lydia’s ex-husband was a severe understatement. Hate wasn’t a strong enough word. He’d only seen the divorce-version of their relationship, but it was more than enough. He was controlling and abusive. The last time Lydia got a restraining order on him, she showed up to work with a black eye. He’d finally been arrested for assault and put away for attempted murder, but he’d been released due to overcrowding and good behavior. The US penal system at its finest. Kids were being locked up for holding weed and this asshole was walking free.

Magnus had to keep Alec from running to Lydia’s place on foot. They grabbed the first cab they could find, paying him extra to break some laws. Alec ensured his license, and they were able to get there in under five minutes. Alec ran through the door, bypassed the elevator in favor of the stairs. Magnus was quick on his heels, but before he caught up, Alec was already in the apartment. He went right for the sound of the oversized man shouting and attempting to beat down a puny
bathroom door. He grabbed him by the arms and threw him away from the door against the wall, causing him to yelp like a wounded animal. Alec immediately drew his gun and held it to his temple when he tried to rise.

“If you move a goddamn muscle, I will blow your fucking head off, I swear to god.”

Thankfully, Magnus didn’t bother trying to stop him. Alec kept his gun trained on Henry long enough for Magnus to get past him into the bathroom. Alec cast a glance through the door to see Lydia balled up in the tub, sobbing. Magnus was helping her out of the tub and bathroom, into the living room and into her bedroom.

“Get her stuff. Get the dog. Get anything she needs and get her out,” Alec said evenly. Henry reacted negatively to this. He lurched at Alec, who holstered his gun and punched him in the stomach. He fought him down to the ground, wrestling him in order to get him in handcuffs. Henry was drunk, screaming and struggling against him. Once Magnus got Lydia and her dog out of the apartment, Alec released him, letting him struggle all on his lonesome.

“You dumb son of a bitch--” Alec pulled out his phone and called 911. He sat there, ignoring Henry completely while he waited for the black and whites to show up. Henry just ended up hurting himself, bruising his own wrists as he tried to get up. Drunken idiot. Magnus texted that they’d gotten a cab, that Lydia was shaken up, but they would be back at the apartment soon. Alec tapped out a response, doing his best to not look at Henry. Any eye contact would result in him killing the bastard, and that would not be ideal.

The black and whites came bounding up the stairs after about ten minutes. They came in, immediately assessing the situation and recognizing Alec instantly. He knew them fairly well, actually, as they’d done good work for him in the past. He gave a statement to one while the other, Deets, kept Henry subdued. He re-cuffed him, moved him to the opposite side of the room and tried to talk him down. Alec crossed his arms, pointedly looking at the officer to avoid taking another swing at Henry.

“Listen, this asshole came after one of our own, so charge him with anything that’ll stick,” he said relatively quietly.

“That’s illegal!” Henry shouted, slurring his words as he tried to jerk himself from Deets’ grasp.

Deets tightened his handcuffs, making him whine. “Maybe you should have thought about that before trying to attack a cop.”
Alec let them leave first and then followed, locking up behind him. He was slow to get a cab, not wanting to rush himself. He walked a little, trying to shake off his adrenaline before he hailed one. He spent the whole of the drive trying to calm himself down. He’d seen red the second he saw Henry’s name. Lydia never asked for help. She never wanted to impose. It had taken her a good long while to open up about that part of her life, and she’d been doing so damn good. So good. Alec’s reaction to her pain was just as strong as it would have been to Izzy’s, and he knew that for a fact. It was like someone had stabbed him in the gut and twisted. It made him want to hit something until his hands were nothing but broken, bloody stubs.

When he finally got back to the apartment, she and Magnus were on the sofa. Alec stood in the doorway for a long moment, just watching them. Lydia was sobbing, her dog curled up on the sofa next to her, while Magnus held her and rubbed her back. He’d only seen her like this once, and he’d hoped to never see it again. When Lydia noticed him, she was up out of her seat and walking to Alec with her arms out. Alec caught her around her waist, holding her as she fell slack into his arms. He just hugged her and let her cry. He hugged her like he’d hug Izzy or his mom. He felt his blood cool, his mind refocused.

“Is he gone?”

“In a holding cell for the night, yeah.”

“I thought he was gonna kill me this time.”

“He’ll have to get through me first.”

“Like I said,” Magnus said gently from the sofa, “you’re welcome to stay here until you find a new place. And I know a particularly vicious lawyer who could bury him in legal fees and restraining orders.”

“He won’t stop, Magnus, he’ll never stop.”

Magnus got up and came to their side. He put a hand to her shoulder soothingly, with a rueful smile on his lips. Lydia turned to him, looking miserable. Alec wanted to hit something again.

“Well darling, he’s never met Lily Chen.”
Alec frowned. “Isn’t she the lawyer that won you that suit against IBM?”

“Yes,” Magnus said. “She managed to have one of the lawyers deported to Canada, convinced another lawyer’s wife to file for divorce, made one of them cry, and uh, persuaded the CEO to apologize to me personally. In writing.”

“She sounds evil,” Lydia said, sniffing and wiping at her eyes.

“She absolutely is, and I will call her first thing in the morning. I cannot guarantee that Henry will survive the process, but he won’t be able to bother you anymore.”

“Magnus, it’s too much, you don’t need to--”

He held up a finger up in front of her lips, silencing her.

“It is not too much. You’re family and I take care of family. Besides, very few people are as deserving of Lily’s services as you are. She’ll do it pro bono.” Magnus reached up to wipe a stray tear from her cheek and took her hand, threading it through the crook of his arm. “For now, you need rest. The pooch can stay in the guest room with you, I do not mind in the least. Of course, the guest bath is fully stocked, so I expect you to take a nice hot bath and then straight to bed with you--”

Alec watched Magnus lead Lydia off again, her dog hopping off the sofa and trailing behind them. He felt relief, knowing that she was in Magnus’ capable hands. It was...it was so much more than he could have hoped for or expected from him. He couldn’t handle it, so he went into the kitchen to make tea. It was a useless gesture, but he needed to do something, anything, to occupy himself for a moment. It wasn’t long before Magnus joined him there. Alec put his hands to the counter and bent, stretching his back and shoulders, dropping his head to ease into it. The pounding in his head hadn’t yet subsided. He felt Magnus’ warm fingers pinch lightly at the base of his skull, putting pressure right where he needed it. He sighed heavily, straightened, and turned to take Magnus in his arms. Magnus was already, moving, sliding right into place.

Lydia settled into the bath with no fuss or protest, so Magnus left her to rest. She was going to need it. Lily was nothing short of a tiger in the courtroom. In fact, she had a traditional Chinese tiger
tattooed on her back just to prove it. Unfortunately, that meant she put her clients through the wringer too. She wanted every edge, every advantage, before facing her opponent. Lydia wouldn’t be permitted to hold anything back. He got the dog settled on the bed, scratching under his chin and hoping he’d be calm through the night. He hoped the dog would keep Lydia calm through the night.

Alec was in the kitchen, seemingly brewing tea, but doing more stretching than brewing. Magnus hadn’t seen him so on edge since that day in the precinct when the psycho walked in with a gun. He’d been stunned to walk into Lydia’s apartment to see Alec holding a gun to the man’s head. Alec was just so...soft. His hands were gentle and his eyes kind. To see him like that, to see him so out of control for that brief moment, was unsettling. But Magnus had quickly reconciled it. Alec could afford to be gentle with the people he loved because he wouldn’t hesitate to put down anyone who threatened them. It was a jarring juxtaposition, but it was one Magnus understood all too well.

However, seeing Alec in any sort of pain, pained Magnus. So he went over to him immediately, pinching the tightness as the base of Alec’s skull to ease the tension there. He relaxed instantly, straightened, and Magnus welcomed him with open arms. Alec submitted to the hug for only a second before pulled back and began his affectionate assault.

“Thank you,” Alec said, kissing Magnus as they stood together in the kitchen. He put his hands to Magnus’ face, kissing him over and over, with so much sweetness Magnus couldn’t take it.

“Alexander--”

He peppered kisses all over Magnus’ face, making him laugh.

“Thank you, thank you, thank you.”

Magnus’ only recourse was to stop the assault with his own mouth, kissing him firmly once.

“She’s family. She watches your back every day and helps get you back home. I’d do anything she asked. Anything.”

Alec grinned and wrapped him in a tight hug, shoving his face into his neck.
Lydia had been partners with Alec Lightwood for four years. It had taken all those four years to get to know him at the most basic level. Yes, she’d met his family. Yes, she’d crashed on his couch once or twice. Yes, they spent an inordinate amount of time together. But it had taken Clary outing him for her to really understand him. And it took her living with him and Magnus for her to really, truly know him. She knew how he took his coffee, where he ate and his favorite foods, she knew his methods of deductive reasoning, his writing style, how empathetic he could be, how much he loved his job and his family. Since meeting Magnus, she’d seen him smile and laugh more often, seen him express his real feelings more often. He was more relaxed, better able to relate to victims’ families and suspects. It was a startling turnaround.

But she didn’t know that he pre-cooked meals for Magnus to heat up later. She didn’t know that he made coffee in the morning and took it to Magnus in bed. She didn’t know that he occasionally let Magnus do his hair. She didn’t know that he was very tactile, letting Chairman Meow curl up in his lap, or even Lydia’s dog, when he couldn’t be touching Magnus. She didn’t know how comfortable he was in his own shared space with Magnus. She didn’t know that he liked to read so much, or that he’d read out loud to Magnus in Spanish. It was actually really cute. He’d nudge Magnus with his elbow or foot, read a line and demand he translate it. Magnus was right maybe half of the time. If he got it wrong, Alec would haul him over to look at the words and explain it to him. Just based on the sickeningly adoring look on Magnus’ face, he wasn’t learning much.

Lydia was nothing if not an avid student. She’d been top of her class essentially her entire life, and she’d not let that edge wear off even the slightest. Her relationship with Henry had been a complete and utter disaster from start to finish. So yes, she was absolutely going to take advantage of the fact that she was in close quarters with one of the happiest, most stable couples in her acquaintance. She’d attempted to do so with her sister and cousins, some of her friends. All of them were disasters. So she watched Magnus and Alec.

They didn’t do anything differently, per se. Actually, they bickered and argued about the same as any other couple. But everything was so short lived. That was the other thing: they never brought up old fights. Henry would bring up every shitty thing she had ever done or said when they argued. Magnus and Alec fought in shorthand, like they’d had the conversation a hundred times and had rules about it.
“You left the mousse out again.”

“Yeah, I used it this morning.”

“There is a basket!”

“It’s too far away.”

“Not a viable excuse.”

“Switch it with the cleaning supplies.”

“That makes no sense.”

“Then don’t complain when I don’t put stuff back--”

“Oh my god, fine.”

At first, it would have been easy to say that Magnus took more care of Alec than the other way around. Magnus had the money, Magnus bought him clothes and food and they lived in his beautiful apartment, which his company owned. It was very easy to make that call. But it simply wasn’t true.

Magnus may have bought most of the food, but Alec did a lot of the cooking. He even made sure Magnus was eating according to some specific diet his doctor had put him on for whatever reason. Alec charged Magnus’ phone when he forgot, got him coffee or something to eat when his conference calls went too long. Magnus seemed to need constant reassurance on various matters, which Alec provided almost thoughtlessly. Magnus seemed to get wound up, overexcited, and Alec would move into his space, providing physical contact, and he would settle. They just had this easy balance, a back and forth that didn’t seem to have a pattern or score. She and Henry...everything was on a scoresheet. She did the dishes, so he needed to do laundry. He’d bought her flowers for her birthday, so he deserved sex. It was a constant paying back or one-upping the other. Magnus and Alec... it was all calm waters. They did things for each other just because they wanted to do them.
Another thing she noticed was how easy they were with each other around other people, even her. When they ate at the table together, they sat on the same side, arms touching. If Alec was sitting on the sofa and Magnus passed, one of them would reach out to touch the other, hands sliding over bodies. They kissed each other in greeting and to say goodbye. Lydia caught them in several private, quiet moments, too. They would just stand together, Magnus’ hands around Alec’s waist while Alec toyed with Magnus’ necklaces. They’d just stand there together, talking quietly and smiling at each other, stealing kisses like they were in their own little world. It was heart-wrenchingly beautiful watching them. Surprisingly, Lydia wasn’t even jealous. Watching them made her happy, made her feel hopeful and loving in a way that was so unlike her. She had a hard time not staring at them sometimes.

“Lyds?”

They were in that exact moment right then. Alec had turned on some game and Magnus had layered himself over Alec, leaning bodily into him, and he’d fallen asleep with Alec’s hand in his hair. Lydia was sitting on the stuffed chair, angled toward the center of the room but with the TV in full view. She had a book and tea, and was totally comfortable, but couldn’t rip her eyes off Magnus and Alec.

“Huh?” she said, startled, “What?”

“She straightened, adjusting herself in her seat to seem more focused on her own person.

“Yeah, totally, just thinking.”

Alec lifted a brow at her, which was totally a Magnus-like gesture he’d adopted lately instead of the stone cold stare of skepticism.

“About what?”

Lydia pulled her lips in, trying to think of a reasonable answer. There wasn’t one. She was observing and learning things she couldn’t with other people. There was no good way to express that to someone inside the relationship she was observing. Lydia tried to think what the department shrink had said about her guarded nature, how she tended to get too defensive when she was being
herself. So Lydia took a deep breath and looked him square in the eye.

“I’m really happy you found Magnus,” she said honestly. Because that was the truth of it at the end of the day. “You’re happier, and it’s because of him, and you of all people deserve that kind of happiness.”

Alec looked at her oddly, in a way she’d never seen from him before. It was almost like disbelief, or something resembling it.

“Thank you.”

She shrugged. “If people were half as kind to each other as you guys are, I don’t think we’d deal with so many couples like me and Henry.” She laughed. “We’d probably be out of business.”

“Lydia…” he started, voice a little hoarse. She watched his hand drift to Magnus’ forearm, holding him there protectively.

“It’s nothing, really.”

“You deserve a hell of a lot better than Henry. None of that was your fault. You do know that, right?”

“I mean--I just--”

“No,” Alec interrupted. “No. You are not to blame because of what he did. You could have been the perfect wife every second of every day, and he would have been the same. He never deserved you. Actually, I have a hard time believing anyone could possibly deserve you. But Jace and Izzy say I’m overprotective, so whatever.”

She smiled when Magnus snuffled against Alec’s shoulder and lifted a hand to lazily pat at his chest.

“Tell’r she’s dumb.”
Alec looked down at him, smiling and laughing lightly through his nose. Lydia saw him roll his eyes, but there was so much fondness in his expression. Stupidly, adoring fondness that couldn’t be explained away by anything but pure, unadulterated love. And if something like that could exist for Alec, who’d been alone and guarded for so long, then maybe there was hope for the rest of them.

Alec looked up at her with a grin and shrugged. “Well, his majesty has spoken.”

*

Despite the terrible circumstances of her moving in with them, having Lydia around after hours was a blessing for their caseload. For whatever reason, they both seemed to take too much work home with them and were doing some of their best processing together in the kitchen. They even managed to solve one of Lydia’s oldest, most problematic cold cases.

“Why don’t we work from here more often?”

“I don’t know, but it’s amazing. It’s like got this magical case-solving energy.”

“Nuh-uh, no,” Magnus said, sweeping in and stealing their files from the table and their hands. “No more working, no more talking about dead people. You’ll not sully my home with your morbid nonsense.”

“But Magnus--!” Alec whined, trying to get his file back.

“Magnus, seriously, this place has got some major mojo. I may never leave.”

He whipped the file out of Alec’s reach and jabbed a finger. “You are searching for a new apartment starting now.” He dropped a different file folder in her lap. “There are ten apartment buildings in that folder, all owned by Bane, Inc with available units in your price range.”

“How do you know--?”
“Pick one and I’ll call the super to update security immediately. And you, mister,” he swiveled to Alec, “are going to go make my dinner because you’ve annoyed me and need to get back in my good graces.”

“Papi--” Alec whined after him, making Lydia snicker. He swatted at her.

“Nope!”
Chapter 66

Chapter Summary

TW: PTSD, flashbacks, mentions of death and violence.

Ya'll wanted some angst, so here's a bit.

Sorry for all the sporadic updating. I'm posting as I write at the moment.

When Alec and Lydia were called out to a murder scene in a park at 6 in the morning, Alec was already in a foul mood. He hadn’t been himself for a few days. He’d known this was coming. Not the murder, the mood. He’d known it was coming, but he couldn’t do a damn thing about it. Magnus was noticing it, too, he was sure. Alec was doing his best to keep it quiet, to let it pass naturally like it did every year. He thought he was doing a bang-up job of it, too, until they got to the scene.

A young woman in her early twenties was found under a park bench. The M.E. on the scene told them that despite the burn damage to the body, he’d been able to pick out bruises along her neck. He was filing the preliminary cause of death as strangulation. It wasn’t outside the norm for people to try to destroy evidence by burning it, even if it was a body. Alec was used to that. But when he looked down at the woman, seeing her lying there, his brain short-circuited.

She was blonde and trim, her body badly burned and eyes wide open. They were blue. Bright blue. Alec’s vision went red. He could hear the pop pop pop of AK-47s going off all around him, latent explosions blasting in his peripheral. His hands were holding her up, covered in bright red blood that wouldn’t stop gushing from the open wound in her abdomen. The sun was hot on his neck and he could taste sand and blood on his tongue.

“Alec?”

He only vaguely heard Lydia’s voice in the background. He pushed her hand away from him. He couldn’t think, couldn’t blink away the brightness of the Iraqi sun, couldn’t get the smell of singed hair and blood out of his nostrils. Without a word, he bolted from the scene, walking quickly away and out of the park. He walked until he could feel his feet again, until his hands felt clean again. He walked until his ears stopped ringing with screams and the whines of distant explosions. He walked until he could feel his lungs take in air again. Somehow he ended up back at the crime scene. Lydia watched him warily, but didn’t comment otherwise. The woman’s name was Hillary Jordan. She was a tennis player enrolled in a graduate program at Buffalo. And three hours later, they still had no leads.
Very quickly, he and Lydia decided that they were going to have to hunker down and find at least one viable lead before going home. Lydia went to go order food. Alec stared down at his phone for a long moment before picking it up and calling Magnus.

Usually, the sound of Magnus’ voice was soothing. Usually, talking to him would settle Alec’s nerves and refocus him. That would not be the case today, he thought regretfully, even as Jace perched a hip on his desk.

“Hey, I was just--”

“I can’t make dinner tonight,” Alec said shortly. He wanted to make this conversation as quick as possible. He must have been too obvious because Jace quirked a brow at him.

“That’s the third time you’ve canceled this week,” Magnus said with a sigh. “What’s going on?”

“My job, Magnus. I have to work.” The frustration rose like bile in the back of his throat, thick and hot.

“Alec--”

“I don’t get why you’re on my case right now, you vanish for days at a time and I never say anything.”

“A weekend conference isn’t vanishing! I told you--”

“I don’t want to do this right now, Magnus, all right? I’ll talk to you tomorrow.”

There was a long pause. Both Jace’s brows were shot straight up at this point. Magnus and Alec didn’t fight. People commented on that quite a lot. It wasn’t true. They fought quite a bit and often. It was just that they were very quick to resolve their issues. Both he and Magnus had nasty tempers that flared up fast and fizzled out just as fast. Just because they didn’t screech at each other like Jace and Clary...

“Yeah. Fine. Talk tomorrow.” Then the line went dead. Jace was glaring at him, unimpressed, as
he put his phone down.

“What?” Alec snapped.

“Not cool, man.”

“Mind your own business, Jace.”

Jace didn’t even blink. “I’m not stupid, Alec. I know what the date is just as well as you.”

He walked away without another word before Alec could snap back at him. Alec wanted to shout after him, or hit something. Neither would accomplish much. Instead, he deflated and dropped his head back to stare up at the ceiling. Nicki would have punched him in the face.
Combing through Hillary Jordan’s life was tedious. She was extremely active on social media. She had a wide circle of friends and acquaintances, all of which had means and opportunity. Finding a motive was turning out to be the crux of the issue. As far as they could tell, she was beloved by most of these people. Lydia’s theory, unfortunately, due to her own experience, was a stalker or an ex-boyfriend. Alec didn’t like the idea of her having to deal with that situation, but he pushed anyway. While she dug through her financials, Alec found himself staring at her photo, the one where she was alive and smiling. Those features were so familiar to him, and he found himself thinking of a completely different person, gunshots ringing in his ears. Then a hand dropped to his shoulder.

“Alec?”

“I’m fine.”

“We’ve been here for five hours. Go home to Magnus.”

She was right. That was absolutely what he should do. He knew it was. He knew he should go apologize and curl up in bed with Magnus and forget the whole thing. But the sludge in his gut hadn’t gone away. The ringing in his ears hadn’t faded yet. Magnus had to deal with so much on a regular basis. He didn’t need to deal with Alec’s bullshit, too. This wasn’t something that could be fixed. You couldn’t just hug it out and wish it away. That was a fantasy. No, it was better to keep his distance until the feeling went away.

“He’s not too happy with me right now. Had a fight on the phone today.”

Lydia forced him to look at her, hand cupping his chin forcefully. The only person who did that was Izzy. Maybe they were spending too much time together?

“Go home, Alec. Go talk to Magnus. And don’t come back here until you do.”
Briefly, he wondered if Jace had said something to her. He quickly decided it didn’t matter. He nodded and leaned forward to kiss her forehead. Then he packed up his stuff and left.

By the time he got home, it was past 1 AM. Magnus was in bed, curled up with Alec’s pillow, seemingly sound asleep. Alec quickly changed, slid into the bed, pulled the pillow away, and inserted himself into Magnus’ space.

Magnus hummed sleepily, “Hey, you okay?”

Alec braced an arm around his waist, pulling him closer in. Magnus accommodated, settling against Alec as he usually did.

“I’m okay when I’m with you.”

Magnus yawned. “Thought you were mad.”

“Not at you.”

“You eat?”

“No.”

Lazily, Magnus smacked his shoulder, making Alec chuckle.

“Go back to sleep, papi.”

“Nope,” Magnus said sitting up, “I’m making tea and we’re talking.”

“Magnus--”
“No arguing. My doctor friend says you got to air it out before you go to bed. Bed is the safe place. Can’t bring it with you.” He clambered over Alec unnecessarily to get out of bed, once on his feet, he grabbed Alec’s hand and tugged.

“Cat is a nurse ,” he said snottily.

“I’m not talking about Cat,” Magnus shot back with attitude. “And my point is the same. So get up.”

Magnus bodily dragged him into the kitchen, disturbing Chairman Meow’s beauty sleep, and set about making boiling water. Alec sat at the counter watching him. He couldn’t believe how different his life was now, seven years later. He couldn’t believe how much had changed. He had his dream job, he was out to his family who were all happy and healthy, and he had this amazing, gorgeous man bending over backward to take care of him. It didn’t get much better than this. He’d been so alone and in so much pain for such a long time, and now...Now Magnus Bane loved him.

“So I couldn’t help but notice that the date on your tattoo was today,” Magnus said, setting Alec’s tea in front of him. Made just how he liked it because of course Magnus knew something that trivial about him. Alec rubbed at his chest absently and sighed. “So this is about Nicki, then?”

Alec nodded and sighed. “I didn’t want to tell you...I was--I’m used to dealing with it on my own, you know? And you’ve got a lot going on. This stuff--”

“Alexander--”

“I’m serious, Magnus. This stuff doesn’t stop. It just...every year, you know? I don’t have any control over it. Usually, there isn’t anyone around enough to react to it.”

Magnus was shaking his head, biting his lip. “You can’t just push me out when you’re having an off day.”

“I know.”

“What am I supposed to do with that?” he asked helplessly. “I can’t read your mind. If you need space, just--tell me.”
Alec decided that apologizing again wasn’t productive. He sighed and sunk onto the counter, leaning on his elbows. There was no use harping on something he was completely inadequate at.

“I called her mom three days ago.”

Magnus didn’t even blink. “How is she?”

“Drunk. She needs a liver transplant, but they won’t put her on the list.”

“That’s not your fault.”

“I know,” Alec whispered, sipping at his tea. Magnus waited, standing there drinking his own, not expecting anything. Just waiting. Alec cupped his mug with both his hands. At this point, he had to go all in, so he continued. “We found a woman in a park this morning. Strangled. Someone tried to burn the body, burn the evidence, but we got there before…” he trailed off. “She had blonde hair and blue eyes. Same height and build as Nicki. She was tennis player, you know, an athlete.”

Magnus reached his hand across the table and Alec grabbed it without looking.

“When they discharge you, they forget to tell you that the flashbacks can happen whenever. You know? You don’t have to be asleep or alone. You could be standing in a park over someone’s dead body, surrounded by co-workers.”

“Oh, Alexander,” Magnus said miserably, squeezing his hand. Alec released his tea to cover their clasped hands.

“I froze. I just froze. Had to leave and clear my head.”

“Tell me what you saw.”

Tears burned his eyes, slipping down without his permission. “I was standing over her body, and I could feel her blood on my hands, but I couldn’t move. I felt like I was screaming but she couldn’t
hear me. She was dying right in front of me all over again and I couldn’t do anything, I couldn’t save her.” He sniffed and wiped at his cheeks, spreading the wetness. “They kept telling me I was a hero for carrying her back to base under fire. For trying. I wasn’t her hero, I was her pallbearer.”

“You did what you could with what you had, that’s the best anyone can do.”

Alec shook his head. “Sometimes I just think that maybe if I’d held her differently or ran faster. Maybe I should have stayed there and waited for air assistance.”

“Then you would be dead now, and Nicki wouldn’t have wanted that.”

Alec lifted his head, vision clouded over from tears. “Magnus, sometimes--” Magnus pushed away from the counter, circled it, and pulled Alec into his arms, letting him sob. One hand moved up and down his back rhythmically, the other stroked his hair. He didn’t try to shush him, to calm him, just let him get it out. When he quieted, he was still clinging to Magnus, who had dropped his face to his hair.

“Don’t hide from me when it gets bad,” Magnus whispered there, barely audible. Alec could feel the vibration of his voice against his skull, a soft pressure he had to close his eyes to. “Find me when it gets this bad.”

Alec nodded shakily. “I’m sorry--”

“No,” Magnus said, pulling back and bringing his hands to Alec’s face. He was shaking his head. “You never have to be sorry for this, do you understand? I love you so much, and…” He trailed off as he thumbed away the tears still on Alec’s cheeks, brows pinching together. “I don’t need you to protect me from the ugliness, Alexander. I love you.”

“I love you, too.”

Magnus ducked down to kiss him soundly, branding himself thoroughly with Alec’s pain and bitterness, accepting it for what it was. They moved to the sofa after that. Magnus sat with Alec’s head in his lap, stroking fingers through his hair while he talked about Nicki. Not about the day she died, just about her and all the good memories. Eventually, Alec fell asleep, so Magnus just curled around him as much as possible to make himself comfortable.
Chapter 68

Chapter Summary

Jealous Alec!

It took a couple of weeks for Alec to get completely back to normal. The nightmares were worse. He didn’t have flashbacks, but he was pretty short-tempered. Magnus was much more understanding, but much less passive when it came to those outbursts. Instead of retreating or snapping back, he was more likely to tell him to take a breath or pull him in for a hug. If it had been anyone else, Alec would have resented that response, but it was Magnus. And instead of luring him into a verbal fight, Magnus dragged him down to his gym. Dojo was more accurate. Alec’s hand-to-hand was a little rusty, but Magnus was a good teacher. Sparring definitely took his mind off of things. And the sex afterward wasn’t too bad either.

Because of his tetchy behavior, Magnus had excused Alec from several of his work functions in favor of letting him have some alone time. But evidently, Magnus had decided that his reprieve was officially over. It was a Thursday night, and Alec was in a shirt and tie at one of Magnus’ regular happy hour events. It was a rented lounge room full of potential and current investors. According to Magnus, it was the best way to get people talking and build trust. Alec didn’t understand why ties and alcohol had to be involved, but he wasn’t in much of a position to argue.

Magnus pulled him around by the hand, introducing him to people and trying to get business done. Eventually, Alec needed a timeout, just to clear his head. Magnus needed to work anyway, so he excused himself to the bar. He sat there chatting with the bartender, Liam, for a while. Liam worked a lot of Magnus’ events. He was a Pandemonium bartender, too, and was friendly and sympathetic with Alec who felt very much out of place. During that time, he’d lost track of Magnus and tried to find him again with his eyes. He stood with a group of men and women, most of which Alec knew. Except for one.

He was an impeccably dressed man with dark hair and a handsome face. Alec bristled when he realized how close he was standing to Magnus. And frowned when the man smiled too long at him, his hand trailing down Magnus’ perfect arm. That was his arm, damn it.

Raphael came out of nowhere, drink in hand, and followed Alec’s gaze.

“I will never understand how he does it,” the CFO commented idly, signaling to Liam to refill his glass.
“What’s that?”

“What talk to people for hours without blowing his brains out.”

Alec hummed, sipping his beer. “Yeah, some people are enjoying it a little too much.” Magnus was in work-mode. Alec knew when Magnus went into work-mode that he sometimes didn’t pay too much attention to how people were responding to him. As long as it was positive, all was well. This did have some drawbacks in Alec’s opinion, this guy being too flirtatious without recourse being one of them.

“Oh quit being a baby, Alec. He’s working.”

“Hey, he doesn’t have to whore himself out for the sake of the company.”

“That’s not what I’m saying because that’s not what’s happening.” Raphael shot him a knowing glance and sauntered off to fuck knows where. Alec didn’t care. He just kept an eye on this guy who was (still!) standing too close to Magnus. No one was even saying anything, or acting like it was out of the ordinary, and Alec did not like the implication of that. But he didn’t want to fly off the handle and embarrass Magnus. He got another drink and grabbed Helen before she walked back into the crowd with another tray of food.

He turned her by the shoulders in the direction of Magnus and pointed over her shoulder at the man currently breathing the same air as his boyfriend.

“Name, please.”

“Oh. Axel.”

“Axel?”

“Yeah, he’s a real piece of work. Always sends his food back and is stingy on the tip.”

“Helen.”
“Right. He’s been trying to bang Magnus for years, but Magnus always shoots him down. Will didn’t like him. Or that’s what Magnus said.”

“And Magnus wouldn’t date someone Will didn’t like?”

“In those days? Hell no. If Will nixed it, Magnus didn’t hit it.”

“Lovely. I hate this guy. Why do I hate this guy?”

“Because he’s got a hand on your hot, rich boyfriend’s beefy bicep.”

“Yep. Uh huh, that’ll do it. I think I’m gonna punch this guy.”

“Whoa there cowboy, slow your roll.”

“Let go of me, Helen.”

“Oh shit, his hand just went to his ass. Go get ‘im Alec. Kill ‘im! Kill!”

Alec darted straight for where Magnus and this guy Axel stood, moving to stand in between them. He slid an arm around Magnus and ducked to kiss him in greeting. Magnus was slow to respond at first, caught off guard, but he sunk into it quickly. He pulled back to smile at Alec, looking not at all put-off. His boyfriend kissing him in front of people he worked with was probably not the weirdest or most unprofessional thing he’d ever done. Alec kept a straight face as he slid a hand under Magnus’ jacket and wedged it between his hip and his waistband, squeezing. Magnus looked up at him in pleased surprise and pushed more closely into his side, despite the company.

“Jealous,” Magnus hissed under his breath, lifting his brows pointedly. Alec turned toward him, putting a bigger block between him and Ax-whatever.

“Perpetually.”
Magnus beamed up at him, reaching out to clutch at his sports jacket. He did that cute nose-scrunching thing that made Alec melt every damn time. They were so busy smiling at each other that they barely heard the other guy’s confused attempt for attention.

“Magnus?”

“Magnus has to go somewhere to do something,” Alec answered for him, not turning around. He picked up Magnus’ hand and pressed a kiss to his palm. “Say bye, Magnus.”

“Uh-huh,” Magnus said, following easily when Alec led him by the hand over to the outdoor patio. Magnus didn’t look back, but Alec did, briefly, when he opened the door for him. Axel was watching them, brows furrowed and talking to one of the women with a frown on his face. He was obviously asking about Alec. Unfortunately, because of Jace’s never-ending quest to beat everyone at everything, Alec was extremely competitive. So in a petty move, he made eye contact with the guy, lifted a hand jauntily and winked, before following Magnus outside.

He was leaning against the railing to the garden, smirking and shaking his head.

“Wow.”

“Wow what?”

“You are ridiculous.”

Alec moved forward, sliding his hands over Magnus’ hips, not moving closer than that.

“I do not know to what you refer.”

Magnus snorted, his smile so blinding that Alec smiled in response.

“You have met several people I’ve slept with, including Camille, who was the worst, and you have never acted like that.”
Alec physically struggled to find the words, not really having a good explanation. He shrugged.

“I don’t know. Camille is old news. You know, you left those people for a reason. But that guy?” He sniffed. “I don’t know.”

“I never slept with him, Alexander.”

“Yeah, maybe that’s the problem.”

“Huh?”

“He’s a what-if. And he’s obviously into you.” He rolled his shoulders in his discomfort, and Magnus immediately plucked his hands from his sides and held them, threading their fingers together, closing some of the distance between them.

“Alexander, there are a lot of what-ifs in my life. And people who are into me.”

“I know that.”

“Okay, so trust me when I say, that those what-ifs don’t matter to me anymore. Not since I met you.”

“It may not matter to you, but I don’t like it when other people touch you.”

Magnus chuckled, “Good thing I have a cop in shining armor to come to my rescue when that happens.” Alec rolled his eyes, a little embarrassed at his overreaction, but not regretting it in the least. He wasn’t about to sit by and watch someone hit on Magnus uninhibited. Magnus laughed at him again and pushed off the railing just enough to kiss him. It was hot and open, and Magnus didn’t hesitate to tangle their tongues together. Alec was dizzy from it, helpless to Magnus’ intensity, and totally willing to let Magnus ravage him. Alec clutched at the small of Magnus’ back, taking steps to press him against the railing, bending him back a little. Magnus moaned into it, lifting his arms to wrap them around Alec’s neck. Magnus slowed their kiss to a stop, pressing quick pecks to his lips and nuzzling their mouths together.
“Aku cinta kamu”, dummy,” he said with a smile, kissing him again.

“I love you, too, papi,” Alec whispered back. Magnus’ brows shot up and Alec didn’t miss the way his pupils immediately widened.

“Uncool,” he said hoarsely. Alec smirked and ducked to kiss him again, pulling his hips in closer to his own. “So uncool,” he repeated against Alec’s lips.

“Well, then you better hurry up and finish your rounds.”

Magnus whined, “It’s so not fair.”

Alec mocked his whiny tone, “Ehh, I’m not the one who made us come here.”

Magnus groaned and dropped his forehead to Alec’s shoulder, fake sobbing even as Alec laughed at him. Alec kept one arm tight around Magnus’ waist and ushered him back toward the door.

“Come on, papi, a few more hours and then I’ll take you home and fuck you stupid.”

“I hate you.”
Chapter 69

Chapter Summary

Avast, more angsty-ness ahead. Ya'll did ask for someone to get shot, right?

Magnus groaned when Alec’s phone went off, telling him it was 6:30 and he had to get up for work. He really hated that alarm. It robbed him of several hours of sleepy, pliant Alec in his arms. Alec usually made it worth his while, snuggling and kissing him, promising wonderful sexual favors if he released him to go do his job for a bit. Magnus usually relented after that.

This morning was no different. Alec turned in Magnus’ arms, pushing up against him, pressing kisses to his face and lips.

“Have to go,” he muttered, voice laced with sleep and extremely attractive to Magnus’ ears. Magnus responded with lazy kisses and hummed.

“So go.”

Alec twined his arms around Magnus’ waist, pulling him more firmly against his front and dipping his face to Magnus’ neck.

“Can you get away for lunch?”

Magnus snorted. “Lunch or a quickie?”

Alec bit at his ear, “Both.” That had Magnus chuckling and nudging at the side of Alec’s face, urging him up to kiss him properly. They made out, sloppily and lazily, ignoring for a long few moments the fact that Alec needed to get ready to leave. Magnus was far too comfortable with the warm skin-on-skin contact, their legs twining together. Alec’s phone went off again, set for exactly this occasion, and it was Alec’s turn to groan. He pressed his forehead to Magnus’.

“I hate that phone.”
“Mmmm, me too,” Magnus said, pecking his lips. “Go do your job, detective.”

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The day was totally normal from there on out. Magnus went into the Brooklyn office, took some phone calls, replied to emails. He and Raphael bickered over nonsense and Ernesto berated him about his eating habits. He and Alec were colluding far too often for his peace of mind. He was actually sitting at his desk, trying to force himself to read progress reports and financial projections, and was failing miserably. He was too distracted by online shopping and looking at pictures of Chairman Meow. He probably could have wasted another hour or two then gone to see Alec before doing some drop-ins, but his phone rang.

And it was Jace.

Jace never called. He texted. It was a trivial facet of his personality. The boy didn’t have an adult instinct in his body. If he needed something, he texted. Magnus stared at his phone for two more rings before snatching it up to answer.

“Jace? What happened?”

On the other end, Jace inhaled shakily. “It’s Alec.” Magnus felt his stomach give way. “Magnus, he’s been shot.”
Chapter 70

Magnus was fairly certain that he didn’t come into his right mind until he and Raphael were walking through the doors of Mount Sinai Hospital. Raphael did all the talking, all the directing, most of the walking. Magnus wasn’t even entirely sure how they’d gotten there. But the next thing he knew, he was standing in front of a nurse’s station, shouting at a nurse to figure out what was going on. Raphael had to physically drag him away, until he heard Clary’s voice. He whipped around in that direction just to collide with the tiny redhead, who was sobbing.

From there, Clary, Jace, Lydia, and Captain Garroway informed him what had happened. They’d received an emergency call just after 10 AM about an armed robbery at a jewelry store. Clary and Jace were already out, so they’d set up a perimeter and assessed the situation until the rest of the squad arrived. Initially, they’d believed there were only two men inside, armed with assault rifles. One came out the back and was put down immediately. One was taken down inside. What they didn’t know is that there was a third gunman, an employee inside the store. He’d gotten the jump on Clary, who took fire. She got one to the chest, striking her vest, before Alec came out of nowhere, knocking her out of the line of fire. Unfortunately, the angle was just right so that he took a bullet at an angle his own vest didn’t cover.

By this point, Clary was sobbing into Jace’s chest, unable to look Magnus in the eye as he sunk into a chair. He knew Lydia was talking to him, telling him that Alec was in surgery, that they would just have to wait. He knew he could understand the words, but it was like his whole body had just shut off. Realistically, he’d thought this would happen at some point. He’d spent enough time with cops to know they were stupidly proud of their battle scars. Alec had been shot in Iraq, he’d been shot as a patrolman, so it stood to reason it would happen again before he retired. Magnus had thought about it enough to have nightmares. But his body didn’t seem to care what his brain knew. His body immediately and violently protested Alec in danger. He flew to the nearest trash can and puked his guts out. Presumably, some of them had tried to follow, but he heard Raphael snarl at them, telling them to back off. Magnus was immensely grateful for that fact. He felt Raphael’s hand in his hair as he knelt down next to him.

“What do you need?” he asked softly. Magnus’ whole body shook, unable to support itself.

“What…” he said slowly. “Cat will know…” Magnus didn’t have to finish because Raphael was already pulling out his phone and talking to her. From there, he got Magnus up on his feet and back in a chair. He checked him over once, promised to be back with water and answers, and set about harassing the hospital staff.

Alec was four hours into surgery when Cat came swooping into the waiting room, looking around frantically with Ragnor hot on her heels. She spotted Magnus and immediately crouched down in front of him.
“What’s happening? How is he?”

“Dunno. Nobody will tell us anything. Raph got himself kicked out.”

“On it,” Cat said, smacking a kiss to his temple. Ragnar sat down next to him, arms opening to welcome Magnus there. Magnus slumped against him, energy gone. Jace was continuously pacing the waiting room. Clary was curled up on Lydia’s lap, who stroked her hair. Robert and Maryse sat together, curled against one another, looking miserable. Garroway had ordered everyone else back to the station and Max was in the middle of an exam. Izzy was on her way.

“He’s going to be okay,” Ragor said quietly, squeezing him. “He’s young and strong. He’s going to be okay.”

“Ragnar--”

“No, Magnus. Don’t even think that way. Alec is going to be just fine.”

And he was. Two hours later, he was out of surgery and in recovery. Cat went in to check on his vitals and read over his chart. She reassured them that he was doing just fine and would be awake in the next half hour.

The nurse came out saying that two of them could go in. Robert was immediately out of his seat, pulling Maryse along with him. Magnus was willing to accept that decision. Right up until Jace put a hand to his father’s chest.

“Mom and Magnus,” he said firmly, staring his father down. “The first thing my brother will want to see is Mom and Magnus.” Shockingly, Robert backed off. Maryse didn’t hesitate to push by everyone. Ragnar urged him up, and Magnus followed, feeling unsteady and ready to vomit.

Alec laid in the hospital bed, in a green hospital gown, looking pale and small. Magnus hated that. Maryse froze in the doorway, gasping at the sight of her baby boy, hand covering her mouth. Magnus let her have her reaction, but moved past her to stand on the opposite side of the bed. He pushed the stool up next to the bed, sat down, and grabbed up Alec’s hand in his own. It was cold and clammy, so he took it between his own, rubbing hard enough to get blood moving there. Alec hated being cold. At the feel of Magnus’ touch, Alec stirred, his eyelids flickering open. His head lolled to Magnus’ side of the bed, eyes opening fully.
“Heeey papi--”

“Heeey papi--”

“Hello darling,” he said, smiling even as the tears slipped down his cheeks.

“Think I got shot,” he said with a grimace.

“Yeah,” Magnus confirmed, nodding. “Yeah, you kinda scared us there for a minute.”

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“Mmmmm,” he inhaled deeply, still looking groggy and drugged. “Sorry bout tha’. Where’s--Is Clary?”

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Alec snorted and rolled his head up and away from them. “Like I got shot.”

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Magnus let out a half sob, half laugh because his stupid boyfriend was such a stupid, noble idiot and he hated him nearly as much as he loved him. He felt Maryse squeeze his shoulders. Then he felt her face pressed against his head. Magnus had to squeeze his eyes shut against it, not at all used to any kind of motherly comfort.

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“I’ll go let them know he’s doing okay.” Magnus nodded. “Do you need anything?” He shook his head. “Okay.” She leaned over to Magnus’ right and pressed a kiss to Alec’s forehead, speaking softly to him. Alec nodded tiredly and they kissed cheeks before Maryse left. Magnus turned his attention back to Alec, squeezing his hand. Alec turned his head back to him, cheek nearly on his own shoulder, offering a weak smile. Magnus lifted their hands to kiss Alec’s.

“I’ll go let them know he’s doing okay.” Magnus nodded. “Do you need anything?” He shook his head. “Okay.” She leaned over to Magnus’ right and pressed a kiss to Alec’s forehead, speaking softly to him. Alec nodded tiredly and they kissed cheeks before Maryse left. Magnus turned his attention back to Alec, squeezing his hand. Alec turned his head back to him, cheek nearly on his own shoulder, offering a weak smile. Magnus lifted their hands to kiss Alec’s.

“I’m okay.”

“I’m okay.”
Magnus gave a rueful shake of his head. “No, you got shot.”

“Didn’t mean to,” he grumbled.

Magnus kissed his hand again. “You still owe me lunch and sex, you know.”

Alec laughed and groaned because it upset his stitches. “Put it on my tab.”

“You’re definitely maxed out. I demand payment.”

Alec frowned. “Don’t think the doctors’ll like that too much.”

So Magnus was laughing when Clary and Lydia came in. Lydia came around to stand next to Magnus, hand on his shoulder. Magnus covered her hand with his own.

“Hey partner,” she said gently.

“Hey--oof!” He was cut off when Clary flung herself on him, wrapping her arms around him as best she could.

“Easy, biscuit,” Magnus advised, amusement lacing his voice. Clary didn’t seem to pay him any mind because she kept hugging Alec and Magnus could hear her crying quietly. Then suddenly she pulled back and punched him in his uninjured shoulder before Magnus could squawk out a protest.

“You big stupid jerk!” she nearly shouted. “Don’t you ever take a bullet for me again or I’ll kill you myself!” Magnus wanted to reach out to comfort her; she was shaking, practically vibrating. Her face was flushed and tears streamed down her cheeks uninhibited. Behind her, Magnus saw Jace came skidding to a halt in the doorway, a nurse shouting after him as he went into the room without permission. Alec briefly looked over at him because Jace threw his arms up, in a flabbergasted what the fuck gesture. Then Alec turned back to Clary, holding out a hand to her. She took it, holding it loosely in front of her.

“Can’t really let some dick shoot my sister-in-law, can I?”
Her face crumpled, pathetically. “I really hate you,” she said with a pout. Alec nodded, lips in a thin line.

“I really hate you, too.”

The nurse had caught up to Jace and was demanding that anyone who wasn’t family leave immediately. Three heads swiveled in her direction, incredulously. Jace had to physically keep Clary in place, restraining her from lashing out unnecessarily.

“I got this, Tasha,” Cat said, coming in from behind her. “With this lot, it’s best to just let it go.”

“Mr. Lightwood needs rest,” Nurse Tasha snapped irritably. She lost complete control of the situation when Robert, Max, Izzy, Raphael, and Ragnor filed in behind them with Madzie in Ragnor’s arms to fill in around the rest of the bed. Ragnor dropped Madzie at the foot of Alec’s bed, where she curled up against his leg and drifted off to sleep. They were all talking over one another, filling each other in on what had happened and how Alec was doing, with Cat moderating the whole thing. Magnus watched these proceedings with no small amount of amusement, Alec’s hand still tight in his own. He kept lifting it and pressing kisses to it, reassuring himself that Alec was still there.

Despite the nurse’s insistence that they all needed to leave so Alec could rest, when Magnus looked over at Alec, he was fast asleep with a small smile on his face.
As expected, when Alec wasn’t drugged out of his mind, he was an absolutely terrible patient. They wanted to keep Alec there for three full days, just to monitor him, but he was itching to leave after the first twenty hours. Because that’s when he’d first turned down pain medication, a decision Magnus did not agree with. Unfortunately, even though he was camped out in Alec’s room, Magnus was “just the boyfriend” and not able to veto his dumb decisions legally.

“Magnus, I know you have work to do.”

“Everyone has work to do. All the time. Not everyone’s boyfriend has just been shot.”

“Magnus--”

“Shut up, I’m not leaving.”

“Fine, but turn off the TV before I throw something at it.” Magnus did so and raised his brows at him. Alec smiled and settled against the pillows. “Read to me?”

Magnus sighed. “What do you want to hear?”

“Your work emails?” he asked teasingly.

Magnus snorted. “People magazine it is.”

It deteriorated from there. Alec didn’t like his doctor. He didn’t like that the nurses were snippy with Magnus and that they were making him more uncomfortable than necessary. He was extremely vocal about how uncomfortable and annoyed he was with the whole set up. So it was hardly surprising that when Magnus woke up from a nap, Alec was checking himself out of the hospital against doctor’s orders.

Thankfully, he wasn’t having trouble walking or getting around, but needed bed rest. Garroway told him two weeks, and his captain was probably the only person in the universe Alec actually listened to on a regular basis. Magnus gritted his teeth and swallowed back his irritation, choosing
to help him instead of arguing. He made Alec walk with his arm around his shoulders, and made him wait for Ernesto instead of taking a cab.

When Alec tried to argue that point, Magnus held up a hand and told him to shut up.

“Magnus--”

“You talk to me right now, and I will strangle you.”

“I’m fine .”

“Yeah, maybe right now, right this moment. But what if something happens? You do know that if you go against doctor’s orders, insurance won’t cover it?”

“I am fine .”

Magnus refused to look at him, shaking his head. “You asshole.” He finished his text to Ernesto and shoved his phone into his pocket, crossing his arms to stubbornly ignore Alec. It wasn’t entirely successful. Alec crowded next to him, slid his arms around him and dropped his chin to his shoulder. Magnus’ immediate response was to want to shove him off, but it was Alec, and having him close was never a bad thing. Not to mention, he’d not been able to properly hold him for two days which had been grating to his nerves. He felt Alec press his face into his neck, inhaling deeply. A little against his will, Magnus leaned his head back against Alec’s shoulder, relaxing against him. He was fine, he told himself repeatedly. He was fine. The surgery went well, there were no complications, he was taking antibiotics and refusing pain medication. He was standing and talking and they were going home. At least there, Magnus could keep a close eye on him without snippy nurses or doctors setting him off at every turn.

Ernesto pulled up to the curb and immediately got out of the car to help Alec get in it. Despite his insistence that he was 100%, he still had trouble bending, sitting, and standing. Those transitions were tough on his stitches. Magnus went around to the other side so Alec wouldn’t have to slide over, and told Ernesto to take them to the nearest pharmacy.

Alec rolled his eyes, but Magnus told him to shut up.

“If you’re gonna be an asshole, then I’m going to make sure nothing happens to you.”
Alec turned and pressed a kiss to his temple. Magnus couldn’t help but let his hand drift over the thick bandaging on his abdomen. It was not a scar he was looking forward to seeing.

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Cat was having a hard time deciding who was more annoying in this whole Alec-is-wounded-resting-at-home situation. Alec was probably the grouchiest patient she’d ever had to deal with, and she’d dealt with half-deaf war veterans who thought vodka and duct tape could cure any ailment. Alec was both better and worse because he knew all the right words to say, knew how to explain everything very logically, even though he didn’t know what the hell he was talking about. Absolutely ridiculous. And Magnus? Magnus was going overboard by a lot. Not that she blamed him. The dumb son of a bitch should not have checked out two days early just because he was mildly irritated. But Magnus had the apartment stocked like a field hospital, he hovered whenever anyone got too close to him, he fussed over his comfort and his stitches and wouldn’t Alec get up without him to help. Unfortunately, Alec was submitting to all of this without complaints. Which was fair, actually, because he’d taken years off of her best friend’s life without even trying.

Still, despite how tiresome they were, Cat couldn’t deny that it was sweet. When she came over to check on Alec’s stitches, she sent Magnus on a search for something she didn’t really need so he’d stop looking over her shoulder while she worked. She shook her head when he took off immediately, but kept her focus on Alec.

“You’re being awfully patient with him,” she mused quietly as she applied the antibacterial ointment on his stitches and started to re-bandage it. Alec’s eyes flicked up to hers, looking a little guilty.

“Yeah, well, he didn’t really sign up for this.”

“What do you mean?”

“Me. Getting shot.” He shrugged. “I hate hospitals.”

Cat bit her lip and scrunched her face up, feeling a little guilty herself. “I looked up your medical records.” Alec snorted, as if he hadn’t expected anything less. “Magnus said you were injured in Iraq...you didn’t tell him you nearly died, did you?” Alec shook his head and she nodded in response. “I figured. Broken ribs, punctured lung, shattered clavicle, nicked the subclavian artery.”
“Fractured my foot, too.”

“You were in inpatient rehab for a month.”

“Yep.”

“In Germany, alone. Does your family know?”

“Nope,” he answered softly.

Cat made sure to catch his gaze and locked in. “Look, I get this whole stoic badass hero bullshit you’ve got going. I’ve seen it a hundred times. But don’t lie to him about this stuff, you understand me? He’s not nearly as strong as he looks. Those biceps? Direct response to Will, understand?”

Alec gave her half grin. “Maybe. But he’s got you.”

Cat sat on her heels, studying him thoughtfully. She knew there was a reason she liked him. Magnus interrupted the whole conversation by bursting into the room, completely annoyed.

“You totally made that thing up, didn’t you? It does not exist.”

Cat twisted her head to smirk at him, answering both him and Alec at the same time.

“Damn straight.”
Over the next two weeks, Magnus was hot and cold, up and down, hardly leaving Alec alone for more than a moment or two. Alec didn’t exactly hate that, but it was somewhat stressful because a bored Magnus couldn’t sit still. He spent half his time making Alec comfortable and cleaning the apartment, and the other half scolding him for not behaving.

“Not behaving” included getting up without assistance, not doing all of his physical therapy, overdoing his physical therapy, and trying to do work on the sly. Lydia was his accomplice, of course. She brought over a spare tablet and files, and fed him information by text and email. Evidently, she was missing her buddy almost as much as Alec was missing work. Magnus wasn’t having it, though. He would snatch his phone or tablet away, hide file folders, and bark orders at him. He even hung up on Lydia more than once, tossing Alec’s phone in the guest room and locking it.

“Sleep, you jerk! Recover!”

“I am bored!”

“Well, you should think about that the next time you jump in front of a bullet!”

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Magnus was really only able to take a week off of work without the whole company burning to the ground, so he handled everything from his home office. It gave Alec some breathing room, but not much overall. They were halfway through week two, and Alec was able to get around on his own, and his incision was fully healed even though the stitches were still in place. They were supposed to dissolve eventually. He’d finished his rounds of antibiotics and the physical therapy wasn’t too bad.

Between phone calls and after meals, he would hover and fuss with Alec’s set up. He was technically still on bedrest. Alec watched him bounce around the room, submitting to his attentions...
without complaint. It was when he started cleaning up the living room, babbling to himself about things he wanted to get to make Alec more comfortable, that Alec finally caved.

“Papi,” Alec said finally, reaching a hand out to him, “C’mere. Sit.” Magnus sighed heavily, shoulders dropping as he complied. “I’m doing fine. You’re taking good care of me, and I’m going to be just fine.”

Magnus was quiet for a long moment, leaning into his side, gingerly though. He was still hesitant about touching him in the wrong way. Alec pulled him closer, more firmly against him, and Magnus seemed to a relax. He let his hand drift over Alec’s bandages, fingering at the edges and resting his head on his shoulder. Magnus had been up and down, too much in both directions, not able to calm himself down. He hung on tighter when they slept in their bed, he was much gentler, more hesitant, more withdrawn. Alec hated it. He hated that Cat was right. He hated that they even had to deal with this.

“Talk to me,” he said against Magnus’ temple.

“You were in surgery for six hours. There were six hours where me and your family had no clue what was going to happen to you.”

“Magnus--”

“I know that’s the job. I understood that from the beginning, but I’m always going to worry about you. I’m always going to worry about you coming home. I’m always going to worry when you get hurt.”

“I wish I could make it easier.”

Magnus brought a hand to his cheek, brushing a thumb over his cheekbone. Alec leaned into it, kissing his palm like always.

“I can handle it. I don’t want you to change just to make me feel better.”

“Magnus, all I care about is how you feel.”

“That’s not totally true, and you know it. I love you for believing that, but I would never ask you to
do your job differently. It’s part of who you are. Do I always like it? No. This whole getting shot thing, I could do without. I don’t particularly enjoy how many killers and rapists you talk to on a regular basis. But this is what you’re good at. You’re damn good at your job, and Clary would definitely be dead right now if you hadn’t been there.”

“We didn’t know there was a third guy.”

“My point is that you’re a good man and a good cop, and I’m proud of you. Mad at you, but proud.”

“I love you.”

“I love you, too.”

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The day Alec was scheduled to go back to work, Magnus was in rare form. He double checked everything, kept asking Alec how he was feeling, insisted on driving in with him. Alec rolled his eyes a lot, but he kept quiet about it. Because while it was annoying, it was also kind of cute and he was hoping that this hypersensitivity to Alec’s injury would fade out over time if he just let it happen. Maybe he’d run out of steam? Who knew. He did draw the line at using a cane.

“I am not crippled, Magnus. Not super flexible right now, but I am not using a cane.”

“It’s just a precaution!”

“Magnus--”

“Fine. But Ernesto’s driving you.”

“Fine. I’m still not using the cane.”

He groaned in defeat.
Everyone at the precinct was excited to have him back, greeting him cheerfully. Patty got up from her desk to hug him tightly. Magnus was there, hovering, and removed her from his person to keep her away from the injury. Alec chuckled at this, but didn’t comment. The squad surrounded him when he came in, clapping him on the back and asked him how his vacation was. Magnus blocked Raj from getting to close and glared at Helen when she handled him too roughly. Alec caught Jace’s knowing smirk and gestured with his finger at his neck, mouthing *shut the fuck up*. Jace snorted loudly and then clapped his hands together to cover it.

“All right people, break it up, give our big damn hero some air. Break it up, back to work.”

“Welcome back, Alec!”

“Glad you’re good, man!”

They all dispersed, leaving Clary, Jace, and Lydia standing there with Alec and Magnus. If Magnus was being overly fussy then Clary was being downright weird. She brought him coffee and a bottle of water, she’d kept his desk organized and handled all of his paperwork while he was gone. She even bullied administration to get him a new, more comfortable chair, using his medical records to justify it. She and Magnus tag teamed ushering Alec to his desk and getting him situated. Jace watched all of it with a hip perched on his desk, hand over his mouth to keep down his laughter. Alec looked over at Lydia, practically begging, but she just shook her head and shrugged. No one was going to interfere, that was for sure. Maybe if it was just Clary or just Magnus, but the both of them? Hell no.

It did take some extra effort to get Magnus to leave. He kept hesitating, finding another reason to stay. Alec finally pulled him over by the hand, smiling up at him.

“I’m fine. I’m sure Clary will text you with updates every ten minutes, and Lydia is watching me like a hawk.”

“Damn right I am.”

“See?” he said swinging his hand despite Magnus’ scowl. “I’m good. Go get to your meeting before Raph comes looking for you.”

“I will be here at 1:00 with your lunch.” He looked pointedly at Lydia who held up her hands in
surrender. Alec chuckled through his nose, smiling up at him stupidly.

“Go,” he repeated for the tenth time, “I will see you later.”

Magnus sighed, looking extremely reluctant. Still, he bent down to kiss him, and then made his goodbyes. Obviously, he’d drawn a lot of attention to them, but Alec didn’t really care. He watched him go, a little worried about his mental state, and tried to put it from his mind for the time being. When he turned around the whole squad was watching him, looks amused and expectant.

“Do you people have nothing better to do?” he snapped gruffly. They all ducked their heads, guiltily, doing their best to pretend like they were doing work. Lydia was watching him, highly entertained, her lips pulled in.

“He’ll be fine, Alec,” she said quietly. Alec glared at her, annoyed that she’d picked up his concern so quickly. “Seriously. He will be fine. Now,” she passed over a file. “Taxi driver shot outside of a bar. Riddle me this. Friend or fare?”
So I know everyone's dying over the premiere. Don't blame you. I'm dying. I can't wait to see stuff from next week.

Confession time: I have never, not once, watched a full episode of the show. I have read parts of the first book, but got bored with the whole Clary-show situation. (Obviously, I immediately loved Magnus and thought Alec was the sassy, salty bitch my dreams are made of.) So while I'll be incorporating Malec lines or scenes, I'm obviously not paying attention to plot points at all. I just love this damn relationship and spend too much time watching their vids.

Feel free to flail with me over friggin MADZIE in the promo pics on tumblr (rideswraptors)!

Magnus walked into the courtroom with Alec, sweeping his eyes over the room’s occupants and feeling the high tension. Alec hadn’t been kidding around when he said this was a particularly gnarly case. He’d asked Magnus two days ago to come with him, and Magnus hadn’t hesitated to say yes. He remembered that week after Javier Delgado came into the precinct all too well, and had no desire for a repeat performance.

Raj and Helen were seated in the back of the room, having already testified the day before. Alec left Magnus with them, as he was going to sit behind the prosecutor until it was his turn to testify. Magnus straightened his tie, kissed his cheek, and let him go. He watched him walk a little too closely. He was wearing his formal dress blues. Alec certainly had nicer suits now, but he insisted on wearing them when the occasion called for it. He had his hat tucked under his arm and moved easily throughout the room, shaking hands with people as he went.

Javi was sat next to Raj, and he made room for Magnus, who settled between them. Magnus was fixated on Alec’s back, not liking the tension in his shoulders, but appreciating the view all the same.

“It’s not fair that he walks around looking like that,” Raj grumbled, crossing his arms. Magnus snorted.

“Tell me about it.”
Javi’s case was coming to a close. There had been a full day of testimony, and Alec was among the last to testify. He’d been riled up and anxious all morning, feeling the need to hit something or take a shot. It was bad enough that he’d all but begged Magnus to come with him. It would be tedious and boring and he’d have to move his schedule around, but Alec didn’t care. He couldn’t handle this alone, and he didn’t want to. Magnus, of course, had agreed thoughtlessly. Didn’t even question why he’d make such a request. Unfortunately, Magnus was seated in the back with Raj, Helen, and Javi, a little too far away for his peace of mind. But Alec had to testify. He couldn’t appear distracted.

The prosecutor lobbed Alec easy questions, just asking him about his job and his role in the case. The questions were open-ended so that Alec could give expansive answers. The prosecutor thanked him for his time, and then returned to her seat. Alec was not overly impressed with the defense attorney. He never bothered to learn lawyers’ names unless he knew them personally, as personal policy and self-preservation. Copping an attitude before even getting into the court was ill-advised on a good day.

Alec termed this particular day a bad one, if only because he didn’t want to even look at the man who’d brutalized Javi. He also wasn’t really sure what the defense attorney was going to get from talking to him. Everything with Javi had been by the book, clean forensics, and solid interrogations tactics from Raj and Helen. It was all but open and shut.

“Detective Lightwood,” the attorney greeted, coming around his table, like a cat stalking its prey, “I’d like to start at the beginning. Can you reiterate your role in this case?”

Alec cleared his throat, “I was an auxiliary resource, meaning that it wasn’t my case but I was helping out.” He made eye contact with one of the jury members who was nodding.

“Right. Auxiliary,” he said as he paced in front of the witness stand. He stopped, head cocked. “Why?”

“Beg pardon?”

“Why were you on the case at all? Were Detectives Ablack and Blackthorn incapable of doing their jobs?”

“Not in the least.”
“So please explain.”

With a sigh, Alec cut a glance over to Raj who nodded and shrugged, like *what can you do*? So Alec did what he had to do.

“As I said earlier, Mr. Delgado became ag...upset during the course of that conversation.”

“Upset,” the attorney repeated. “Is that uncommon?” He sounded like some condescending jackass Alec would have punched in the face during high school. He expanded his stomach to inhale deeply on the sly without seeming annoyed.

“No. Just aggressive. So I offered to speak with him privately in an interrogation room where he could calm down.”

“You. Not Detective Blackthorn?” Alec nodded and saw that the prosecutor caught of whiff of something fishy. She stood up.
“Objection, your honor, relevance?”

The attorney kept his eyes on Alec in an unsubtle attempt at a power move. Alec’s hand clenched.

“Pertains to the legitimacy of the proceedings of the investigation, your honor.”

Alec frowned and there was a rumble of whispering through the courtroom; Raj looked ready to jump up and protest but Helen grabbed his arm roughly. The judge looked unimpressed.

“I’ll allow it, but tread carefully, counselor.”

The attorney lifted his brows. “Detective?”

Alec shot a look to Raj and Helen again before turning his focus back. “I offered because Detective Ablack had never dealt with a male victim before, and as a gay man myself, I presumed that I would be able to offer better--”

“Comfort?”

Alec’s frown deepened. “I beg your pardon?”

“Comfort,” the attorney explained. “As a gay man, you could offer a gay victim better comfort.”

“I would say understanding. Empathy.”

“Explain the difference for us, please?”

From where he was seated, Magnus looked confused. Raj and Helen looked ready to incite a riot. And the prosecutor was already on her feet.

“Objection!”
“Sustained,” the judge followed up immediately. “You are on thin ice, counselor. I advise you to rephrase the question or change the line of it entirely.” Alec turned to nod at her in thanks. She nodded back grimly, looking ready to shove her foot up the guy’s ass. But the attorney just smiled his slimy smile and spread his arms.

“Detective, to your knowledge, before Mr. Delgado spoke with you, did he use the word *rape*?”

Alec frowned, brows pinching together. “I beg your pardon?”

“Did Mr. Delgado say that he had come in to report a rape before he spoke with you?”

“I can’t answer that with any certainty.”

“Detective, did you or did you not say, and I quote: *We are here to make this son of a bitch pay for what he did to you*?”

“I--”

“You’re under oath, Detective.”

“I’m aware of that!” Alec snapped, shifting in his seat. “And yes, I did. I was trying to reassure him that we were on his side and trying to help him.”

“But had he said the word *rape* at that point in time?”

“I--no, not to me.”

“In fact, the beginnings of the report, say that he was reporting an *attack* and not a *rape*. So Detective, did you convince Mr. Delgado to file this incident as rape instead of assault?”

“Objection!”
“Of course not!”

“Your honor, this is ludicrous.”

The judge was frowning deeply. “I’ll allow it for now. But your thin ice is dropping into dangerous waters, counselor.”

Apparently, he didn’t care.

“Were you attracted to Mr. Delgado?”

“Objection!” the prosecutor snapped shrilly. Even Raj and Helen were on their feet. Alec was quickly losing patience, and the judge was about to speak.

“Your honor, I’m okay with answering.”

“Then do so.”

Alec took a deep breath and twisted his neck a little to crack it. Jace once told him that Alec was at his most intimidating when he did that. Scared the little people, so to speak. The lawyer may not have flinched, but at least Alec felt he had the high ground here.

“The short answer is no. I did not feel attracted to Mr. Delgado. I did feel other things. Rage, for one, toward the disgusting piece of trash who could do that to another person…” There were snorts from the back of the courtroom. “Did he explicitly say rape at first? I don’t know. I do know that’s what he described in detail. I do know I promised to sit with him while he gave his statement, and I did, so he held my hand and got through it, and we’re here, hopefully making sure that he didn’t go through that whole process for nothing by throwing his dirtbag rapist in jail to rot. I’m not exactly sure what kind person gets their rocks off in a police station, but as my boyfriend can attest, it’s not me.” He gestured randomly to Magnus, who waved back when the attorney whirled around to get a look at him. Alec wasn’t sure if it was the pink hair, the glitter, or the fact that he knew him, but the attorney blanched, gruffly thanked him for his time, and returned to his seat.

The prosecutor, Judy Muskett, was also a former Master Sergeant in the Air Force, and one of the
few lawyers Alec respected on a personal level because she had joined the Air Force in order to take care of her younger brother and didn’t retire until she’d paid off his college tuition. After he graduated, she requested discharge and went to law school like she’d always wanted to do, free from military constraints. Judy was out of her seat before the defense attorney could even sit down. She was tapping away on her phone as if responding to an email, and she didn’t look up at Alec when she started talking.

“Redirect, your honor. Detective Lightwood, you served in the military, correct?” she asked blandly. Inwardly, Alec groaned, knowing where this was headed. Quite often, when his character was called into question on the stand and the lawyers knew his history, this would happen.

“Yes, ma’am,” he answered with a light sigh. She arched a brow at him, still without looking up.

“Branch, rank, years of service?”

“I was a Captain in the United States Army Special Forces for approximately six years.”

“Approximately?”

“I didn’t quite hit seven.”

“Objection, your honor,” the defense attorney all but whined, “relevance?”

Judy scoffed and put her phone down on the witness stand, “Your honor, I’m not the one who called Detective Lightwood’s character into question in order to invalidate victim testimony. I would simply like to disabuse the jury of the notion that Detective Lightwood’s judgment was in any way compromised.”

“She’s right, counselor. You opened the bag, deal with the feral cat inside. You may continue.”

“Detective, please inform the jury which honors you received during your six years of military service.”

Alec swiveled his head to the judge, who leaned down to listen, and whispered, “Do I have to?”
She lifted her brows at him, much like Judy had.

“Is that really how you want to be in contempt of court?” she whispered back. He let out a heavy sigh. “Suck it up, Alec.” Judge Adelaide Washington was known as one of the toughest judges on her circuit and had the tendency to pass down fairly harsh sentences. She didn’t suffer fools in her courtroom, and Alec had enjoyed testifying in her courtroom since he was a rookie officer. So Alec did as she said and rattled off his medals and awards from the service. There was some murmuring from the jury at the mention of his purple heart, Alec studiously ignored it, falling back on his boot camp habit of staring off to just above middle distance instead of looking at who was talking to him.

“And how long have you been with the New York Police Department?”

“Two years as an officer, five as a homicide detective in the 70th precinct in Brooklyn.”

“And can you describe for the jury your awards and commendations, please?”

Alec scowled, “Your honor, really?”

Judy interrupted, “Your honor, I have here Detective Lightwood’s service record. How about I read it off, detective, and you tell me if it’s correct?” Alec sat impossibly straighter, hands clenching as he riveted his gaze back to middle distance, and nodded. “Thank you for humoring me.” She took her phone from the witness stand and began to read. “December 2010, Meritorious Commendation for Community Service. March 2011, Meritorious Commendation for Integrity. June 2011, Exceptional Merit. November 2011, Meritorious Police Duty. I believe this covers your time as a uniformed officer?”

“Yes, ma’am,” he answered automatically.

“February 2012, Honorable Mention for Meritorious Police Duty. May 2012, Exceptional Merit. September 2012, Meritorious Commendation for Integrity. October 2012, Honorable Mention. December 2012, Meritorious Commendation for Community Service.” She used a finger to continue to dramatically scroll down the list, while facing the jury, not bothering to look at it as she did so. Finally, she stopped and looked down, seemingly at random. “Let’s skip to something more recent, shall we? April 2016,” she emphasized heavily, “Meritorious Police Duty. October 2016, New York Police Department Medal of Honor. November 2016, Exceptional Merit. Ladies and gentlemen of the jury, it is now October 2017 and I won’t bore you with the details, but Detective Lightwood has just again been nominated for an Honorable Mention. Another award, which I imagine, will end up in the bottom of a drawer somewhere.”
Alec didn’t respond to any of that. He didn’t respond to the lifted eyebrows either. He’d only gone
to a handful of those awards ceremonies, and only when he was a uniform. He’d outright told
Garroway he wouldn’t show up and not to bother with a plaque or any of that nonsense. He wore
his medals because it was part of his uniform and would have been disrespectful not to, but he only
wore one of each. The whole thing made Alec itch under the attention. He just did his job. He
followed leads and tried to help people before he had to chase down their murderers. That’s why
he’d joined the army, that’s why he’d joined the police force. Alec considered awards primarily
good PR for the department and submitted only when necessary.

“I think I’ve embarrassed Detective Lightwood enough for one day. So let’s ask the real questions,
shall we? Detective Lightwood, did you go into the interrogation room with Mr. Delgado alone?”

“Yes, but I motioned to my partner, Detective Lydia Branwell, to follow and run the camera in the
observation room. The video was submitted into evidence.”

“A video, done without Mr. Delgado’s consent?”

“The camera system for the interrogation rooms has two-fold purpose. The first is to record victim
and witness interviews. The second is to monitor and evaluate officers and detectives such as
myself when with said victims or witnesses.”

“To what end?”

“It’s our Captain’s method of holding us accountable and evaluating our performance every year. It
also helps determine the true sources of complaints registered against the department. It was
installed when he took command ten years ago.”

“How did you know your partner would follow to run the camera?”

“It’s protocol.”

“But she could have ignored your signal, not followed you in, not turned on the camera.”

Alec frowned and repeated: “It’s protocol.”
“And you always follow protocol.”

“When possible.”

“So leading a witness to make a false report?”

Alec scowled, “Against protocol.”

“And hitting on a witness?”

“Against protocol.”

“No further questions, your honor.”

“You are dismissed, Detective Lightwood.”

Gratefully, Alec grabbed his hat from the ledge, got down from the witness stand to return to his seat between Magnus and Javi. Javi clapped his back and he moved to sit down, and Magnus turned to kiss his cheek.

“How many awards did she skip?” he asked in a teasingly low voice. Alec rolled his eyes and shook his head.

“Twelve,” Raj and Helen answered simultaneously.

“Seriously?” Magnus hissed. Alec just nodded. It wasn’t like he’d asked for any of it. Most of them came from…

“Dumb luck,” Alec explained, bored.
“Right.”

Raj leaned past Magnus, “Dude, you can head out if you need to.” Alec felt a jolt of irritation.

“I’m not leaving Javi.”

Javi put a hand on his arm, “Alec, I’ll be fine.”

Alec shook his head stubbornly, “Not until we hear the verdict.” He felt Javi squeeze his arm in thanks.
Chapter 74

Chapter Summary

Quick wrap up of Javi's case

Magnus listened to the prosecutor read out Alec’s service record, at once impressed and baffled. It was astonishing how frequent he was honored, and it was even more astonishing that Alec rarely, if ever, mentioned them. He spoke more to his failures than his triumphs, and Magnus had had no idea, no inkling, that he’d been put up for another award. On the witness stand, the poor thing looked ready to crawl out of his skin, and he all but ran from it once dismissed. He’d been too astonished to demand any further explanation from Raj or Helen.

Then Alec was sitting next to him, looking delicious in that damn uniform, and Magnus couldn’t resist pressing a kiss to his cheek. Couldn’t help but slide an arm through his and thread their fingers together. He watched the look of absolute disgust cross his features when Raj suggested he could leave. So, Magnus pressed up close against him and dropped a chin to his shoulder. It was one part claiming, one part comforting. Javi’s case had been exceptionally difficult on him, and so Magnus had agreed to come to the trial even though it was mildly disturbing. At first, he’d had his reservations, but then he’d actually met Javi. The boy was sweet and charming and just this side of cynical due to his profession. Naturally, Magnus did what he always did when he came across a lovely lost soul searching for guidance: offered him housing, a job, and barely restrained himself from filing for adoption.

After the motherfucker- forgive him, defendant - was found guilty, the prosecutor immediately swept Javi to someplace safe from media attention. Javi kept shouting back to them that he was going to buy them drinks, they needed to celebrate. Magnus already had his number and promised to call him. Raj and Helen were being pulled aside by the members of the press, so Magnus pulled Alec into a divot between columns until the lobby cleared out of people attached to the case. They were there for about ten minutes, pressed up against each other, trying very hard not to laugh too loudly.

“You are so stupid,” Alec spluttered. “We’re gonna get caught like this--”

“Excuse me, this is entirely innocent.”

“Yeah, looks it too.”
“Oh hush.”

“Magnus--”

“Fuck, you are so hot in your uniform.”

“Ugh, I knew this was gonna be a thing--”

“I am totally serious, I’m calling Isabelle to get your army blues.”

“How do you know I don’t have them?”

“Because I know you, dummy.”

Alec laughed, and ducked his head, putting his big hand to Magnus’ neck and cheek, and kissed him thoroughly. It was insane how small Magnus felt when Alec held him. Small, but intensely powerful because he could bring this hulk of a man, a soldier, a cop, to his knees with mere touch. Nobody else could do it, and evidently, a shit ton of people had tried very, very hard to do so without success. So Magnus submitted to him, let the pleasure of being kissed by Alec wash over him. It was the easiest thing Magnus had ever done.

“Thank you,” Alec breathed against his lips, “for coming with me.”

Magnus hummed, “Anything for you.” He pecked his lips sharply. “Everything for you.”

Alec smiled, kissing him soundly, and slid his arms around Magnus’ neck, pulling him in close.

“Then how about we go home, shut off the phones, take a bath, drink that stupidly expensive wine you’ve been saving for no reason.”

Magnus rubbed their noses together, smiling. “Sounds perfect.”
Days when neither one of them was overloaded with work were few and far between. Sometimes they had snatches of uninterrupted hours together at most. At the very least, uninterrupted hours when they were alone with no bystanders or witnesses. Before Alec, Magnus had spent a lot of that time in clubs, drinking, or finding random hookups. Well, he’d kept busy, that was for sure. His brain sometimes worked too fast for him to sit still for long. Being with Alec had subdued a lot of those manic impulses. It wasn’t even that he felt calmer; it was more that he felt more confident and comfortable where he was.

Alec was worn out after a marathon of a case and had been sent home to recuperate. Magnus sat on the sofa, watching Project Runway with Alec’s head in his lap. He had his cheek against Magnus’ thigh, head against his abdomen, and had his arms wrapped around Magnus like a pillow. Magnus spread his legs to accommodate his presence there, and absently stroked his hair, twirling the strands around his fingers. Boy needed a haircut, he thought idly. Magnus highly doubted Alec would submit to a high-end salon, but the thought was pretty entertaining. Alec was, after all, painfully gay, but his brain essentially short-circuited in the face of a more flamboyant, flashy gay man. Magnus seemed to be the one exception, actually, for some unknown reason. But then again, anything overtly sexual sent Alec running for the hills. With the exception of Magnus, he thought with a grin.

Alec was drifting in and out of sleep, snuffling and nuzzling into Magnus’ stomach. Magnus watched him, thinking over the past few months. It was like they’d been swapping confessions, a ping-pong game of who was more mentally and emotionally unstable. At this point, it was nearly impossible to determine who was winning. Magnus decided, continuously stroking Alec’s hair, that he really didn’t give a damn. He’d never felt so close to anyone in his life, never felt so sure of anyone in his life. He’d tried many times to convince himself that it was infatuation, that he was blinded by chemical imbalances termed love. But that explanation seemed so damn unreasonable in the face of an absolute and determined Alec Lightwood. The man who bought him sushi and submitted to shopping to cheer him up. The man who trusted his judgment even though they didn’t agree more than a fraction of the time. The man who’d been dead set on telling him he loved him as much as possible until he believed it. The man who’d waited nearly three months for sex just because Magnus asked him. Rare things. Impossible things. Things Magnus had never experienced with a single person all at once.

Alec nuzzled his face into Magnus’ stomach, sighing and wrapping his arms tighter around him.
“What time is Raph coming over?” he mumbled tiredly. Magnus let his hand drift down to Alec’s neck. Poor baby, couldn’t catch a break. He skimmed another hand over the still-recent scar on his side. Magnus still had pretty strong reactions to seeing that pink scar. He tried to hide it from Alec, but wasn’t wholly effective. He couldn’t keep anything from Alec for long. So he brushed fingers over it when he could, kissed it when they made love. Cat called it exposure therapy.

“Little bit,” Magnus answered vaguely, more of his attention on Alec than the show at this point.

“Need to get up?”

“Nope,” Magnus said, dragging his fingers through his hair more fully. “You stay right there.”

Alec mumbled something, prompting Magnus to tilt his head down to get him to repeat himself.

“...says too much PDA.”

Magnus scoffed, rolling his eyes. Raphael could kiss his ass.

“He has his own TV. He can be a hermit and avoid our cuteness if he wants to.”

Alec sighed. “TV’s bigger.”

“Hush,” he chastised, tapping his fingers on Alec’s neck. “You need sleep, and I need to hear what Tim is saying.”

“That everything’s a disaster and they’re running out of time,” Alec deadpanned. Magnus cut a glance over to the TV and realized that was precisely what was happening. He laughed.

Raphael came over not ten minutes later with tamales and wearing a Mexican football jersey. Alec didn’t move from Magnus’ lap, but spoke in rapid Spanish with Raphael anyway. Magnus knew they were talking about soccer, but didn’t pay close enough attention to the conversation. Despite his best efforts, his Spanish was actually getting much better.
Raphael graciously waited until his episode was finished, not that Magnus knew what was going on anyway, and then changed to whatever match they’d agreed to watch. Alec moved only to let Magnus up, so that he could take a phone call. A disgruntled manager, evidently.

*A*

Alec sprawled out on the sofa, mildly annoyed that his body pillow was gone. Magnus had the tendency to take all the heat with him. He and Raphael kept talking quietly in Spanish, abusing each other’s teams and then turning back to yell at the TV.

“You coming to poker night?” Alec asked idly, not expecting a no.

“You?”

“You. Mom and Dad are in D.C. for a conference. No family dinner this week.”

“Family dinner,” Raphael scoffed. “Do you know what family dinner was for us growing up?”

“Takis and Fanta in an alley?” Raphael threw a pillow at his head. “You went to Harvard, you asshole. I do not feel sorry for you.”

“On *scholarship* .”

“Which you always need to say.” He pulled a face and mocked him in falsetto. “Ugh, poor me, I worked hard and got out of a bad situation and now I get to do whatever the fuck I want and work with my best friend doing whatever the fuck we want. Poor me.”

“Dick!”

“Bitch!”

Magnus walked between where they sat, batting down the pillow that was being thrown across and re-taking his seat on the sofa with Alec. Alec immediately moved to accommodate, snuggling back
into his lap without missing a beat.

“I see we’re maintaining high levels of maturity,” he drawled, dropping his hand back into Alec’s hair. Alec hummed, leaning into the touch. Raphael threw a wayward hand in Alec’s direction, already watching the match again.

“He’s mocking my impoverished background.”

“Nuh-uh, I’m mocking him.”

“Both of you stop, or I’ll turn this car around.”

“Ha. Hah. Ha,” Raphael sneered. “And who said you could invite a cop to our poker night?”

“He’s not invited, he lives here.”

“Face,” Alec mumbled wrapping his arms around Magnus and spitting his tongue out at Raphael.

“Raph, you throw another pillow and I’ll break your hand.”

“You’re not fun when you defend him.”

“I’m not defending him, I’m defending my Ming vase.”

“Still.”

“You’re just mad cause he loves me more.”

“Oh my god --”
“Keep lying to yourself, Lightwood, see where it gets you.”

“I know exactly where it’s gotten me,” he said with a snort.

“Eewww! Magnus!”

“That’s it,” he said dispassionately, “bed without dinner for the both of you.”
Chapter 76

Chapter Summary

Alec Does Poker Night

Personal HC: Cat calls Ragnor a "colonizer" whenever possible.

Poker night was going about as Magnus regularly described it. Madzie was high on sugar, running around like a psycho with Chairman Meow. Cat was relaxed and enjoying herself too much while Ragnor drank like it was the Saturday before the end of the world. Raphael was being salty as usual, making snippy comments in everyone’s direction.

Magnus was sitting on Alec’s lap, shouting at Madzie to be careful around the sharp corners, and corralling his friends into behaving themselves. It wasn’t working well, obviously, but he seemed to be content in that role. Alec loved it. Loved how calm and relaxed he was, not censoring himself in the least. Alec was painfully aware of how often Magnus felt the need to tone himself down or watch his words when they were with Alec’s friends and family. They were on their third hand. Alec wasn’t playing, just watching and feeling up Magnus more than strictly necessary.

Eventually though, Ragnor demanded more sangria, so Magnus slid off his lap to go make it, while they talked amongst themselves. Ragnor was ranting about two particular students who were driving he and his co-workers crazy. They were two young girls, both juniors, who were obsessed with Shakespeare and in the theatre group. According to Ragnor, they were very obviously crazy about each other but seemed to be oblivious to it. He claimed that they were essentially writing each other love letters through school assignments, and he couldn’t take it anymore.

“I hate them, I really do think I hate them. What year is it? How are young women so ignorant of their own sexual preferences?” he demanded wildly. Cat glared at him.

“Check yourself, colonizer,” she grumbled, making Alec snicker. He loved Cat’s absolute impatience with white men and their opinions. Hysterical.

“I’m just saying--”

“What you’re saying is that young women in this country are bombarded with images of heterosexuality and motherhood as the norm, and you expect that they supersede that cultural expectation without any sort of guidance.”
Raphael was outright laughing, so Ragnor looked to Alec for help. He held his hands up in defeat, not willing to help him at all.

“She is not wrong, man.”

Ragnor scowled. “I always forget about your closeted backstory. Useless.”

“Hey!” Cat shot back, “Don’t knock the tragic backstory! People without them are boring and lame.”

“Thank you, Cat,” Alec said pointedly, pulling a face at Ragnor. The British man sat back in his chair, eyeing him thoughtfully, which was never a good sign.

“Cat,” he said casually, eyes still on Alec, “do you remember the first time we heard about the lovely Detective?”

Cat snorted. “Absolutely. God, Magnus was such a weirdo the Sunday after.” She elbowed Raphael. “When did he tell you?”

Raphael lifted his brows, “He didn’t. I had Poppy hack into his virtual schedule when I got phone calls the next day that our entire fucking schedule had been changed and tried to figure out what the hell was going on.” He snickered. “There was just this little block of three hours with nothing in it,” he said indicating the size with his fingers. “I ran into his office yelling about his nonsense, and he still wouldn’t tell me!”

“You’re joking,” Alec said, thinking over that day in particular. Magnus had been the one to text him first. Magnus had been the one to suggest lunch that Sunday. Magnus had been the one to pick the place. “He rearranged your schedule?”

Raphael widened his eyes and tilted his head, “Oh yeah.”

“How much?” he asked incredulously. You would only pry ownership of Magnus’ schedule from his cold, dead hands. There had to be an extreme, bloody emergency happening for him to reschedule. Raphael shrugged and reached for a chip and guacamole.
“We were probably making up meetings for the next three months.”

“You’re joking —”

“He was being such a weirdo,” Cat confirmed. Ragnor shook his head ruefully.

“We had to bother the hell out of him to get any information. And we wouldn’t have even known if Raphael hadn’t had his poor driver spy on him and told us about it.”

Glee shot through Alec’s system and he sat up straighter. “No way. No way Ernesto was spying!”

Raphael scoffed, “I paid him extra to tell me everywhere Magnus went for the next month.”

“Oh my god—”

“He doesn’t know, and if you tell him I’ll kill you in your sleep and make him bury your body.”

Alec pointed at him. “Graphic, but point taken.”

“Rag, what did he say to us at poker night?” Cat asked, kicking her leg out at him and snapping her fingers trying to remember.

“My dear, I can literally quote that evening back, if asked.”

“I remember there was a specific adjective…”

“Different?” Cat shook her head no. Ragnor snapped his fingers, tossing his hand up. “Stunning. And I quote: the boy’s stunning .”
Right then, Magnus walked in with a fresh pitcher of sangria, frowning and squinting his eyes in suspicion at Ragnor. Raphael slumped in his chair, like he was trying to avoid being seen and Cat studiously examined her nails.

“What are we talking about?” he snapped. Alec tried not to smile when Raphael smothered his snickering. Instead, he reached a hand out to Magnus, tugging on his shirt.

“You said I was stunning,” he cooed, excessively pleased by that completely endearing fact. How cute was he? Magnus’ immediate reaction was a scowl.

“Why do I even talk to you people?” he grumbled, setting the pitcher down. His friends immediately protested, talking over each other. Magnus swatted a dismissive hand at them and sat back down on Alec’s lap, mumbling that he was the only person he liked. Alec just smiled, rubbed a hand up and down his back, and kissed his cheek when he curled into Alec.

“It’s okay,” Alec said quietly. “Clary said you were stunning, too. Literally, that was the first thing she said.” Apparently, Ragnor decided to jump on this and humiliate everyone. He threw a finger in Cat’s direction.

“Cat said you looked like a GQ cover!”

She gasped, betrayed, “Traitor!” She turned back to Alec, eyes enraged. “Helen said Ragnor said you two were bloody adorable!”

“That cow!” Ragnor spat. Raphael was looking quite pleased with himself. “Comments, Raphael?”

“None at all. This is exactly why I don’t tell you people anything ever.”

“Which means he thinks we’re adorable, too,” Magnus told Alec confidently, who snickered. Magnus swatted at his chest. “What did you tell people?”

“What?” Alec squeaked, startled by the sudden spotlight. “I don’t know!”

Cat raised a hand as she pulled out her phone. “I’ll text Lydia.”
“What?”

“I’ll text Simon. Izzy will know.”

Alec spread his hands out wide in disbelief as Magnus dipped forward, nose pressed to his temple and laughing silently. He whispered stupidly cute things against his head while his friends openly mocked the both of them.

“It’s just mean.”

“I know, darling.”

“I cannot be held responsible for what came out of my mouth during that time.” Magnus laced their fingers together and kissed his hand.

“All right, you three, that’s enough, leave him alone.”

The three of them looked between each other, lifting brows and nodding slightly. Alec knew that meant they’d continue their conversation later. Probably make charts and spreadsheets because they were awful nerds who had nothing better to do. He wouldn’t be surprised if they prepared a slideshow for Magnus’ next party with an open discussion section.

“Okay, okay,” Raphael said, shoving his phone back into his pocket. “Now, here’s a real question for you, Magnus. Did you see Lorenzo’s email?”

Alec watched, amazed, as Magnus went from perfectly content and happy to snarly and annoyed in less than thirty seconds. He vaguely remembered that Lorenzo worked for the company Simon had left and that Magnus didn’t like him. But that was it.

“Ruh-roh,” Cat intoned, pouring herself another glass of sangria. “Is it that time already?” She turned her head, lifting her brows pointedly in a way that was not amused or amusing at all.
“Time for what?” Alec asked, confused, trying to catch up with all the subtext happening around him.

“Ruh-roh,” Cat said again, sipping at her drink.

“Stop it!” Magnus snapped. “And yes I saw it.” He stiffened on Alec’s lap, nearly moving away before Alec tightened his arms around him. Thankfully, this earned him peripheral attention, if not the whole of it.

“Are you actually going this year?” Raphael followed up, making a face Alec couldn’t interpret. Alec didn’t like not being able to interpret Magnus-related things. It was getting ridiculous.

“Someone care to catch me up?”

Ragnor sighed noisily, “Magnus, don’t be a child,” he scolded irritably.

“I am not--being a child…” he trailed off and snatched his drink from the table and took a swig. “That son of a b--”

“Blanket!” Cat interrupted, kicking at him, and jerking her head in Madzie’s direction.

“Whatever. He wanted the presidency, he can handle the responsibility of it.” He muttered something else in Russian, which sounded uncharitable. “Besides, I have better things to do with my time than babysit Lorenzo while he fails at planning a party,” he added on, pressing closer to Alec, a clear indication as to what he would be doing instead. Alec’s brows shot right up.

“You, Magnus Bane, are passing up a chance to plan a party?”

Raphael snorted, earning a scowl from Magnus. His glance at Alec was much kinder.

“It’s the annual reunion party for our MBA class from Harvard,” he started.

“Uh-huh.”
Magnus looked peeved and absolutely reluctant to continue. Raphael saved him the effort.

“Reunion party, he says. More like a gala. While we were in school, Magnus was president of the Business school’s Student Association. Lame among the undergraduates, but a formidable position for a post-graduate.”

“Okay, so what does that have to do with what’s his face?” He felt instead of heard Alec’s laughter. Magnus loved it when he pretended not to know people’s names. It was weird, but it amused him, so whatever.

“Well, that meant Magnus became president of the alumni association, and was in charge of planning the reunions and what not. Couple years back, Lorenzo staged a coup, and got voted to replace Magnus as president over a...uh...minor incident.”

“I still contend that Lola Seelie is a snake, and it was not my damn fault.”

“Let it go, Magnus,” Ragnor sighed.

“That son of a blanket set me up!”

“And he’s been complaining about it ever since,” Cat finished with a wry smile. “Just go to the damn meeting, Magnus. You love doing it. This guy sucks at it--”

“So let him suck at it on his own,” Magnus grumbled. “Don’t know why we have to sully my name with it.”

“Because it was horrible last year without you there and everyone knows it. So you don’t have to plan it, but you have to show up.”

Magnus turned, sipping from his drink and stretching to set it down. Alec, spread his hands out over his abdomen, appreciating the flex.
“I’ll go, but Alexander’s coming and you owe me,” he answered prissily. Alec pulled a face when Raphael’s jaw dropped with what seemed to be utter glee.

“You wouldn’t.”

“I so would.”

“What?”

“No guests allowed,” Ragnor answered. “It’s exclusive elitist bullshit.”

“More like a way to keep horrible spouses out,” Raphael snorted.

“It’s bonding time, or that’s what they’d have everyone believe. The truth is that half of the board embezzles the funds, so there’s rarely enough to do the basics. I always supplemented with my own cash.” He waggled his brows at Alec, “Which I did not tell little Renzy-poo.”

“Mean,” Alec said with a laugh.

Raphael dismissed it with a wave of his hand, “Bah, the pendejo deserves it.”

“So are we playing cards here or what?” The rest of them complained, opting in and fussing over who was dealing. “I’m just saying it’s a hen night in here, not a poker game.”
Chapter 77

Chapter Summary

Alec gets awarded for saving Clary's life

As was surprising to no one, Magnus thoroughly enjoyed dressing Alec whenever he could. Not only choosing his outfits, but physically dressing him. He especially enjoyed dressing him in his dress blues, which he didn’t wear so often. Alec submitted to this process with a wry grin, letting him fasten the straps and buttons, putting on the pins, medals, and ribbons. In typical Magnus fashion, he had his dress uniform sent out to be cleaned every time Alec had need for it and removed every single removable piece before doing so. He claimed it was so the cleaner didn’t steal or lose any of it. Alec had other suspicions.

Usually, when an officer was up for an award, the ceremony was done within a few weeks of their return to duty. Alec’s situation was somewhat different. He’d been back at work for well over a month after being shot, but the award ceremony had been postponed in order to accommodate the recovery of several other cops who were receiving the same medal. There were four of them in total, and the ceremony was being held at The Union Club, which of course Robert Lightwood was a member of. He’d offered the space to the Commissioner as a boon to his son, naturally. Evidently, all Alec had to do was make a request, and he too would be a member, but had refused for many years. Magnus was beyond excited to be able to go and babbled about it unceasingly while he meticulously pinned on every medal and commendation Alec had ever gotten.

“Why would you want to hang out with a bunch of old, rich, white dudes?” Alec asked rolling his eyes.

“To make them uncomfortable. Obviously.”

“Magnus--”

“It is not only the oldest social club in New York, but it’s notoriously filled with straight white men.” Magnus spread his hands incredulously. “Who could possibly resist the temptation?”

“Me,” Alec answered firmly. “I have resisted that temptation for my entire life.”
“You’re saying you’ve never been there?”

“Once or twice, by force, to celebrate my father’s birthday or some award.”

Magnus laughed through his nose, “Naturally you hated it.”

Alec lifted his brows, “Naturally.”

“Well,” Magnus patted his chest and leaned forward, “I’ll make this an enjoyable experience for you, darling.” He darted his eyes away, obviously skeptical. “As much as possible, anyway.” Alec closed that small space between them, kissing him lightly.

“That is why I asked you to come, isn’t it?”

Magnus kissed him again and grabbed his hand, “Let’s go.”

*

The building was beautiful, of course, and the security was tight. Of course, the Police Commissioner was going to be there, so naturally, everyone was on edge about that. Alec knew better. It was pomp and circumstance. It was grandiose display for effect, which Alec was far too accustomed to seeing. Places like this were places Alec had spent his whole life trying to avoid and escape. He’d gone all the way to Afghanistan to do so, and to prove a point. But somehow, he always ended up here. In the thick of it. They stood in the lobby while the officers went over them with metal detecting wands, and Alec averted his gaze upward examining the ceiling. He’d always hated this place. The thought made his gut clench, so he turned his attention to Magnus, who was giving the security team a hard time. He’d always hated this place. The thought made his gut clench, so he turned his attention to Magnus, who was giving the security team a hard time. Not physically, of course, just pointing out that they’d missed a spot or reminding them that belts didn’t make good weapons. He also managed to sniff out an affair between two officers, scold another for being too uptight, and generally wreak a little bit of havoc in the few minutes they were there. Security was happy to see him go.

He all but skipped over to Alec’s side, situating himself easily in Alec’s space. He was wrinkling his nose.

“They really could do a better job of dusting in here.”
“You, sir, are a troublemaker.”

Magnus beamed. “I take that as a compliment. Someone needs to keep these youngsters on their toes.”

“Because they don’t have their work cut out for them with criminals and terrorists.”

“Those drapes are terrorizing my sense of good taste, does that count?”

“Shockingly no. Am I going to have conversations with everyone here to keep you from getting thrown out?” he asked wryly. Very, very quietly he was hoping that Magnus would harass the shit out of everyone present as much as possible. Not only would it be entertaining, but it would keep the attention off of him. Besides, Magnus liked nothing better than causing a good disruption whenever he could. Alas, he lifted his hands in surrender.

“Hey, this is your day. I am here purely for decoration.” Alec rolled his eyes.

“You are not decoration,” Alec said lowly. “You are here to keep me from shooting people.”

“Ugh,” he whined, “tedious.”

“Necessary.”

Magnus rounded on him, straightening out his shirt and coat, brushing off that ever-present imaginary lint, and adjusting his pins and medals. Alec watched him do this, feeling calmer just from the reiteration of the process.

“It won’t be nearly as bad as you think. You did a good thing and you deserve to be recognized for it.”

Alec shook his head, “I got shot doing my job. I don’t see what’s so--” Magnus lifted two fingers in front of Alec’s lips, brows raised. Alec instantly shut up, a grin tugging at his lips.
“It’s cathartic.”

“It’s ridiculous.”

“It’s mandatory.”

“Which is why I dragged you here with me.”

*

Magnus snorted, completely at a loss with all this indignant stubbornness. Everyone else he knew would be chomping at the bit for recognition, to get face time with the mayor and press. Given Clary’s general adorableness and backstory and Alec’s sexuality, this would probably go viral somewhere for some period of time. Things like that just happened. Not that Alec seemed to appreciate any of it. Magnus hooked his hand into the lapels of Alec’s jacket and smirked at him.

“Fine. Behave yourself for even a little while and I’ll blow you in the men’s bathroom later.”

Alec opened and closed his mouth uselessly, not a single sound coming out. His cheeks flushed adorably, but otherwise, he didn’t react.

“I cannot believe you just said that to me right now.”

“That’s not a no,” Magnus pointed out laughingly.

“I--no...it’s not.”

Magnus snickered and tugged him in the direction of the main hall. “Come on, Superman, let’s go see if they can figure out where to pin another medal on that jacket of yours.”

“I hate you so much right now.”
“Mmm, you keep saying that.”
Chapter 78

Chapter Summary

Rest of the reception

New chapters 73-78

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Magnus had to admit that watching Alec around political hotshots, higher-ups in the police department, and the media was pretty painful. Not because Alec was inappropriate or inarticulate. In fact, it was quite the opposite. Alec was a more intense version of himself under these conditions. To someone who knew him well, he looked stressed and uncomfortable. He stood at parade rest, listening to those around him speak, never moving from that position. Ever the default soldier. He didn’t seem at all impressed by the people around him, even as his father played up their importance. He responded to any compliment or flattery with a short smile and a brief nod of his head and not much else.

Magnus chose to stick with his squad and Luke Garroway for two different reasons. One, he had no desire to socialize with these people other than for Alec’s benefit. Two, Magnus had the tendency to draw too much attention to himself, which would prolong those interactions. By throwing Alec to the wolves, he was shortening the experience by half and letting people focus on Alec for once. Even if he didn’t want it, he did deserve it.

The ceremony started at 1:30 on the dot. Three other police officers were being honored as well. Alec knew two of them. Two were black, two were women, and Alec was gay. It wasn’t difficult to see what angle the Police Commissioner’s office was playing at here, grouping these people together. Magnus just hoped Alec didn’t notice. Doubtful, but still. They read out each officer’s service record, all of which were lengthy, and placed medals around their necks. When the last one was placed, the room erupted in cheers from all the people there supporting them. Magnus clapped, eyes fixed on Alec and beaming. Alec did look devastatingly handsome in his dress blues, and when his eyes landed on his squad, he couldn’t stop the spread of a grin across his lips. They cheered louder, Jace letting out a piercing whistle and Clary’s yay Alec rising above the general din. But then he swiveled his gaze right to Magnus, who wrinkled his nose happily. Alec’s grin softened and he lifted his brows in that, yeah whatever, please save me look of his. Magnus snickered, lifting his hands to clap more visibly, and Alec scowled in response.

The photo op was hysterical. The other man, obviously more ambitious than the other three, put himself in the center, a little in front of the others. Magnus wasn’t exactly sure what he’d done to earn his medal, but it was extremely obnoxious behavior. The women seemed unimpressed too, shooting Alec looks behind the guy’s back. Alec did precisely what Magnus had assumed he
would do. He held a hand up to the photographer to wait, ushered the two women into the middle, and stood just behind the one to his left, going immediately to parade rest. The other man looking absolutely irritated, but the women smiled brightly. Alec just looked smug at thwarting another overeager asshole.

“What a jerk,” Jace mumbled, fondly at Magnus’ side.

“You know how he is,” Magnus answered, eyes still on Alec. “Can’t stand showboating.”

“I’m surprised he didn’t push the guy off the stage.”

Lydia nudged him from the other side. “I heard that guy broke protocol, put everyone in danger, and had to save his own ass.”

“What about the women?”

“Sandy took a bullet protecting a witness. Ellen broke her ribs rescuing a hostage.”

“And Alec took a bullet protecting a fellow officer. One of these things is not like the others.”


When the photographers finally released them, several reporters swept forward, descending like vultures on the four. The male officer stepped forward, obviously pleased with the attention, while the two women clustered together. Alec ducked and dodged them completely, giving them wide berth to get back to his family and squad. He took off his hat, sighing in relief when he wasn’t followed.

“What a frickin’ nightmare,” he breathed out, rolling his shoulders in discomfort. Jace clapped him on the back.

“You looked good up there, brother. Enjoy it for a second, will you?”
He twisted his head to crack his neck. “This is too much.”

“And it ain’t over,” Lydia muttered. “Incoming.”

Magnus looked up to see a slender, blonde woman walking over with more confidence than was strictly warranted. Oh boy.

She held out a recorder. “Detective Lightwood, care to make a comment concerning your award here today?”

Alec stiffened at his side, so Magnus slipped a hand through his arm, stroking his wrist with his thumb. He relaxed just enough to smile tightly at her.

“I was just doing my job.”

“Of course,” she said, voice dripping with false sweetness. “Do you believe that Detective Fairchild’s relationship to your captain affected your performance?” Alec’s brows shot right up. “Do you think you were more inclined to behave heroically because she is your boss’ stepdaughter?”

“Excuse me?”

Magnus was about to cut him off when Clary stepped in for him. “Alec would have done the same for anyone. And I mean anyone. Cop, criminal, friend or not because that’s the kind of man he is, and to suggest otherwise is gross.” She grabbed Alec by the shoulders and steered him in the opposite direction, glaring over her shoulder. Jace smirked sunnily, following behind them, and Magnus smiled insincerely at the nonplussed woman.

“I think I’ll be taking that,” he snipped, snatching her recorder from her hand. He took the batteries out, handed them to her, and turned to follow the others.

Alec, of course, was riled up. “Did she just say what I think she said?”

“Ignore her, Alec,” Clary said noncommittally. “She’s just being an asshole. It’s her job.”
“Did she just say I took a bullet for you to get brownie points with my captain?”

“Yep,” Lydia answered unhelpfully. Jace swatted at her.

“Alec, stop!” Clary snapped, almost stamping her foot like a child. “Ignore her! She just wants a story.” Alec still looked ready to shoot something, and Magnus knew this was going to deteriorate very quickly. He slid between the extremely unhelpful cops and into Alec’s space. With a small smile, he held up the recorder between them and slid it into Alec’s pocket.

“I don’t think she has much of a story,” he offered quietly. He reached up to straighten Alec’s medal, smoothing down the ribbon holding it. Alec’s shoulders unclenched, and Magnus felt rather than heard his relieved sigh. He mouthed a very quiet thank you which had Magnus preening a little more than strictly necessary. He patted Alec’s chest.

“You still have to do one interview.” Alec groaned childishly. “None of that. Obviously, we won’t talk to the she-devil, but I spotted a timid one in the back of the herd. They’re always the most appreciative and Garroway won’t strangle you. So hop to, let’s go.” He ushered Alec in the direction of a despondent, sad-looking reporter with a terrible paisley tie and ill-fitting brown suit, arm hooked around Alec’s as much for closeness as it was to keep him from bolting. Magnus had been given specific instructions: make Alec do one interview. Just one. With any reporter, any media outlet. So Magnus picked the weakest link and cheerfully approached him.

“It is your lucky day Mr...Greenblatt. Your tie is terrible, by the way.” The man blanched even as Alec snorted. “You get to have an exclusive interview with Detective Lightwood, which no one else will get. So pull out your questions, or do I need to tell you what to write down?”

The man scrambled in response to that, feeling around for his pen and recorder, much to Alec’s amusement. Perfect. An amused Alec was better than a defensive one. This would work perfectly. The reporter’s first few questions were easy lobs, which Magnus thought was probably coincidental instead of shrewd. Putting Alec at ease was obviously priority one, but this guy couldn’t seem to get his shit together long enough to notice that.

“So how long have you been a police officer?”

“Almost seven years.”
“And you’ve been a detective..?”

“Almost five years…” Alec said, amusement lacing his voice.

The guy stammered, flipping through his notes. “So you’re gay?”

Magnus tossed his hands up in defeat when Alec’s face scrunched up incredulously. Magnus grabbed the reporter by the shoulders, shaking him slightly.

“You’re killing me,” he told him firmly. Then he spun on his heel, looking at Alec and gesturing to the reporter. “Answer.” Alec was looking absolutely put off, his mouth dropped open in disgust. His eyes slid over Magnus and back to the reporter, who was now looking ready to shit himself. Wonderful.

“Yes.”

The reporter deflated. “Sorry. I don’t usually interview people, I’m filling in for--never mind. Sorry. I won’t include that, it’s just what she wrote--I’m so sorry please don’t sue me!”

“Simmer down,” Magnus snapped, swiping the notebook from his hands and scanning over the questions. “These are completely idiotic.” He sighed and tossed the notebook to some unknown locale, causing the reporter to squeak in protest. Magnus grabbed him by the shoulders again, forcing eye contact. “Listen to me, Greenblatt. I have only one job today, and that is to get my stupidly noble boyfriend to submit to just one interview. I have chosen you, and you will not fail me.” He slapped both of his cheeks sharply at the same time. “So we are going to go over into this side hall and you are going to talk to him like a normal person and record it for later. Do we understand each other?” He nodded quickly and silently, wincing when Magnus slapped his cheeks again. “Excellent.” He grabbed up both of them, forcing them to walk in front of him in the direction of a side service hall where they could have more privacy.

Things went much more smoothly without Greenblatt’s co-worker’s notes. They had a much more normal conversation where Greenblatt asked Alec what had happened on the day in question, why he decided to become a cop, and about his military experiences. He did, eventually, circle back to the sexuality issue, and to Magnus, since he was so forcibly present. Alec answered those questions much more easily once he realized the guy was essentially harmless. He was still vague and private, but at least he wasn’t about to strangle the poor bastard. They parted with smiles and handshakes and Magnus raising his arms in victory.
“You are ridiculous,” Alec murmured, shaking his head. But Magnus was too busy celebrating himself and his success.

“You can’t take this from me,” he shot back smugly. “I just got you to do the first voluntary, coherent interview of your career, which means I win.”

Alec laughed brightly. “What could you possibly win from that?”

“Bragging rights. 100%. I have officially one-upped Isabelle.”

“Oh my god--”

“Hey, it’s a serious point of contention!”

“Riiight,” Alec said snarkily, “serious is the first word that came to mind.”

Magnus snickered to himself, snatching up Alec’s hand and dragging him back into the room full of people. He easily deflected two reporters in favor of making a path back to their party. Robert was standing with them now, looking as serious as ever. The man really needed to pull the stick out of his ass.

“And just where were you two?” Jace asked suggestively, earning a swat from Clary. It didn’t even faze him as he waggled his brows at them.

“Forcing Alexander to do an interview. It went well, I think.”

“You’re joking,” Lydia asked, jaw dropping. “You did an interview that was more than yes, no, and no comment?”

Magnus stroked Alec’s arms, patting his chest affectionately. “He used whole sentences and everything.” Alec scowled, exasperated as the rest of them teased him mercilessly. Magnus just twined an arm around Alec’s and stood there with him. Because Robert and Luke were standing with them, several people came over to make introductions or small talk. Alec submitted to the conversations, mostly letting his father, the captain, and the others do all the talking. Magnus really
didn’t mind being his arm candy, hanging off his arm like a proud trophy wife.

The Police Commissioner called all of them to move into the reception hall, where there were refreshments waiting for them. Magnus snickered when Alec immediately grabbed a flute of champagne and downed it.

“Stressed, darling?”

“This whole thing makes my skin itch,” he grumbled. Magnus laughed again and pressed a kiss to his shoulder.

“You’ll have to suffer through it a little longer. They want to schmooze with their good publicity.”

“It’s annoying .”

Magnus smirked sunnily, looking around the room and sizing up the crowd. “Just say the word, darling, and I’ll set all their teeth on edge.”

He felt Alec’s shoulders shake with smothered laughter. “Only in retaliation. No need to piss off the captain.”

“Hhmm,” he sighed, “too bad.”

“I thought I was supposed to be behaving myself, not you.”

“Eh,” Magnus shrugged. “The important thing is that you make a good impression without being too salty.”

“I am not--”

“Hush,” Magnus interrupted, snatching two flutes of champagne from a passing waitress and handed one to Alec. “Drink.”
“That is such a bad idea,” Alec grumbled, drinking it anyway. “Can we please sneak out of here?”

“Nope. Luke said at least an hour.”

“Collusion!” Alec accused indignantly, using Magnus’ own word against him. Magnus nodded very grimly.

“Absolutely. If it’s going to help your career with minimal effort on your part.”

“Magnus--”

“It’s good for you, making your dreams come true and what not.”

Magnus wasn’t paying much attention, so Alec slid an arm behind his back, resting his hand on his hip and pulling him in closer. Magnus always startled a little whenever he touched him in public. Still. It was actually pretty amusing because it happened mostly when they were around Alec’s set. At Pandemonium, or with Magnus’ friends, or at one of his work events, Magnus hardly reacted at all. In fact, he all but demanded physical contact and PDA. But he always seemed surprised when it was in front Alec’s friends and co-workers. He thought about their first week together. About that night at Dilly’s. What he really needed to do was invest in a pool table for the apartment.

He pressed a kiss to his temple, leaning in. “My dream was meeting someone like you,” Alec said quietly, pressing another kiss to his temple. “I don’t give a damn about these assholes. Sólo tú,” Alec was pleased when Magnus leaned into his touch, sighing contentedly, even if his expression stayed cool and collected. People were moving past them to get closer to the buffet tables and crowding together in their groups. Alec kept Magnus with him for just a moment longer, until Magnus turned in his grasp and smiled up at him. It was one of those shy, close-lipped smiles Alec got whenever he was just this side of too honest. His eyes gentled and he kissed Alec’s cheek.

“You just stand there and look pretty, and I’ll do all the work. Yeah?”

And work he did. Magnus, as usual, was a splendid schmoozer, moving seamlessly between groups and charming everyone while he did it. He had a way of tailoring his personality and conversation to match the tone and content of whoever he spoke to. He was non-threatening enough for women to feel comfortable responding and flirting with him. He was sharp and intelligent enough to keep bigots in their place without much effort. He managed to make everyone in a group feel included.
Alec saw it happening in real time. He’d seen it a hundred times before with a decidedly different set of people. These government officials and politicians were a different subset and far more deft in how they handled private citizens, but Magnus seemed to be doing all the handling. There had been one or two occasions early in their relationship when Alec had felt insecure about this particular skill of Magnus’. He’d briefly wondered if Magnus had pulled a similar gambit on him, drawing him in easily like a starving stray cat. But as he watched Magnus charm his way through the Police Commissioner’s staff, he knew it simply wasn’t true. Because, well, he’d slip. They were small things. Things no one else would possibly notice. For example, the way he slid a pen through his fingers, flipping it around easily. Or when he’d disposed of the pen and slipped his hand into his pocket, fiddling with what Alec knew was the omamori charm he’d bought for him. Or when his jaw would clench when someone was particularly crass or said something bordering on morally repugnant.

Magnus did none of these things when he was comfortable, when he was being himself, when he was being fully honest and forthright. Which meant Alec noticed them instantly. It made him appreciate Magnus so much more than he possibly could have before. One of the public relations officers in the Commissioner’s office smiled at Alec as Magnus spoke to the others in their circle.

“You know, your father talks about your Mr. Bane quite often,” she said slowly and discreetly.

“Does he?”

“Mhmm, he does. And I have to say, he certainly lives up to the hype.”

Alec looked over at her, smiling appreciatively at the compliment even as Magnus told some ridiculous story about a run-in with a Russian minister in France, gesturing wildly and making the whole group laugh. He turned his focus back on Magnus, who flicked his eyes over and winked before answering someone’s question. Alec shook his head.

“Trust me, ma’am, he exceeds it.”
Just to contextualize this monster for you: I had to archive the first 375 pages so that I could conveniently continue writing the next chapters. This is literally a nightmare.
Chapter 79

Chapter Summary

Simon's bachelor party!
I know it seemed like it was never going to happen, but the wedding is coming.

Also, if you get really upset with stupid straight people's majorly ignorant and slightly homophobic questions, feel free to skip over this chapter. (Alcohol is involved, so don't hold it against him too much).

Alec, Magnus, Raphael, Max, and Jace were forced to go to Simon’s bachelor party on the threat of death. Alec and Magnus had already planned on going, but Izzy was not fucking around with any of their nonsense now that the wedding was descending upon them like a Category 5 hurricane. She was freakishly shrill and not responding well to anyone making her life in the least bit complicated. People were giving her wide berth, and her boss had given her an extra week of vacation time just to prevent a workplace tragedy.

Because all of Simon’s friends were terrified of Izzy and Jace and Max were little bitches, Alec and Magnus were sent to pick Simon up from their apartment for his bachelor party. The reasoning was that Alec was the only person who could calm Izzy down and Magnus could sneak Simon out while she was distracted.

“Why can’t Sheldon meet us, again?” Magnus asked as the elevator doors closed. Alec had already moved into parade rest, looking like he was gearing up to go into battle.

“Apparently,” he drawled with a sigh, “Izzy has been getting a little hysterical every time he goes out. They fight, they make up, they fight some more.”

“Sounds healthy.”

“Izzy doesn’t handle stress she can’t beat the crap out of.”

“Ah.”

“It’s the waiting, I think. Everything’s done and she doesn’t have anymore tweaking to do or
decisions to make. Happened when she was about to start medical school, too. Gave Jace a black eye.”

“Did he deserve it?”

“Oh for sure,” Alec answered without hesitation. The elevator doors opened with a ding and they stepped out in tandem. “So I’ll cool Iz off, you just get Simon closer to the door.”

Magnus nodded. “I’m sure it won’t be that bad.”

Alec smirked over his shoulder as he knocked. “Famous last words.”

Alec used his key when no one answered. They heard the faint sounds of an argument coming from the bedroom and a thump against the floor or wall. Magnus shot Alec a concerned look, but Alec just shrugged and shoved his hands in his jacket pockets.

“Oh shit,” he said slumping.

“What?”

He pointed to the coffee table which had a bag of fun size candy bars and a bunch of empty wrappers all over it. There was also a napkin from a fast food place.

“Izzy binge eats candy bars and fries when she’s stressed. This is probably as bad if not worse when she was court marshaled a few years back.”

“For what?”

“Not important,” Alec snapped defensively. They were pulled out of the conversation when the bedroom door swung open sharply and Izzy came storming out, Simon following behind talking too fast to be comprehensible. He stopped short when he saw Alec and Magnus. He put his hand up in a prayer pose, mouthing please, begging them to intercede. Alec held up a hand, indicating he’d handle it and followed his sister. Magnus moved forward, swinging a hand in amusement.
“Trouble in paradise?” he asked, far too entertained by it. Simon deflated completely, looking exhausted.

“Everything I do is wrong. Everything I say is wrong. She’s stressed all the time and I can’t seem to get her to calm down.” He held his hands up. “I don’t know, Magnus, maybe--”

Magnus held a finger up to his lips with lifted brows. “Don’t speak stupid. Alec will calm her down, and we will take you out for a night of debauched hetero fun.”

“I don’t know what that means,” he said, looking a little more cheerful, “but it sounds nice.”

*A*

Alec made sure Magnus would get Simon out the door and he followed Izzy as she bolted for the kitchen, which was not a good sign. When she jerked open the freezer door, he automatically shut it, making her snarl.

“Get out of my way, Alec!” she snapped irritably.

“Binge eating ice cream is not going to help,” he answered calmly, hand still firm on the door.

“Fuck you.”

He lifted his brows at her, forcing a reactionary full-body jerk from her out of frustration. She turned away from him, rubbing a hand through her hair roughly, and flopping down into a chair. She pursed her lips and crossed her arms.

“When did you last talk to Mom?” he asked gently.

“Yesterday.”
“Simon’s mom?”

“Two days ago.”

He nodded and pulled a chair over to sit down across from her. He put his elbows on his knees and tilted his head to catch her gaze. She looked up at him guiltily, still frowning like a bratty little kid. There was no way in hell that Simon would have been able to figure this one out. Izzy had a...well, she didn’t always handle hurts and upsets in the healthiest way. For her, the adrenaline always drowned out pain, so she chased it with gusto. Alec had watched this routine several hundred times.

“What did he say?”

“What did who say?” she shot back grumpily.

“Izzy--”

“He didn’t say anything.”

“So?”

“So what?”

Alec pinched his nose and gestured uselessly. “So what happened?”

Izzy dropped her head to the back of the chair, staring up at the ceiling.

“He’s gonna walk me down the aisle. Then there’s the father-daughter dance.”

“Oh Iz…” She lifted her head to look at him, anger fizzled out and sadness in full force.

“He’s having an affair and he’s going to walk me down the aisle to give me away to Simon. He’s
going to dance with me at my wedding and we all have to pretend like he’s not spitting in the face of everything we care about.” She sniffed. “Simon deserves better than that.”

Alec pulled his lips into a tight line and shrugged. “Yeah maybe.” She frowned. “Look, I was having the same issue with Magnus, okay? Like, I’d just look at him and feel how much I loved him, and all I could think about was Dad and his bullshit and…” He sighed and dropped his head. “I don’t know what the hell is going on with him. He’s tried talking to me, and I just can’t even listen. But here’s the thing: you can’t let him ruin your time with Simon.”

She looked absolutely devastated by that comment, probably because she’d most likely said some terrible things to him with no cause or explanation. Maybe got a little more physical than strictly necessary. She’d never hurt Simon, but she obviously wasn’t handling things very well. Alec picked up her hands, holding them firmly in his own.

“I can't imagine how you're feeling, and I can't tell you how to deal with Dad and your feelings about it. But it’s just one day. It’s just a ceremony. I know it means a lot to you, but Simon means more, right?” She nodded, a tear slipping down the side of her nose. Alec reached up to brush it away. “I’m pretty sure you’re supposed to have a miserable time at your own wedding anyway. Is that not the plot of all those straight people romcoms?” That got him a chuckle at least, even if tears came with it. “Simon loves you, and your getting married is just a formality of that.”

“Yeah,” she said tearfully, barely able to get the word out.

“Good,” he said, feeling moderately optimistic. “Now go out there and apologize to your fiancé, tell him you love him and that you’re going to be less of a chocolate-crazed, violent psycho for the next three days.”

She scrunched her lips up sheepishly. “I broke a rolling pin.”

“What? How-?” He held his hands up in defeat. “Nevermind, it’s not important. Just--” he gestured in the direction of the living room where Simon and Magnus were waiting. She sighed heavily and got up to do as he said. Alec got up to follow her, leaning against the door frame and crossing his arms as he watched her hug Simon. She didn’t even say anything, just threw her arms around him roughly and hugged him. Simon was surprised at first, but easily got over it, hugging her back and speaking quietly to her. She nodded quickly and kissed him, hands on his neck. Simon wiped at her tears, looking stupidly fond, and Alec had never liked the idiot more than right then. He made eye contact with Magnus who was watching them just as happily. He lifted his shoulders in a what can you do gesture, and Magnus wrinkled his nose and shook his head fondly. He was totally impressed, Alec knew it.
Izzy spun on her heel and pointed a finger in Alec’s direction.

“He does not get left alone with Jace.” Alec stood to attention for his orders, smirking but at parade rest anyway. “Colored liquor only, no more than four shots an hour, and I expect him back here fully clothed, coherent, and sans glitter, do you understand me?”

“Yes ma’am,” Alec answered, jauntily saluting her.

*

They started the night at Dilly’s, where a lot of the cops there bought them shots because they knew Simon fairly well at this point. Jace officially named Alec the S.S.O. Or, Superior Sober Officer. The acronym came from their time in the academy, when the cadet with the highest class rank had to stay sober when they went out for the night. It wasn’t particularly fair, but it did keep people’s egos in check. Max, Jace, and Simon were laughing at him, giving him a hard time. So Alec just slung an arm around Magnus’ shoulders, pulling him closer with a smirk.

“It’s all good,” Alec said, pressing a kiss to Magnus’ temple. “I like to be sober when I bottom for Magnus anyway.”

The spit takes were amazing and well worth the overshare. Unfortunately, Simon didn’t stick to the four shots an hour rule Izzy set because Max kept sneaking him drinks on the side. It also turned out that he was chasing shots with beer. Everything from there deteriorated into sex talk. They were all sharing their worst sex stories, even Raphael got in it. Alec just sat back and let himself be entertained, because there was no way in hell he was giving his brothers ammunition for later. Magnus happily participated, though, easily winning the unspoken competition thanks to Camille. Alec wasn’t particularly pleased with the context of the story, but Magnus was smiling and enjoying himself, so Alec kept his mouth shut.

The sex talk deteriorated even further the drunker Simon got. Apparently, gay sex was still on his brain because he started interrogating Magnus and Alec with questions he must have been compiling for years.

“So who bottoms? And what does being a bottom entail, exactly? Does bottoming make you the woman?”

Frankly, it was not a great start.
“Is better to be a top or a bottom? What if you like to top, but the guy you’re with wants to top too? Do you switch and if so, is there a schedule and who makes it? Are there rules? Are bottoms gayer than tops? Isn’t a top just a straight man?”

Max and Raphael were holding each other up, snickering and trying to hide their laughter behind their drinks. Jace made no effort to hide his glee, beaming and clumsily holding his phone up to record the whole thing. Including Magnus’ and Alec’s reactions.

“Do straight men have sensitive prostates, too? How do you decide that you’re gay? If a straight guy takes it up the ass and likes it, is he gay? What if he still likes boobs and vagina? Does that make him bisexual? What if it was like a one-time thing with a guy? Is it like a mark on your permanent record or can you say you’re still straight?”

Simon asked one question after the other, with no filter, and didn’t seem to need answers. Magnus just listened, brows raised, stirring his drink with the cocktail straw. Alec’s face was increasingly disconcerted, jaw slightly agape as he processed the sheer amount of nonsense coming out of his brother-in-law’s mouth. Simon’s friends were losing it, half shaking their heads, half egging him on and not at all helpful. They kept giving him ideas and telling him he made good points.

“So like...do ever you, you know, when he pulls out? Cause it probably feels the same, right?”

How do you actually do it? Cause like...with a girl’s vagina there’s stuff, you know, so it’s easier, but with the butthole, there’s no stuff.”

Jace lost it and dropped his phone. Unsteadily, he dove down under the table to get it and keep recording. Max’s face was so red that Alec was concerned he wasn’t breathing, but he couldn’t rip his eyes away from the shitshow happening in front of him.

“Why do you think men were designed with something sensitive up their butts? Like why don’t women have something sensitive up their butts, too? If you like anal with a girl, does that mean you could be gay?”

“Okay!” Alec said finally, slamming his glass down, earning howls of laughter from Max and Raphael who were doubled over. Jace whipped the phone in Alec’s direction, probably hoping to catch him beating the crap out of Simon. Magnus hardly reacted except to wink at the camera. Alec sighed. “Let’s get food in the idiot.”

“Cheers!”
“Alec you’re the *best* and I *love* you. Not like gay love cause I love Izzy. But she’s like a girl-you so I guess I do gay-love you.”

“Oh my god,” Alec muttered, drawing a hand over his brow. Magnus rubbed back, a rueful smile on his face.

“Just remember,” he said firmly. “You love your sister.”

Alec nodded and grabbed Simon by the arm to direct him to the door, chanting under his breath, “I love my sister. I love my sister. I love my sister.”
Chapter 80

Chapter Summary

THEY'RE FINALLY GETTING MARRIED
Izzy and Simon, that is.
Not Malec.
My B. I can see how that might have been misleading.

The day was beautiful, the ceremony was beautiful, and Izzy still managed to outshine it all. She wore a long-sleeved, off the shoulder, lace gown with a foot long train and a lace veil. Alec, Jace, and Max stood up on Izzy’s side with her two other bridesmaids, and Clary, who was her maid of honor. Simon had his three best friends from college and his three bandmates. The ceremony was held at St. Catherine’s and a rabbi was present as a co-minister. They followed both traditions, which upset both mothers. Surprisingly, no one had a meltdown and Izzy was completely serene and happy.

Alec was perfectly content when he’d watched her walk down the aisle. She didn’t seem upset by their father’s presence, so he was hoping they’d talked and worked things out. While they said their vows, Alec couldn’t help but seek out Magnus. He was seated behind his parents on Izzy’s side and Raphael sat next to him. (Raphael refused to sit next to anyone else.) He’d found that Magnus was already watching him, but his smile got wider when their eyes met. Magnus was looking exceptionally good in his long, suede jacket which was a silver gray color. It had really pretty silver detailing that matched his burgundy dress shirt. The jacket trailed down to his thighs and he wore block heeled boots. His hair was spiked up and he wore silver and red eyeshadow. Alec had watched him get ready earlier from his favorite spot on the bed. God, he looked perfect. Magnus lifted his chin and winked at him, making Alec blush.

While the ceremony was lovely, Alec felt much more comfortable once they got to the reception hall and he didn’t have a hundred sets of eyes on him. He did have to sit at the head table, without Magnus, but at least he didn’t have to stay there long. Simon gave his opening speech and the meal was served. Throughout dinner, people got up and made speeches. Jace, Alec, and Max were among them. They coordinated one speech for a few good reasons: Jace couldn’t be trusted to go solo, Max was drunk, and Alec didn’t like unnecessary public speaking. They kept it short and sweet, telling Izzy how proud they were of her, what an amazing woman she was, and then continued to threaten Simon’s life if he ever hurt her.

“All it’ll take is a text, man,” Max said.

“No one will ever find your body.”
“Or remember that you even existed,” Alec finished. “To Izzy and Simon!”

Once the meal was over, Simon led Izzy out onto the floor for their first dance. It was sweet, even if Simon was clumsy. Then the rest of the wedding party was supposed to get up and ask someone to dance. Max asked their mom, Jace got Clary, and Alec went for Magnus. Alec wasn’t that great of a dancer, and had managed to escape dance lessons. But Magnus smiled at him anyway, pulled him onto the dance floor, and did the leading. Alec really didn’t mind that at all.

“All right,” Magnus said quietly as they swayed together. “It’s almost over.”

Alec let out a stressed chuckle through his nose and curled his hand around the back of Magnus’ neck. He felt Magnus’ thumb drifting over the back of his hand soothingly.

“There are far too many people. Too many of my relatives in one room.”

“I imagine that doesn’t happen often?”

“No,” Alec answered with a lift of his brows. “And not all of them are aware of you and me.”

Magnus turned an incredulous and surprised look on him, torn between confusion and glee.

“Well they’re certainly aware now,” Magnus intoned. “What you didn’t send out a notice with the family Christmas card?”

Alec shoved his tongue into his bottom lip and shook his head. “I don’t really care about ninety percent of these people, so no, I did not make a formal announcement about my big gay relationship.”

The music was winding down, but Alec and Magnus stayed close together while Alec pointed out all of the people Magnus needed to be wary of. Anyone important, he’d already met, but these were the extended family. Cousins from upstate, Guyano, and Texas. Aunts and uncles. Family friends Alec wished he’d never met. Luckily, Raphael was also there, so when Alec inevitably got pulled away for some inane conversation about hedge funds, Magnus would be protected.
“I’m not letting you talk to them alone,” Magnus chided, arm tightening around his waist. Alec instinctively pushed his hips closer to Magnus’. He threaded their fingers together and pulled their hands closer to his chest. “What kind of boyfriend would I be to leave you to the wolves when there are so many opportunities to make stuffy old people uncomfortable?”

“My great aunt Mildred was a huge Nixon supporter and she donates to a conversion program in Maine.”

Magnus eyes widened maniacally. “Beautiful.”

Part of Alec’s job for the evening was to entertain some of the guests in order to keep the pressure off of Izzy. It was not Alec’s strong suit, but he’d agreed anyway. Besides, he had Magnus to help. Most of his relatives were a colorful mix of homophobes, racists, and Republicans. Which was fine, as Magnus could handle them easily. Aunt Mildred was terrible, as usual, but Richard was by far the worst. He was a second cousin on the Lightwood side who’d gotten his law degree from NYU. He had always been insanely jealous of Alec, to the point that Jace had shoved his head in the toilet once. As a result, he went out of his way to be an annoying little troll whenever the family was all together. Alec didn’t like spending more time near him than necessary, but as Alec ushered Magnus toward the bar, he cut them off.

“Alec!” he said too cheerfully, with a smarmy grin, “lovely to see you, congratulations.”

“Yes, Alexander,” Magnus said voice laced with too much sweetness, “you did a wonderful job standing next to Jace.”

Alec tried to subdue the grin, but failed spectacularly. “Magnus, this is my cousin Richard. Richard, my boyfriend Magnus Bane.”

Magnus reached a hand out, because he was sane, normal, polite human being who liked to appear so. Richard didn’t return the favor.

“Oh,” he said, blinking a few times. His nose wrinkled like he smelled something foul, and Magnus immediately retracted his hand. “I’d heard, but I thought--”

“Thought what?” Alec snapped. Richard’s fake smile was immediately back in place.
“Well, you know how people can be, a thing like that could, uh, make things difficult for you.”

“I rather think the high stakes job and getting shot have made things difficult for him. Not that it seems to have slowed him down any. In bed or out,” Magnus slid an arm through Alec’s and started tugging him away. “Pleasure meeting you, dear.”

Alec went along with him easily, grinning like an idiot. He caught up to him, bumping into his back, and trying really hard not to laugh.

“That was so hot.”

“Homophobic idiot,” Magnus hissed through his teeth. Alec pulled his arm out to slide it around Magnus’ neck, hanging on him and pressing a kiss to his temple.

“I love you so much right now.”

“I need a drink.”

“He’s a lawyer for ICE.”

“Can we poison him?”

“Let’s go find Max. He’ll tell you his six-step plan.”

* 

The rest of the evening was much more enjoyable. Once people were done greeting each other and making small talk, they settled into their normal groups. Magnus and Alec stood with his brothers, Clary, and Raphael, while Simon and Izzy continued to make their rounds. Alec had his arm slung around Magnus’ neck, standing just behind him, and Magnus pressed close to him. They talked and fended off unwanted attention from family members. Magnus thought it was a defensive gesture that was well-rehearsed, and he was more than happy to be in the middle of it. Alec’s hand kept
brushing over his chest, slipping into his jacket. Magnus felt warm and content, talking and laughing with the Lightwoods. Raphael was a little tipsy and Clary was bordering on wasted. She really needed to figure out how to handle Lightwood Family Function-related stress better.

“So you had a run-in with Richie-kins, Magnus?” Jace asked, taking Clary’s drink from her and swapping it out for a glass of water. She sighed and submitted to it, but didn’t look happy. Max scowled.

“I thought I smelled the little weasel,” he sneered. “Do I need to give that punk an atomic wedgie?” He pointed at Magnus. “What did he say to you? Did he talk about his boat? If I have to listen to another damn word about that stupid --!”

“Simmer down, killer,” Alec said, amusement rumbling in his chest and making Magnus smile. “Magnus handled him just fine,” he said it against Magnus’ skin, pressing a kiss to the hinge of his jaw.

“First,” Max said gesturing between them, “gross. Have some self-control, you animals.” Magnus rolled his eyes, but Raphael snickered at the hyperbole, obviously having taken to the youngest Lightwood very quickly. “Second. Thank you. Because the smarmy bastard shouldn’t be allowed to breathe the same air as us. He is the worst.”

“Max and Richie have a sordid history,” Alec explained to Magnus quietly.

“Oh really? I would never have guessed.”

“He set me up!” Max all but shouted. Jace backhanded him in the chest when he moved forward, putting him back into his spot.

“Let it go, Max,” he said with more gentleness than Magnus was used to from Jace. Clearly, this incident was a bit more than childhood rivalry.

“Besides,” Alec continued, “I told Aunt Mildred that he his girlfriend dumped him for a comptroller. And we all know how notorious she is about forgetting who’s related to who.” Jace and Max snickered, nodding in delight. Alec scratched lightly at Magnus’ chest to get his attention. “Aunt Mildred tends to set our cousins up with other cousins who are distantly related. There was a bit of a legal issue with Harry and Marlene a few years back.”
“Ooh.”

“Yeah. And I’m pretty sure Marlene’s single again.”

“Whup,” Jace said, pointing, “there she goes. Poor bastard. Their children with have webbed toes.” Clary swatted at him. “What? It’s true. Richie’s stupid as fuck. And Marlene is too pale not to be inbred.”

“That was a rumor --”

“Whatever. I hate that guy. He’s always trying to make Alec look bad and he spends way too much time talking about his smoothie regimen. I do not need to know why extra ginger helps him.”

“Fucking hell,” Max groused, “can we please talk about anything other than Bitchy Rich?”

“Actually,” Alec said, tightening his grip on Magnus, “you all are going to have to manage without us for a moment. We need to go do something somewhere.” He was already starting to steer Magnus away from the group.

“Sneaking off for a quickie?” Jace chirped, earning a swat from Clary.

“Absolutely not,” Alec shot over his shoulder. “Magnus lasts too long,” Jace cackled as the rest of them groaned in unison. Magnus was starting to think Alec’s siblings were making those comments just to get one liners out of Alec. It was actually pretty hilarious, and Magnus really loved it. Alec directed them toward the lobby, stopping every so often to speak quickly with someone, including his parents. Robert looked slightly uncomfortable, he noticed, but he didn’t say anything about it.

“Alec, can I speak with you later?” Robert asked quietly. Alec nodded and kissed his mother’s cheek, telling her for the hundredth time that she looked beautiful, before taking Magnus’ hand and heading for the lobby. Magnus went willingly, bemused by the randomness of Alec’s taking them out of the reception hall. Some of that confusion fled, when Alec pulled him into a side hall. It was out of view of the main lobby and probably used for employees. He crowded Magnus up against the wall and ducked down to kiss him.

Magnus caught him by the face, absorbing the force of impact and gentling him. But that lasted
only a moment because Alec wrapped his arms around his waist, pulling him in closer, not giving him the chance to catch his breath. His lips moved insistently, opening Magnus up and sweeping his tongue through. Magnus groaned into it, responding greedily. They kissed furiously, tugging and biting at lips, hands clenching tightly into clothes. Magnus slid his arms around Alec’s neck, using the leverage to take control of the kiss.

“Just so you know,” Magnus said around kisses, “you look so hot in that tux.”

Alec trailed kisses to his cheek and down his jaw until he landed on Magnus’ neck. Magnus felt his knees nearly buckle. Thankfully, he had a good grip on Alec’s shoulders. Alec’s hands snaked down to cup Magnus’ ass, making Magnus swear.

“Fuck you smell good,” Alec bit out against his neck, making Magnus shiver. “I’m so glad you’re here.” He bit at Magnus’ jaw and licked a stripe up to his ear, so he clenched a hand in his hair, holding him where he wanted. Alec pressed wet, open kisses to his skin, and nuzzled there, inhaling deeply. Magnus cupped his cheek, prompting Alec to turn and kiss his palm before bringing their mouths back together. The frantic edge was gone this time, replaced with a slow, sensual slide of lips. Magnus could barely handle it, how sweet he was, and good he tasted.

“Not that I’m complaining…” Magnus said, trailing off with a hum. Alec cut him off, sucking his bottom lip between his own and nipping at it with his teeth.

“Just needed a break.” Alec panted out, sweeping his tongue through Magnus’ mouth with thorough efficiency that sent a bolt of heat into his belly. “A you break,” he explained. “Away from people.”

“Good. Did I mention you look hot?”

“Several times.” Alec snagged his lips again for a hard kiss.

* 

Alec wasn’t being totally honest when he said he needed a break from the reception. He absolutely did need a break. There were too many people he disliked on a basic, moral level that his head was spinning. It didn’t help that he was constantly worried about Izzy spiraling for any given reason, and he’d been putting a lot of extra effort into being nice to Simon. He’d let the pressure off a little with his co-speech, but it was still irritating to force it.
No, he’d noticed Magnus was crawling out of his skin, and had been for a couple of days. Magnus was still stupidly emotionally repressed, so Alec always gave him two to three days before poking a hole in his poorly constructed facade. Now that the wedding was over, the reception well under way, and most of his relatives were suitably drunk, it was time to press the issue. So he kissed him hard, waiting until Magnus was putty in his hands and relaxed enough to be a little off guard. Alec was pretty certain Magnus was expecting to be his emotional support for the day, but Alec was already in full-in support mode so it seemed like a good a time as any. Alec dropped his forehead to Magnus’, pressing intermittent kisses to his lips and swaying a little.

“This would also be a good time to tell me what’s been bothering you,” he added, tilting his head to kiss his temple. Magnus leaned into the touch, but quickly stiffened and pulled back to look at him, looking irked but slightly impressed.

“What gave me away?”

“You painted Chairman’s nails.”

“Damn, I need to stop doing that.”

“Yeah, no kidding, it’s the worst tell ever.”

Magnus clicked his tongue, still looking mildly annoyed. He really didn’t like it when Alec pushed, but he did honestly give him two whole days to fess up, so he didn’t feel that guilty about it. Besides, better to have it out where there was an open bar and dancing to mollify him in front of witnesses. Magnus in a foul mood with a nosy Alec on his tail was not something anyone needed to see, ever. Magnus gripped the lapels of Alec’s tux, still pressed close.

He cleared his throat uncomfortably. “What would you say to taking a trip?”

Alec frowned. “A trip?” Magnus nodded, pulling his lips in and looking extremely anxious for asking such an inane question. They took weekend trips regularly. Alec hadn’t had a full vacation since...ever, barring his two weeks of medical leave after being shot. But Alec knew Magnus took vacations fairly regularly. It was written into all of his employees’ contracts, so naturally, his was the same. Magnus also loved to travel when it wasn’t for work. The idea of him asking at this point in their relationship wasn’t that weird...it also wasn’t something for him to be anxious about.
“Where?”

“I don’t know. Europe?” Too quick of an answer.

“Sounds vague.”

“Germany, then.”

“Huh.” That actually didn’t sound so bad. He’d been afraid he wanted to go somewhere extremely exotic or fancy, but Germany seemed pretty low key. “For how long?”

“How long can you take off?”

“Few weeks.”

“Then for a few weeks.” Alec pulled a face. “What?”

“Setting aside the fact that spontaneity is a hallmark of your personality...any particular reason for this last minute trip?”

He shifted uncomfortably, anxiety back in his features. “Raph found out Camille is spending her month-long sabbatical here.”

“Oh. Let’s go for a month then. Or two.”

“How are you gonna pull that off?” His voice was defensive already, sounding skeptical. Which was mildly irritating. Alec really, truly very much hated all of Magnus’ exes. Who made promises like that and didn’t keep them? It really didn’t make any sense.

“Pretty sure I’m long overdue for a leave of absence. I’ll cite mental health reasons. Find a shrink to sign off on it. Whatever, I’ll handle it. Let’s go to Germany.”
“Really?” Magnus melted against him, hands flattening against his chest, and smiling sweetly. Alec couldn’t help but smile back. He was both happy and annoyed that it was this easy to please Magnus. Well, easy was a relative term, given that it would be a month-long trip which would be a nightmare to coordinate and he was going to have to grovel to Aline to make it happen with the captain. Not really, grovel, per se, because Aline owed him a hundred thousand favors because of her daughter and Alec’s perpetual singledom before Magnus. He would also have to bully Jace into covering for Aline during emergencies. It wouldn’t be hard actually because he had at least a dozen terrible stories he could tell Clary which could potentially end their relationship depending on how many details he supplied her. Alec thought of it for all of three seconds before he decided it would be worth it if Magnus was happy.

Alec smiled to himself, satisfied with his decision, and kissed him. “Really. But if you wear lederhosen, I’m going to run away with eurotrash and I’ll never forgive you.”

“Excuse you me, you will be the one wearing lederhosen.”

“Not a chance.”

“Bet?”

“Bet. Bet hard.”
Chapter 81

Chapter Summary

everybody misses Malec

Jace was not trying to deal with Lydia this morning. Ever since Alec and Magnus had left for their Germany trip, she had been a literal monster to be around. She was snippy and tired, and she wasn’t closing as many cases. Helen had decided to take some leave at the same time as Alec, so Raj had been temporarily reassigned as her partner. It was not going well. She refused to let Raj sit in Alec’s chair and was working cases alone without consulting him. Raj had complained, but the captain told them to work it out or both get a suspension. Again, it was not going well.

Jace and Clary walked into the precinct, going over their priorities for the day, when they were confronted by the absolute nightmare at Alec and Lydia’s desk cluster. Clary was mid-sentence when she squeaked in terror and dropped her coffee. Jace tugged her out of the way of the hot liquid, half out of protectiveness, half out of fear of what was in front of him.

“Lydia…” he said slowly, “what the hell is that?”

*That* was a large piece of cardboard with a picture of Alec taped to it, sitting in Alec’s chair. It was literally terrifying.

“He helps me think?” she said with a hopeful shrug.

“No. That is cardboard.”

“Alec helps me think!”

Clary put her hands up and stepped forward. “Lydia...sweetie...maybe you should just call him.”

She slumped looking miserable and sheepish at the same time. “I don’t want to bother them.”
“Oh please,” Clary said tossing her bag onto her desk and crossing her arms over her chest. “He and Jace skype every night. It’s scheduled. Jace actually downloaded a reminder app specifically for that reason.”

“Hey!” Jace protested immediately. “You know I don’t sleep well if I don’t hear his voice once a day.”

Clary gestured in his direction as if her point had been immediately proven. It was, Jace thought, very, very quietly to himself. Between their engagement and Alec getting shot, the separation anxiety was at an all-time high. So yes, fuck everyone, those skype calls were totally necessary. He pointed at cardboard Alec.

“I can’t suffer this thing to live.” He lurched toward it, but Lydia was immediately out of her seat defending it.

“Jace, no! Don’t kill Alec!”

Clary stood with a hand on her forehead while her fiance wrestled with their other adult colleague over a cardboard cutout of their other colleague who was her future brother-in-law. Luke stepped out of his office, hands clasped behind his back and walked toward Clary, watching the scene in front of him with some trepidation.

“Hey Captain,” she said hanging her head and crossing her arms. He gestured to the temper tantrum happening.

“What is happening in my police station right now?”

“Two of your best detectives are fighting over a cardboard cutout of one of your other best detectives.”

“Oh. Of course.” He paused, taking in the scene with a new set of eyes. “Why?”

“Lydia made cardboard Alec to help her think. Jace finds it offensive and wants it destroyed. And I dropped my coffee, so all of this is making me dizzy.”
Silently, he stopped a passing officer, took his mug of coffee, and handed it to Clary. She accepted it and shrugged at the officer, who walked off in a huff.


“Yeah.”

“Are we 100% certain that Alec is 100% gay? You’d get the same family?”

“Sorry, pops.”

Luke sighed huffily and made his way back to his office.

“Branwell, destroy that traumatizing monstrosity before I fire you.”

Lydia stopped in her tracks immediately, sending Jace to his butt, clutching the cardboard.

“Yes, sir!”

*

The situation hadn’t improved as the day continued. During the lunch hour, Clary caught sight of Raphael coming into the precinct. Which was far from usual, so she was immediately panicked. But then he threw himself into Alec’s chair, ignoring the weird looks he got from the detectives around him.

“Don’t you all have jobs to do?” he asked shortly, glaring at them. Jace lifted his hands incredulously, but Clary batted them down.

“Why are you here?”
“Huh?”

“You don’t live or work anywhere near here. Are you reporting a crime, or?”

“Oh. No. I just--” He sighed heavily, and spun in his chair. “Everyone is driving me nuts. I don’t understand how Magnus deals with all these people on a regular basis. The level of idiocy is too damn high.”

“Ah.”

“He misses Magnus.”

“No--”

“It’s sad.”

“Sadder than cardboard-Alec?”

“What’s cardboard-Alec?”

“No. Probably equal.”

Raphael slumped in Alec’s chair, and Clary looked at Jace insistently. When he barely responded, she kicked him and gestured toward a miserable-looking Raphael. When he shrugged at her, she lifted her eyebrows, and he was immediately out of his seat and going over to Raphael.

“Come on, buddy, let’s go get a drink.”
Chapter 82

Chapter Summary

New Chapters 80-82

“What are you looking at?”

“Huh?”

“You’re making a disturbing face. So what are you looking at?”

“Aline just sent me a video of Jace burning a cardboard picture of me with caption *please come home*.”

“Strange.”

“It’s dated two weeks ago. What the hell is happening over there?”

“I don’t know,” Magnus said, making grabby hands for him, “But we have 12 more hours of not finding out so come here please.”

Alec tossed his phone and climbed onto the bed into Magnus’ open arms. They’d spent the first leg of their trip in Hamburg, then Berlin, and then Frankfurt. Now, they were in Munich at the Bayerischer Hof Hotel, and were mentally preparing to head home. Alec had accrued six weeks of vacation time, so they were extremely well-rested and well-fed. It turned out that they were good traveling companions, too. Alec was a planner and Magnus liked spontaneity, so they compromised with planned spontaneity. Surprisingly it worked. And yes, Alec did end up in lederhosen for the span of an hour. All evidence was duly destroyed.

All in all, the trip had been pretty great. They kept busy enough to keep Alec from losing his mind, but there was enough relaxing that Magnus didn’t strangle him, and there were only a few minorly irritating phone calls and emails from home. Just based on pictures posted to social media, Jace, Lydia, and Raphael were comforting themselves by spending an inordinate amount of time together. Alec had called Clary to get a realistic check-in, and she claimed it was a “pathetic, self-
indulgent wallowing session of epic proportions.” However, she did not mention Jace setting a fake Alec on fire, so that was a bit suspicious.

Alec nestled into Magnus’ chest, feeling stupidly content with his arms around him. Magnus had amazing arms. It was ridiculous. He loved those arms.

“I can’t believe we’re going back tomorrow. I mean, I miss work and everybody, but…”

Magnus stroked his hand up and down Alec’s arm, “Yeah. Just us 24/7 was kind of nice.”

“More like 23/7. Jace did insist on skyping every night.”

“Close enough. Could have been worse.”

“That is very true. Raphael threatened to come here and track us down if I didn’t make you check in more often.”

“Did he really?”

“He found out you were sending Cat pictures.”

“Ah. That would do it. I should have known that assuaging my grown adult business partner’s anxiety was an equal priority to that of my goddaughter’s.”

“I mean, how dare you.”

They were quiet for a long while, just soaking up the calm under golden silk sheets in that insanely comfortable bed which was made exclusively for the hotel. Alec secretly loved how luxurious the whole trip had been. Magnus had insisted on spoiling and pampering him to the nth degree. While it was ridiculous, Alec really liked it. He really liked how relaxed and confident Magnus was navigating new cities and exploring different places. He didn’t insist on the most expensive thing every time, either, and he made friends with someone every single place they went. It was pretty great, too. They got all sorts of recommendations, learned about the best places and local spots most tourists wouldn’t know about. Magnus indulged Alec’s need to see the sights and do the
typical tourist things, but he also dragged him off road to tiny, family-run restaurants and into the buildings not listed on tour maps. Alec loved it. He also loved thinking about trips in the future. Very, very secretly he hoped Magnus would agree to a trip to Indonesia and India and Nepal and Japan, all the places he’d spent as a child. Melbourne was a long shot, but he didn’t care so much about that.

“What are you thinking about, love?” Magnus asked quietly, rubbing at his arm. Alec nuzzled against his chest, then twisted to look up at him, feeling the small smile on his lips.

“I’m just really, really happy you brought me with you.”

“There’s nobody I’d rather be with, I know that much. Especially not Raph. He’s such a stick in the mud.”

Alec groaned. “Don’t talk about Raph when my hand is near your dick.”

“It is not--”

“It was about to be.”

“Am I supposed to be reading your mind, now?”

“I take full offense to that, you were supposed to be doing it a long time ago.”

“Oh really?” Magnus mocked, sliding a leg over his hip and pushing him to his back.

“Really,” Alec answered, tugging him down for a thorough kiss while Magnus situated himself on top of him. They kissed lazily, talking quietly in the pauses, slowly getting rid of clothes. Alec had thought their sex life was pretty vigorously active before the trip, but being away from the pressures of their jobs and Alec’s family had just kicked it into overdrive. It was like the first week after they’d started having sex, except they were more familiar and efficient, more playful and absolutely more loving. Maybe it was watching Izzy get married, maybe it was the gorgeous country they were in, or maybe he was just high on Magnus. He couldn’t really say, and he didn’t really care to. It didn’t help that there were whole new venues to explore; they were on vacation and less inhibited. Magnus had an astounding imagination, and Alec was more than willing and able to indulge him.
As Magnus kissed down his chest and torso, nuzzling into his happy trail and biting at his edges. Alec didn’t let him do this very often, he thought as he slid a hand into Magnus’ hair. Magnus had come so far, allowed himself to be so open and exposed, but Alec still had trouble on occasion, especially in this area. But he loved it too much. He loved feeling doted on, loved how self-indulgent it was for him. He spread his legs to accommodate Magnus between them, arching his hips when he sucked Alec’s cock down. He alternated his attention between his cock and his ass, prepping him steadily. It was such an even, sensual rise, like it always was when he was with Magnus like this. Alec gave himself a moment to soak it up while he could.

But then Magnus was sliding up his body again, catching his lips for a kiss. “Love you,” he breathed into Alec’s mouth, “I could spend the rest of my life doing this for you.” He cut off his reply with another kiss. “Not that you’d let me.”

“Magnus--”

“Don’t play dumb with me, Alexander Lightwood,” he rumbled, his arms sliding under his thighs. Alec melted around those arms, a bolt of heat shooting through him when Magnus tugged at him to get him into a better position. He smirked when Magnus’ mouth descended on his, purring contentedly when Magnus rolled his hips down into his. Alec reached for his face with both hands, lurching up to kiss him, open and messy.

“You’re so good to me, papi. God, please fuck me, please.”

“You’re so pretty when you beg.”

Alec stole another kiss. “You’re always pretty, now get in me.” Magnus blanketed his body head to toe, relishing the skin on skin while he kissed the breath right out of his lungs. When he slid into Alec, Magnus groaned, nuzzling into his cheek and biting at his jaw. Magnus rotated his hips in that way that drove Alec absolutely crazy. Magnus was above him, around him, in him, and all he could smell was sandalwood and sweat, all he looked for was dark hair and tawny skin. Magnus was perfect, his muscles contracting and releasing under Alec’s hands, bunching and shifting as he fucked into him at a hypnotic pace.

Alec groaned, smoothing his hands up and down Magnus’ skin, clamping onto his ass in encouragement, trying to get him deeper.

“You feel so good,” Alec crooned, lifting his hips into it, he kept babbling. “Sólo tu, sólo-- fuck ,
“God, papi, right there, that’s it. Fuck! Harder! Papi -!”

“Easy, angel,” Magnus whispered breathily into his ear. “Take it good for me.” He sat up, pulling away even as he thrust sharply into Alec, making him cry out at the sudden change in angle. Magnus slid his hands up along Alec’s thighs, spreading his legs wide, and cupped under his knees to give himself leverage. He pumped in and out of Alec hard and fast, so that Alec could barely get a breath let alone see straight. He tossed his head back against the pillows, gritting his teeth against the pure onslaught of Magnus trying to overtake him.

“Don’t fight it, angel,” Magnus chuckled from above him. “Stop fighting .”

So he did. Because he always did what Magnus asked. He let that one muscle relax, one that held the gate shut, and got swept off in Magnus’ current. He let Magnus fuck him into oblivion, let himself surrender to it. Quite honestly, he felt like he’d surrendered a piece of his soul to Magnus in the process, and he wasn’t about to regret it.

Magnus must have felt the change because he growled out and dove down to kiss him furiously, hips still pumping, searching for his own release. Once their hot skin met, roughly sliding against one another, Alec was coming. He reached between them to jerk himself off with Magnus whispering filthy encouragement in his ear. Only then did Magnus really let go, fucking into him like an animal and making Alec gasp and writhe beneath him.

When Magnus came, he tossed his head back with a guttural shout, twisting his hips and jerking into Alec once, twice more to finish before sitting back on his heels and leveraging Alec up with him. Alec winced, feeling himself getting hard again too fast and too soon. Magnus reached between them and brought him off again, slow and easy, before flopping onto the bed next to him.

Alec immediately curled into his side, peppering kisses on his shoulders, neck, and chest. Magnus let out an appreciative hum.

“You’re perfect, angel.”

Alec hummed against his skin and bit lightly at his nipple. “I like that one.”

“What one?” Magnus asked dumbly, twisting Alec’s hair around his fingers. Alec chuckled and pushed up for a proper kiss to get his attention.
“Angel. I like that one.”

Magnus clamped his hands on Alec’s neck, kissing him thoroughly again. “You like darling and Superman, too.” Magnus had a hundred thousand pet names for Alec. He dropped them so casually and so frequently that Alec rarely batted an eye at them anymore. Occasionally though, he did prefer one over the other. His darlings, dears, and loves were tossed around in everyone’s direction. Not that Alec didn’t like them. He just preferred the quiet Alexanders to the generic names.

He wrinkled his nose. “You call everyone, darling.”

Magnus tossed his head back and crowed his victory. “So you admit it! You do like Superman.”

Alec sighed, unable to dim his chagrined smile even as he kissed the smug one off of Magnus’ face.

“Yeah, I like it,” he murmured around kisses, “but only when you say it.”

They got a little distracted with another make out session, caught up in their afterglow and giddy. Alec loved those moments; when they had nothing better to do and nowhere to be, and Magnus was calm and content without being buzzed. Eventually, though, they needed to sleep. Magnus protested that they could get a later flight, but Alec hauled him up alongside him and tucked him against his side, trapping him there.

“Behave yourself and go to sleep.”

“Ugh how boring.”

“If boring means making our international flight home on time, I’ll take it.”

“Fine, but you’re blowing me in the airplane bathroom.”

Alec thought about it for a very long minute.
“Fine.”

*

Jace agreed to pick them up at the airport, since Ernesto had a family thing going on. He immediately hugged Alec like they’d been apart for years, making Magnus scowl.

He scowled harder when Jace pulled back, looked between them, and smirked like a smarmy little twat.

“You fucked on the plane, didn’t you?”

“Jace-”

He held his hands up in defeat, “No judgment here.” But then he was frowning, looking at them thoughtfully. “I bet you guys didn’t fight once for the whole six weeks. Assholes.”

“No,” Alec instantly argued, brain skimming over the whole trip to find one significant argument they’d had which lasted longer than a second or didn’t result in sex. There had to be at least one...

“Train to Berlin!” he and Magnus said simultaneously. They high fived when Jace rolled his eyes and turned on his heel to lead them back to the car. When he had fully turned around, Alec jerked Magnus in for a kiss.
Chapter 83

Chapter Summary

Am I spoiling my own fic? Yes, that's exactly what I'm doing.

After they got back from Germany, Alec spent a long overdue afternoon with Izzy. They went shopping in the Village, got tamales at their favorite spot, and ended up at the Red Hook as always. Alec had really missed her when they were away. He missed Jace and Lydia and Max and everyone, but he and Izzy had their thing that kept them glued tightly together. Not being able to see her and talk to her regularly was grating to his nerves. Thank every god in existence for skype.

Izzy looked happier than Alec had ever seen her. She was glowing and relaxed, and she couldn’t stop chattering about her and Simon’s trip to Israel, and Simon himself. Alec was more than happy to indulge it, if only because her happiness was intoxicating and he couldn’t help but catch it secondhand.

“I know it’s so cliche, but I just love him so much. Going away was exactly what we needed, and it was fantastic to get away from the moms and work.”

“I’m happy for you, sis. Sounds like Israel was pretty great.”

“Beautiful,” she insisted with a wave of her hand. “Food was fabulous. Loved the markets. But anyway, enough about me. How are things with Magnus? I feel like we haven’t dished in forever..”

“Iz, we spent our second anniversary in a castle in Germany. Things are pretty fucking good.”

She covered his hands with her own and pouted, “Alec ;” she whined, “pretty, pretty please?”

Alec smiled at her ridiculousness as she tugged at his hands in some pathetic attempt to coerce him. Izzy was probably the only person Alec really talked to about his relationship with Magnus in any sort of detail. Everyone else got vague sketches of what happened. Unless Magnus was there, and then they got play by plays with technicolor details, including embellishments. Izzy liked to hear it straight from Alec.
“He did this thing in Germany…” he trailed off, biting his lip to hide a smile. But going off of Izzy’s smirk, there was nothing stopping his blush.

“Yeah?” she asked eagerly, all but squealing.

“Stop,” he said jabbing a finger at her. “Normal pitch and volume!” She held up her hands in defeat. He inhaled. “I mean, we’ve been together for two years, and Magnus…I get jealous when he’s around other people. All the time. But I never see that in him, you know? He’s always got this mask on when we’re around people. But on our trip, he was so territorial.”

She scrunched up her nose. “Was it bad?”

He felt his eyes widen, “It was awesome.” Izzy’s eyes lit up with utter glee. “Seriously, I’ve never seen him like that. He almost got into it with this guy--Germans are aggressive, by the way--” he bobbed his head. “It was hot. He was like an animal. God, and the sex --”

“That good?”

“Better. We couldn’t keep our hands off each other. It was crazy.”

“If I hadn’t just spent three weeks in Israel doing the same thing, I would be jealous.”

“We’ve got it pretty good, Iz. Pretty damn good.”

Izzy straightened, that diagnostic look in her eye, like she was going to cut him open and investigate.

“Are you saying what I think you’re saying?”

“I’m saying we both have great things going on here, and that’s it.”

“Jace and Clary’s wedding is ten months away.”
“That it is.”

“What are you not telling me?” She swatted at his arm excitedly. “Alec!”

He smacked her hand away. “I said nothing. No plans are afoot!”

“Afeet them! Afeet them!”

“No, no, no, he’s not ready yet. Not by a long shot.”

“I so doubt that.”

Alec rolled his eyes, “I think I know Magnus a little better than you, and trust me. He’s not there yet.”

“But you are,” she countered sneakily, catching him off guard. Alec sighed and scratched at the back of his neck. “Oh my god-”

“Hush!”

“You’re gonna ask Dad for it, aren’t you?”

“No! I don’t know! Maybe, probably next week when we have lunch.”

“Oh my--!” Alec slapped a hand over her mouth, cutting her off. When he lowered it, her eyes were bugged out, but still gleaming. “God,” she finished quietly. “When did you know?”

Alec could see that moment perfectly in his mind’s eye with such clarity that he ached for it. Just standing there with his family, Magnus leaning into his side, smiling and laughing with them like he had nowhere better to be.
“It was stupid, you know? We were at your wedding reception and Max was going off about Richie—”

“As usual,” Izzy drawled irritably.

“Right. As usual. Us against them, as usual. And Magnus was a part of that. I guess I just realized that there wasn’t an us without Magnus anymore. I want to keep it that way.”

He looked up to see Izzy beaming at him, looking happy and proud like the day he finally came out to his parents, even though it had been a shit show. That little glow of excitement poured out just like it had the day they first talked about Magnus. It poured out so much that it became a tear she had to bat away.

“Sorry, sorry. I’m just so happy for you. I was always just so afraid—” She dropped two heavy hands over his, clenching tight and looking him square in the eye. “Tell me everything.”
Chapter 84

Chapter Summary

In honor of that adorable episode, I give you my AU version of a Lorenzo introduction.

New chapters 83-84

Magnus and Alec’s social calendar was fuller than usual, considering how long they’d been gone. Magnus had a lot to make up for, and Alec had to catch up with everyone. That got put on hold for one evening, as they had to attend Magnus’ Harvard class reunion. This was no small event either; on the invite list were well over 800 graduates, most of whom were major players in US finance. In the past, guests were unofficially prohibited. For one, it would have put the guest list at a ridiculous number, and for another, it was supposed to be an exclusive event. Another bullshit elitist tradition Magnus had fallen prey to. He’d kept with the tradition, if only for the sake of practicality.

However, that night, he strolled into the Altman Building with Alec on his arm and Raphael at his side, he was feeling torn between smug and terrified. He wasn’t entirely sure how much Alec knew about his history with Lorenzo Rey, but it wasn’t pretty. This whole situation set his teeth on edge, and he had no real desire to be there. Naturally, his response was to rebel and make a spectacle of himself. He didn’t regret that decision in the least. Having Alec with him made him feel calmer, more rooted in something, and less like he had during school. He wasn’t entirely proud of his years at Harvard; he’d gone a little off the rails, partied too hard, burned too many bridges to count. Rebounding from Camille was not a pleasant process. Regardless, he’d come out of it a better man, a better person, and it led him to Alec, so he was trying not to dwell on it too much.

Alec was looking stupidly beautiful in that green suit of his. Magnus kept forgetting that he had it, and then something like this would happen, and he’d pull it out and completely throw Magnus off his game. It wasn’t doing him any favors either; Alec was drawing a lot of attention. He was a beautiful man on a bad day, but on a good day? He was dead sexy, and that damn suit did nothing to dampen it. Alec also happened to be in mother hen, protective mode, and was being just this side of too defensive because he knew Magnus didn’t want to be there. While Magnus appreciated the effort, he wasn’t sure it was going to translate into anything good.

Alec knew Magnus was on edge about seeing this Lorenzo guy. He remembered snippets of their backstory: a bad deal, a lawsuit, some beef from their days in school. He didn’t know specifics, but he knew Magnus was specifically against attending this party. Alec wished they could bail and go to that scrubby Polish diner a few blocks away to pig out on pierogi and hot chocolate instead of
dealing with these snobby, egotistical--

“Alexander?”

“What’s that?” he said, snapping out of his internal ranting. Magnus had a brow lifted in his direction and looked torn between irritation and amusement. Alec instinctively picked up his hand and kissed it, not missing the fact that Magnus immediately settled.

“I’m running to the restroom. Grab me a martini?” he asked as he walked off.

“Or you could eat something first!” Alec called back. But Magnus dismissed him with a flap of his hand. Raphael shoved his hands in his pockets, looked down and shook his head with a laugh.

“Don’t start,” Alec grumbled, not wanting to hear it. Magnus’ friends had the nasty habit of enlightening Alec as to Magnus’ previous exploits, especially under stressful conditions. Alec loved that they loved Magnus enough to thoroughly enjoy and appreciate his more spontaneous behavior, but he didn’t like the implications as to his mental health in the past.

“Twenty bucks Magnus gets trashed and breaks a vase by ten."

“Shut up, that’s not gonna happen.”

“And that is your opinion. Which is what makes it a bet.”

“I’m not letting you bet against my boyfriend,” Alec snapped as they made their way to the bar. Alec leaned up against it and raised a hand to get the bartender’s attention while Raphael scoped out the room.

“Ugh, must you always be so serious?”

“Yes. Be supportive.”

“It would be good for him,” Raphael followed up in all seriousness. “Cathartic. His blood pressure
is so high because he bottles everything up. He needs to explode every once in a while.’ That was the other thing Alec appreciated about Magnus’ friends, they knew exactly how much pressure to apply so that Magnus could let off just enough steam. They always seemed to know when he needed it the most, too.

Alec slapped his shoulder, “That’s my job.”

“Ew.”

“You said it, not me.”

“See, this is why I don’t talk to you.”

“You talk to me all the time.”

“And I regret it all the time.”

Alec chuckled and put in their order, a jack and coke for him, a dirty martini for Magnus, and a scotch neat for Raphael. He was not impressed that Alec remembered his drink, so Alec made sure to point it out and congratulate himself for remembering. Raphael was about to throw a scathing remark in his direction, when they were interrupted by Magnus’ sudden appearance between them. He slid right next to Alec, picked up his drink, and downed it in one go without a word.

“Oh boy,” Alec said, reaching for the glass and moving it out of his grasp. Magnus let it go willingly.

“Who’d you run into?” Raphael quipped, sipping at his drink.

“Martha,” Magnus rasped out. “I barely escaped with my life.” He put a hand to his chest, panting thematically. Raphael rolled his eyes and leaned forward to make eye contact with Alec.

“Martha is a two hundred pound white woman who helps run an international conglomerate and makes sweaters for her six cats in her spare time.”
“They’re named after her favorite presidents- international presidents.”

Alec immediately turned back to the bartender, “Yeah, two more?”

Magnus clung to his arm and leaned into him heavily. “Absolute angel. This is why I brought you.”

Alec pulled him against his front and pressed his lips to his temple. “Deep breath, papi,” he murmured while the bartender prepared another round. Magnus nodded absently and turned his attention to Raphael. They made small talk about who was there and who looked terrible while Magnus let Alec physically comfort him. Alec kept his hands on Magnus’ arm and back, rubbing and steadying.

Several of Raphael and Magnus’ old school pals came by, more than pleased to the see the pair of them. They talked about Will and expressed condolences, and looked absolutely intrigued by Alec’s presence.

“I can’t believe you brought a date.”

“Invite didn’t say no guests.”

“Renzos gonna lose it. We need video footage sent to the group chat, Santiago.”

“Why am I responsible?”

“Because you’re the sneakiest.”

“They got you there, Raph,” Alec said. He reached out a hand to shake theirs. “I’m Alec Lightwood, by the way, Magnus’ boyfriend.”

“I’m Gary, that’s Sam. This is also Sam, but we call him Washington. Boyfried, huh?” he said, making eyes at Magnus, swishing his shoulders teasingly. “What happened to the three-night
policy, Bane?"

“It was abolished in the early 2010s,” Magnus answered with a scowl.

“And there have been no policies for over two years,” Alec chimed in, not at all pleased with the direction of the conversation.

“My bad, my bad,” Gary said lifting his hands, feigning defeat.

“Loosen up, Lightwood, it’s only gonna get worse,” Raphael drawled.

“Magnus prefers--”

He was immediately cut off when Magnus slapped a hand over his mouth, as he was very much used to Alec spouting off salacious one-liners at inappropriate times whenever someone set him up like that. While Magnus, absolutely adored any and all salaciousness that could be sucked out of his rugged cop boyfriend, it was decidedly not a good time for him to get worked up in any manner at all.

“And that’s enough of that. Alexander, stop instigating and Raphael, stop being such an easy target, I mean honestly…”

The blond guy with a pudgy middle, Washington, crossed his arms with a kind grin pointed in Magnus’ direction. Alec immediately liked him. He seemed a lot more subdued and a lot less douchey than everyone else in the room.

“So two years, huh? That’s great, Magnus.”

Magnus reached out a hand to pat his forearm with a fond smile, “Thanks, Wash. How are Carol and the nuggets?” His smile got impossibly wider and he reached for his phone to show them pictures. Apparently, he and Carol had met in high school, got married, and moved around for each other’s school and work, taking turns while raising three really cute kids. Their story was impossibly sweet, and it was difficult for Alec to believe that Wild Magnus would have hung around a guy like Washington. But then he thought of Madzie while Magnus was gushing over how pretty their eldest was, watched that softness descend on his features, and he had to repress a smile behind his drink. Magnus was drawn to families, to stability, to the one thing he’d always
They decided to venture out and find the rest of their old group, many of whom had already arrived. Alec met a ton of Magnus’ classmates, all grinning like psychos at the prospect of Alec’s presence. What was interesting was that no one seemed to have a negative reaction to it, which probably spoke more to how much they didn’t like this Lorenzo guy than how much they liked the no guests rule. However, Alec didn’t really like that most of them were excited by how much trouble Magnus was stirring up, almost like he was the entertainment for the evening. Magnus was definitely wearing that hat. Alec couldn’t deny that, but he didn’t have to like it either.

They were hounding a waitress for hors-d’oeuvres when Magnus’ name was called out across the room. Magnus froze, going bug-eyed as the people around him snickered. Alec followed the direction of their looks because Magnus seemed to not want to move from the spot. The man in question stood with a group of people near a table of party favors. He had skin the color of chestnut and long, black hair tied back into a ponytail. He had wide features, a heavy set brow, and a pretentious-looking goatee. He was someone who seemed to exude taste and class, but there was a haughtiness in his look Alec didn’t like.

“Is that-?”

“Lorenzo Rey,” Magnus answered, “our honorable president.”

“He seems...okay.”

“Sure, he’s charming, if you like arrogant, pretentious, no taste assholes with an inferiority complex.”

Lorenzo was insistently waving him over now, and Magnus turned on his heel to make his escape. Alec stopped him with a hand to his chest, and directed him back toward his old schoolmate. They walked over together, and Alec slid his hand into Magnus’, fingers slipping under the chain draped over the back of his hand and thumb rubbing soothingly.

“Magnus,” the man all but purred, hands outstretched as if welcoming. It came across as trying too hard. Alec tried to hide a laugh at the sight of the fakest smile he’d ever seen on Magnus’ face.

“Lorenzo,” Magnus greeted shortly, looking absolutely reluctant to introduce them. Actually, he
was angling to move Alec away from him.

“"I see you brought a friend.”

Alec’s brows shot right up and he almost frowned. He couldn’t help but look down at their clasped hands and then back at Magnus, confused. Who was this fucker--? Being the ever-diligent boyfriend, Alec resisted that motion, and reached out a hand to Lorenzo.

“Yes, hi, I’m--”

“Detective Alec Lightwood. Yes, I know. Word travels fast in small circles.” He completely ignored Alec’s hand, delivering an equally fake smile as Magnus’.

He pulled his hand back, smiling thinly. “Obviously.”

“So what do you think?” he asked in a too-cheerful tone. “I think the festivities are rather up to par-” Before Alec could get a word in, Lorenzo was talking a mile a minute about the parties he’d attended in Spain and Italy, name dropping like he was being paid to, and complimenting himself at every turn. He was so busy congratulating himself that he didn’t notice Alec and Magnus trade looks.

See?

Okay, it’s bad.

Told you so.

Eventually, though, he wound down enough for Alec to actually pay him a compliment, superficial as it was. Lorenzo smiled thinly at him.

“Yes, well, it was lovely meeting you, Mr. Lightwood--”

“Detective,” Magnus smoothly corrected. He turned an irritated glare on Magnus, but continued as
if he hadn’t been interrupted.

“But I believe this is goodbye for the evening?”

The implication was plain and obvious, and it had earned several looks from the people around them. Well, people had been blatantly watching the whole thing for several minutes, as if waiting for them to beat the living shit out of each other. Magnus could take this guy, Alec thought petulantly, even in heels. And if he couldn’t, Alec would just shoot him (and no, he didn’t tell Magnus he had a pistol strapped to his ankle).

“Magnus, you know the rules,” Lorenzo said in an even passive aggressive tone flicking his eyes in Alec’s direction.

Magnus leaned in, slapping the man on the shoulder, “Yeah. Don’t really give a shit, mate.” He used that dead sexy Australian accent that occasionally slipped out when he was trying to annoy people. He reached a hand back to Alec, who took it firmly, glaring at Lorenzo like he was a bug under his shoe as Magnus led him in the direction of another group.

“I don’t like that guy.”

“Told you.”

“Can I shoot him?”

“No.”

“Hit him?”

“Not tonight.”

“Arrest him?” Alec tried again, only turning back to Magnus when he came to a stop, smile on his lips. He pressed up on his toes to kiss him.
“Maybe another time.”

*

The rest of the evening went relatively smoothly. There weren’t too many disruptions and most of Magnus’ classmates were plenty friendly to Alec. There was some discussion about having less exorbitant reunions in the future so that the guest list could be expanded. Magnus had thoughts about that, apparently, but he said it wasn’t his place to discuss it. Someone would have to submit a proposal to the board for consideration. Several people grumpily commented that Magnus had never needed a formal proposal for suggestions and that he’d always been reasonable. He noticed that Alec seemed very put off by Lorenzo and was adamantly agreeing with his classmates with no foundation for the claim. Magnus was enjoying his saltiness very much, and he got handsier and handsier as the alcohol set in. Alec accepted the affection all too willingly, pulling Magnus in closer and holding his hand. Very quietly, Magnus thought that anyone watching them couldn’t mistake their relationship for anything but loving.

All too soon, their good time was interrupted by Lorenzo calling for everyone’s attention so he could make a speech.

“I know this party isn’t nearly as--” he laughed through his nose, “fabulous as it has been in years past--” Magnus shot a hand out to keep Alec in place when he lurched in Lorenzo’s direction, that sassy, snide scowl on his lips.

“Angel--”

“Let me kill ‘im.”

“Alexander,” he faux-chastised.

“I’m gonna rip off his leg and shove it up his ass.”

“Yes, but then you’ll ruin that horrible suit of his, and that would be such a tragedy.”

“How is he still talking? Who is listening to this?”
“Just him. He likes to talk.”

Alec reached a hand over to point at someone, “Washington. Get Gary and Sam. We’re going outside.” They put their hands up in confusion and Alec jerked a thumb in Lorenzo’s direction. “I can’t listen to this guy. I mean, seriously.”

Alec grabbed up Magnus’ hand roughly and started towing him in the direction of the patio door, nudging Raphael as he went, who immediately followed. Their school friends were not far behind. Magnus clapped one hand to his wrist, head turned over his shoulder as Lorenzo’s speech was disrupted by their movement.

“Brava, Renzo, you’re an inspiration,” he said lightly, so only the people around him could hear. They all snickered.

“Yeah, to no one,” Alec hissed, earning louder chuckles. “God damn, this is worse than that fundraiser for Dogs with ADD.” That earned Magnus’ loud cackle, which was muffled only when the patio door shut behind him.

Raphael was not far behind, snickering and shoving his phone into his pocket.

“What did you do?” Magnus griped.

“I just sent Jace a video of his brother throwing a bitch fit in a crowded room full of people on your behalf.”

“I hate that you’re friends with Jace,” Alec mused, evenly.

“Oh,” Raphael agreed, sipping at his drink, “So do I.”
Alec did not like Pandemonium, and he had no qualms about saying it either. He did, however, like Magnus, and he had no qualms about setting aside his intense dislike of the club to spend time with him, especially when their schedules got too crazy. Magnus had been at the club all day, handling club business, and was now holding meetings there with individuals looking to make investments. Magnus was always drawing in investors for his various businesses, especially the smaller ones. He was exceptionally proud of some of them, and went out of his way to make sure they were well-funded to operate efficiently.

Alec loved his passion for it. He hated the hours. So he left work immediately to get to Pandemonium, hoping to get there in enough time for him to pull Magnus aside between meetings. Alas, he wasn’t. In fact, he got there when Magnus was smack dab in the middle of a heated conversation with someone in his private section. The bouncer waved Alec through, barely giving him a second glance even though people griped about favoritism, and Quincy let him into the VIP section, bumping his fist as he went. Alec tried and failed to get Magnus’ attention, so he went over to the private bar and chatted with Liam. Poor kid was overworked, but there wasn’t much that could be done about graduate school conditions.

Alec drank a beer while Liam talked about his latest project and how annoying his group mates were. He didn’t seem to need much input from Alec, so he let his attention wander. Naturally, it wandered to Magnus. He didn’t always love the nature of the conversations Magnus was having; he was a bit too charming, too fixated on the dollars and cents, but Alec did love watching him while he worked.

Magnus was always so animated when he was working someone over. Animated in his facial expressions and mannerisms. Alec thought it was sexy, the way he handled people so easily. He could always catch Magnus out in an exaggeration or when he was running a play. He’d twiddle with something or move his hands in a way that indicated he was being deceptive.

“Woohoo!” Liam said, waving a hand in Alec’s face. “Earth to Alec! Where’d you go, man?”

“Sorry, got distracted.”
He shook his head ruefully. “No joke. You and Bossman, huh? That still good?”

Alec grinned behind his beer. “Yeah, it’s still good.”

Liam nodded thoughtfully at that while he cleaned out a glass. “Good. Good. He needs that.”

Alec arched a brow and shot a quick look to Magnus. Seeing him occupied, he looked back at Liam.

“Something happen?”

“No!” Liam answered immediately, a little panicked. “Nothing specific, no. Please don’t try to fight somebody.” Alec rolled his eyes. “He’s just been stressed, is all. I’m used to reading people from behind the bar. Observation, you know?”

“Sure,” Alec said with a nod, “sure.” He locked his gaze on Magnus. “How long has the latest one been there?”

“Hour, at least.”

“Well,” Alec responded, finishing his beer and lifting his brows pointedly, “I think his turn is officially over.”

“Go get your boo, boo.”

“God, you are the worst.”

Regardless, that’s exactly what he did. He got up from the bar and walked around to where Magnus and his guest were sitting. Alec didn’t recognize the man, or the woman with him, but he sidled up to them anyway. He stood next to where they sat, putting his hands in his pockets. Magnus’ attention was instantly drawn to him, ripped away from his guests, and Alec offered him a slow smile.
“Mr. Bane, what--?” The woman whipped her head around to see Alec standing there, face scrunching up in irritated confusion. “Excuse me, can we help you?”

Alec spared her a thin smile and a flit of his eyes in her direction before turning the full force of his attention back on Magnus. He looked beautiful in the low light with neon blue highlighting his profile. His face looked soft and calm, all that animation zapped and redirected into sweetness. Alec tilted his head in the direction of the door.

“Time to go,” he said gently. The two people at Alec’s side protested immediately, but Magnus held up a hand to them, watching Alec instead.

“Maureen, I’ll have to call you tomorrow.”

“Mr. Bane--”

“Tomorrow, with bells on.”

She cast a glance between the two of them, and sighed. “Very well. Tomorrow.” She jerked her chin and she and her male associate got up to leave. Alec didn’t pay them any mind. He just took a couple steps forward and held a hand out to him. Magnus took it, got up, and allowed himself to be led out of the club.

Once they hit the Brooklyn air, Alec pulled Magnus’ arm through his, and they walked through the night arm in arm.

*

Magnus hadn’t expected Alec to show up at Pandemonium. He made absolutely no effort to hide his disdain for the club scene. Magnus liked everything about it; the self-indulgence, the heat, the constant frenetic energy, the uncertainty of it all. All of which Alec hated. Magnus actually loved that about him. Loved that he was calm and solid, a steadying force in an unforgivingly chaotic world. Maybe that was too metaphorical for a Tuesday evening, but it felt true anyway.

Once Maureen and Sam made themselves scarce, Magnus’ full attention was on Alec, who was exuding a softness that evening that boded well for the both of them. Sometimes he just got into these really attentive moods for no particular reason. Well, not any reason discernable to Magnus.
They talked as they walked, and Magnus thought it was probably one of his favorite activities. He and Alec took relatively frequent walks together, starting from their first week of dating. So very few of Magnus’ previous lovers had indulged his need to wander the way Alec did. They always wanted the car, the convenience, to stay put. Alec probably would have happily stayed put if it meant Magnus was staying with him.

“...and Izzy said that if the department could give her a good offer, she could leverage it with her boss to get a raise or better equipment. I’d rather she just leave and come work for NYPD like she wanted a long time ago.”

“Why does she stay, then?” he asked.

“Who knows? She insists it’s a loyalty thing.”

“I’m sure she’ll come to her senses.”

Alec huffed, squeezing Magnus just this side of tighter. “You’re always trying to make me feel better.”

“It’s almost as if I like you or something…”

“Yeah, it’s starting to get weird.”

Alec rolled his eyes, “You’re such a sap.”

“A sap you love.”

“A sap I do love,” Alec agreed with a sigh. He turned his head to press a kiss to Magnus’ temple. “Sap that I love, did you make more of that shampoo I like?”

“Indeed, I did.”

Alec pulled his arm out from around Magnus’ and slid it around his neck to pull him in closer.
Magnus laughed through his nose and put his arms around Alec’s middle, huddling against him.

“Then when we get home, we should take a shower and use it,” Alec murmured against his head. Magnus brought them to a full stop and jerked him into a very thorough kiss. He sank into it, his stomach warming when Alec’s arms wrapped around him. Magnus couldn’t stand it, couldn’t stand how loving and affectionate Alec was even still. Especially when he was in this mood; touchy and snuggly and too damn needy for him. Alec’s arms slid so that his hands could drift where they wanted to go. Meaning they went right for his ass. Magnus chuckled into their kiss.

“Whoa there, tiger,” he muttered, paying special attention to Alec’s bottom lip, pressing tiny, loving pecks to it. “I demand salon-quality treatment before I put out.” Magnus nearly laughed outright when Alec continued to haul him closer, hands on his ass, squeezing, so that Magnus wound his arms around Alec’s neck.

“When do you not?” Alec quipped, pressing his lips firmly to Magnus’ every time he kissed him. With a grin, Magnus swept his tongue through Alec’s mouth, humming when that animal in his chest purred contentedly. It always did when Alec was this close.

“That’s what I like to hear,” he crooned back. “Have I mentioned lately that I love you?”

“Mmm, lately.”

“I do. Thank you for saving me from work.”

“Mhmm,” Alec hummed as he continued kissing him, “but I think I was saving myself from boredom.”

“You were not bored.”

“Everything without you is boring.”

“Even murder?”

“Especially murder. You should be in law enforcement so that I can bring you with me everywhere
all the time.” Magnus leaned back into Alec’s grasp, hanging a little off his neck while he grinned up at him. “I’d apologize for being terrible, but I’m not sorry at all.”

“Me neither,” Magnus said, snagging his lips. “I love that you want me around. Love that you need me.”

“Always need you,” Alec said, hands squeezing as he kissed him again. “Need you right now. We should get home.”

Alec ripped away from Magnus, grabbing his hand and dragging him down the sidewalk at a faster pace than usual. He didn’t turn back to make eye contact or slow down, he just kept walking at a furious pace to the apartment. He didn’t even look at him in the elevator, made no point of contact except to hold his hand. This continued until they reached their own bathroom, where Alec immediately turned on the water and started to strip as he spun on his heel. They toed off their shoes and tugged off their shirts. They reached for each other’s zippers while they tried to rip off socks and unreasonably keep their mouths connected.

Magnus allowed himself to be wrangled under the hot spray of the shower. It was pure coincidence that they both loved boiling hot water for their showers. Magnus had been with plenty of people who hadn’t appreciated his temperature preferences. They pushed and pulled at each other as they maneuvered the shower, holding onto each other for balance. Magnus loved it. He loved how needy Alec was behaving. Loved that his hands were everywhere. He loved it even more when Alec lathered sandalwood shampoo into his damp hair, fingernails dragging along his scalp.

“Uooh, angel, that’s lovely.”

“Yeah?” Alec murmured near his ear.

“Yeah,” Magnus answered, pushing into his touch. It felt even better when Alec’s hands moved on his scalp under the warm spray, rinsing the suds away. Magnus ran his hands over Alec’s body, lathering up the soap and letting it rinse away clean. He paid special attention to his back, abs, and that lovely tattoo. Eventually, though, they were too needy, too clingy to focus on their shower. They kissed sloppily, giggling when the spray hit the wrong spot and ducked out of its way. Magnus pressed Alec against the shower wall, lips seeking lips, hands seeking more private places. Magnus brought Alec to full hardness, and pushed himself more fully into Alec’s grasp. They sighed happily into each other’s mouths even as their strokes became firmer and more frantic. Magnus pushed up on his toes as he came into Alec’s hand, kissing him fiercely and twisting Alec’s cock sharply, prompting his own release.
“Fuck, you are so good at that.”

Magnus hummed, “Mmm, practice,” and he kissed his lips gently. “Clean me up again?” Alec chuckled but complied.

They finished up their shower quickly after that, and tumbled into bed together, laughing and grappling with each other. It was a win-win scenario with no clear victor. They just struggled to get closer, drawn to each other’s body heat, torn between kissing and laughing. Magnus had never had this before, never had this outright, playful affection. Never fell into bed with someone, giggling like children, with no need for pretense or judgment. It still managed to shock the hell out of him and take his breath away. They made out furiously, their bodies pressing together at every possible point of contact. Magnus loved it, loved how casual it was. He could end it right there, and Alec would be content with that. It was a thought that pounded through his skull on occasion. He didn’t have to put on a show. He didn’t have to do anything he didn’t feel like doing. He didn’t have to pretend.

But he did want to continue. Alec was in such a good mood, and it seeped into Magnus’ bones. So he coaxed him onto his stomach, kissing down the back of his neck and spine, tonguing at each knob. Alec moaned beautifully for him, trying his damnedest to stay still as Magnus worked him open, but not entirely succeeding. His mouth shot off almost immediately after Magnus brushed his prostate with two fingers, and Magnus did nothing to stop him. He worked his way forward, bent so he could talk in Alec’s ear, which had him turning into putty, all but whimpering for him. It never ceased to amaze Magnus just how much Alec needed him; it never ceased to amaze him how careless Alec was about who knew it. He was perfect and warm and lovely, and Magnus’ dick leapt to attention at the thought of sinking into that perfectly lovely warmth.

“Tell me what you want, angel,” he crooned in Alec’s ear. Alec’s response was close to incoherent, more of a whine than an answer. Magnus chuckled. “Use you words.”

“You, mierda, Papi, solo tú.”

“Nuh uh, angel,” he laughed. “Hand,” he twisted his fingers inside him, earning himself a whine. “Mouth,” he bent to press a sloppy, wet kiss to the middle of his spine. “Or cock,” his other hand snaked around to stroke Alec’s leaking dick, thumbing at the tip. “En inglés, por favor.”

“Papi —” he choked out when Magnus twisted his hand around his dick firmly, making his preference clear. “Cock!” Alec spluttered. “Your cock. In me. Right now.” He twisted his head back, eyes looking positively feral and Magnus bent forward to kiss him, tonguing into his mouth suggestively as he repositioned himself.
“Fuck yes,” Alec hissed when Magnus finally sunk all the way in. He didn’t bottom very often, but Magnus always seemed to know when he needed it. At first, it had seemed like a coincidence, but when Magnus voiced his decision, citing specific reasons, it was just eerie. He just knew when Alec needed extra attentiveness. But that was just Magnus. Generous and thoughtful and always paying attention to the people around him. Alec had never honestly believed it was a skill set specific to him.

But a lot of things about their relationship were different for Alec. For one, Alec had only topped once or twice before meeting Magnus. The guys he hooked up with were so closeted or so dominant that they didn’t give a damn what Alec wanted. Alec had just wanted to be held, to feel intimate with someone. Magnus made him realize intimacy had nothing to do with sex.

Intimacy was the way Magnus always seemed to find him in a crowded room, the second he entered. Intimacy was thoughtlessly reaching for his hand when someone got too close. Intimacy was the way Magnus fussed over his clothes as an excuse to stand too close and touch him in public. Intimacy was having silent conversations among other people. Intimacy was Magnus’ hand in his hair while he read out loud to him. Intimacy was the way Magnus handled Izzy with so much gentleness because he knew what she needed as much as Alec did. Intimacy was Cat patting Alec’s cheek fondly whenever he dropped Madzie off after an outing or sleepover. Intimacy was Ragnor calling Alec to persuade him to gang up against Magnus for his own good. Intimacy was Raphael texting Alec that Magnus had a particularly trying day and needed a drink.

Intimacy was their every day. Intimacy was in their every touch and look. Alec woke up every day, loving Magnus on impulse and making the active decision to show him how much. The amount showed changed every day. The amount he loved did not.

He settled into the comfortable rise and fall of their lovemaking, pushing his hips back and babbling encouragement thoughtlessly. When Magnus finished and collapsed against his back, panting in his ear, Alec maneuvered them into their familiar sleeping position and cuddled him close, murmuring how much he loved him against his hair and skin, pressing kisses where he could reach.

When sleep came for them, all their demons had fled.
Chapter 86

Chapter Notes

Slowly and continuously writing chapters. Life is busy, folks. I'm still settling into my new apartment with my sister and my internship is exhausting.

So. A couple of short chapters as a balm for all the Dead!Alec angst we seem to be experiencing as of late. I hope no one's too upset about this week's episode. We have that stupidly lovely scene from the first S3 promos to look forward to.

Raphael was not a frequent guest at Magnus and Alec’s apartment. He came over on occasion, but usually preferred to meet them somewhere else. He claimed it was like intruding on an episode of *Full House*, and when Alec demanded to know when he’d ever watched the show, he’d immediately made himself scarce. So when Alec got home late from a case one night, he was surprised to hear Raphael’s voice coming from the kitchen. Whatever he was discussing with Magnus must have been fairly intense because they didn’t notice his entrance.

Alec was prepared to make his presence known and hit the showers, but he caught sight of them together in the kitchen and froze. Raphael was seated at the counter with a blanket around his shoulders. He had his head in his hands and was shaking it intermittently. Magnus’ soothing voice drifted out to where Alec stood, but he couldn’t make out the words. Magnus himself stood with one hand stroking Raphael’s back, the other cupping his head from the other side, and his forehead dropped to the top of Raphael’s.

To anyone else, the scene looked incredibly intimate. It wouldn’t be paranoid to think there was something romantic going on between them. The thought, however, never crossed Alec’s mind. He watched them for a long moment, concerned, his fear confirmed when Raphael’s shoulders started to shake. It hadn’t happened in some time. Raphael insisted he had a handle on it. He followed the program, went to meetings, met with his sponsor. He kept a strict schedule, kept himself well-regulated, but...well, not every day was perfect. Hell, not every day was good. Sometimes it got so overwhelming that he couldn’t function. It was a surprise to no one that in those truly dark moments, Raphael returned to the person who had pulled him out to begin with: Magnus. Magnus was so gentle and kind and decent. Magnus who offered his home and warmth without a second thought. Magnus who was soft in giving comfort, that he was damn near unrecognizable from the fierce, confident businessman he daylighted as.

With a heavy sigh, Alec dropped his bag, officially announcing his presence, and made solid strides into the kitchen. As he walked by Magnus and Raphael, his hand drifted over Magnus’ back and he pressed a kiss to his cheek.
“I’ll put the coffee on,” he said softly. Without looking up, Magnus nodded and cuddled Raphael closer.

It was going to be a long night.
There was probably nothing Alec loved better than watching Magnus work. He got so focused and intense when he was reading over reports or presentations, and always had this adorable frown on his face. Not that Alec ever told him this. In fact, he outright refused because he had no desire to let Magnus know how much power he had over him at any given moment. (Not that he didn’t know already.) Regardless, on his days off, when Magnus had to work, he inevitably followed him around to whatever office he worked from. Usually, it was the Brooklyn office because Alec was the most comfortable there. Magnus was the kind of person who would do things like that; rearrange his day so that Alec was more comfortable. Alec just wanted to spend time with him.

That particular day, they were in the Brooklyn office, with Raphael periodically in and out harassing them both, as well as their assistants. Poppy thought they were particularly adorable and would spend a lot of unnecessary time in there, interrogating Alec and making Magnus squirm. Alec liked it best when he held meetings there. Alec would lounge on the couch, keeping quiet as he watched Magnus interact and negotiate with his visitors. Most of them were pleasant. Magnus did good work, matched investors with appropriate businesses and vice versa. However, they occasionally got heated and Alec enjoyed watching Magnus handle himself in those situations.

Alec had one of his rare days off, so he was sprawled out on the couch while Magnus talked on the phone. Magnus was a weirdo and couldn’t sit still while he spoke with people on the phone. Actually, he had a Bluetooth just for the office because their home was set up with surround-sound Bluetooth speakers, so he could take calls pretty much anywhere. It was weird, for sure, but Alec had gotten used to it. And actually, he really liked watching Magnus move around his office on the phone.

He was supposed to be reading an article Lydia had recommended in the Journal of Law Enforcement, but he was far too distracted by Magnus’ dancer-like movements. Magnus’ hips seemed to move on a constant swivel, as if he were prowling through his own space. His hands drifted over solid spaces, fingers tapping over the gaps, and picking up random objects. He would twirl them through his fingers, set them back down if they were breakable, toss them aside if they weren’t. Alec couldn’t stop watching his feet either. The way he went up on his toes, planted his
feet to twist his big body around like it weighed nothing, how every movement was fluid as if
planned in advance and rehearsed instead of Magnus’ casual way of existing within a space.

It was entrancing.

Not to mention, Alec absolutely loved listening to Magnus’ voice. His natural cadence was
soothing, his tones so wide in variation, that it was always interesting. People had a hard time not
listening to Magnus when he spoke. Alec thought it was a foregone conclusion that he, of all
people, would be a little obsessive about those qualities in his partner.

At this point, the article was completely forgotten, and Alec wasn't entirely sure he was even
holding onto the journal itself anymore. He was too wrapped up in watching Magnus do a tight
spin in place and keep walking as he kept his voice even and smooth in tone. He did one more
quick turn before theatrically pressing a finger to his ear, pulling the earpiece out and tossing it
somewhere unpredictable. He outstretched his arms and walked toward Alec, flinging himself into
the space between Alec’s legs and the back of the sofa.

“That sounded like it went well,” Alec said, reaching for his knee and succeeding in getting
Magnus to angle more toward him.

“More or less,” he murmured back, as their bodies worked to get closer together. Their legs shifted
and slotted so they were pressed together. Alec slid his hands up along Magnus’ arms to force his
hands up to his hair. Magnus indulged him for all of a second, sinking his fingers into the thick of
his hair, tugging as he kissed him soundly. “Hold that thought,” he said against Alec’s lips. Alec
chased him, trying to catch his lips again and whining when he couldn’t. He held up his empty
hands in exasperation as Magnus went to the door, flashed Alec a Do Not Disturb sign, and hung it
on the outside handle before shutting and locking it. Alec tossed his head back to laugh.

“When did you get that?”

“After last time .”

Last time entailed far too much scotch after Alec got off work and a mishap when the janitor
walked in to clean up. Magnus’ non-reaction had sent Alec into an epic temper tantrum. Drunken,
but still. Alec threw an arm over his face, laughing, and Magnus continued his trek around his
office, grabbing a few things Alec couldn’t see. Then he was moving back into Alec’s space. Alec
immediately sat up to intercept him, catching him around the waist as he straddled his lap. Alec ran
his hands up and down Magnus’ sides, squeezing at his hips.
“Taking a break?” Alec teased with a smirk, fingers slipping below Magnus’ waistline. With an equally dirty grin, Magnus swiveled his hips, pulling a low groan from Alec.

“Long lunch,” he corrected, ducking his head to kiss him. Magnus tilted Alec’s head back, pressing him into the cushions as he swept his tongue through his mouth. Alec clamped his arms around Magnus’ waist, pushing his hips up into him.

“Raph got mad last time--” Magnus cut him off, kissing him with a smile. Fuck Raph, Alec laughed to himself, sinking into the exchange as Magnus had his way with him. Other than spread out under him, Alec loved nothing better than Magnus in his lap. He was just so beautiful and he moved so perfectly. He didn’t realize he was saying it out loud until Magnus huffed and kissed a trail to Alec’s ear, nipping at the upper curve.

“Then let me move for you, angel.”

Removing their clothes took time, but it was a process Magnus tended to enjoy so Alec liked to prolong it. Magnus was so quick to give in every circumstance that Alec was always trying to give back in all the little ways he could dream up. If that meant sliding off his silk shirt just enough to kiss and bite at his shoulder, then so be it. They shucked off pants and slid out of shirts, their lips coming together in an ebb and flow that felt only natural. Magnus produced lubricant like magic, and Alec set about prepping him, eyes locked on Magnus’ abdomen. Because even as Alec’s fingers pressed and twisted inside him, Magnus moved in his lap, undulating and swiveling his hips, forcing Alec’s fingers where he wanted and pushing Alec into madness. The planes of his muscles bunched and lengthened, turning and dipping so prettily that Alec couldn’t tear his eyes away from them.

Not until Magnus let out a soft laugh and tipped his chin up to tease him.

“Eyes are up here, angel.”

Alec hummed, reaching up to kiss him, “Like those, too.” Magnus laughed and kissed him again, grinding himself down against Alec. He reached down between them to take hold of their dicks and gave them a few, firm strokes.

“Shit papi,” Alec groaned, pushing into his hand and twisting his fingers to force Magnus to make the same sound. “Ready?”
“Mhmm,” Magnus hummed, wrapping an arm around his neck to kiss him while he re-positioned himself on Alec’s lap. Alec guided him, holding himself steady for Magnus to sink down on; this was old hat, practiced and smooth. Especially when Magnus felt like dancing. Alec found that often translated to Magnus riding him like he was dying for it. Alec merely held onto him, fingers skimming over the divots between his muscles, guiding his hips as he worked. It felt so good he could cry for it. Most of Alec’s sex dreams consisted of Magnus riding him like this, hard and fast, grip so tight they bruised.

Alec dipped his head forward, forehead grazing Magnus’ collarbone. He pressed kisses to his pecs and nipples, tonguing the edges and nipping at the curves. Magnus just wrapped his arms tighter around him, keeping Alec right where he was wanted, and tilting his hips forward and up to maintain friction.

“He says he’s not a girlfriend.”

“So no?”
“No.”

“That was on purpose.” Alec hummed his agreement, more focused on Magnus’ lips than his commentary. “Are you going to be nice to Sheldon?”

“I’ll be nice to him when you start calling him Simon.”

“His name is Simon?” Magnus asked lightly, feigning ignorance.

“Technically, you are his boss, so why do I have to be nice?”

“Cause I said so.”

“That’s so not fair…”
Chapter 88

Chapter Summary

Malec sparring

Chapter Notes

Hey ya'll. Just wanted to let you know I haven't forgotten my baby. (I literally have post-it notes everywhere reminding me to finish!) I've been distracted by exams and job interviews (I will be officially licensed and employed come Jul 16th!! WOOOOO). I'm also walking a new life path I wasn't expecting which has taken up the whole of my attention during my free time.

Anyhoo. Here's a little nugget while we twiddle our thumbs waiting for this season from Edom to return to us.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

If there was one thing Magnus truly enjoyed in his free time, it was watching Alec workout. He and Jace almost always worked out together. When Magnus got off work early, he'd go along to spot, judge, or time. It sounded boring, certainly, but the combination of Alec’s nearly constant state of undress and the brothers’ childish competitiveness always made for a good time. Jace was nothing to turn your nose up at either, but Magnus was extremely biased in the direction of dark chest hair and long legs. Magnus usually didn’t participate. He had a very strict routine which didn’t include hurting himself trying to outdo Jace.

What he did like is watching Alec move. The boy was built. All that rigorous military training and OCD-like adherence to that regimen had kept him in prime condition. Alec often told him that he was built like a cat, all grace and poise and quickness. If that was true, then Alec was a mountain. Solid, sturdy, unshakeable. The ocean could crash over him and he’d hold his own. The earth could shake under him and he’d erupt, destroying what came for him and those he loved. Jace was strong, sure, but Magnus highly doubted he could even ding Alec, let alone best him.

“Mags!” Jace called out, throwing a sparring cane at him. Magnus stepped from where he was leaning against the wall and caught it, glaring suspiciously. “Alec says you’re pretty good.”

To emphasize his point, Magnus swung the cane behind his back spinning and directing the end toward Jace’s head, then lifting his brows.
“I’m better than good, cupcake.” He spun the pole around his wrist so that the back end hit the floor.

Jace thrust a finger in his direction. “That sounds like a challenge to me.”

“Jace…” Alec said, half in warning, half out of exhaustion.

Magnus swung around to Alec. “Does he even know what he’s doing?”

Alec tossed a hand in the air. “No.”

He swung back, bringing both hands to the cane. “Ah. So. I shall teach instead of demolish. Step to, Jonathan.”

With a surprising amount of eagerness, Jace scrambled to get into position on the mat, looking ready and willing to be instructed. Magnus was thrown off guard a little, having expected some sort of argument or resistance. As Clary continuously reminded him, Jace was, in fact, a veritable font of surprise. Not that you would know it by looking at him. Still, Magnus felt like he had a point to prove here. From everything he’d gleaned from the Lightwood Family Dynamic (and he’d gleaned a lot), Jace was actually the golden child. He was the most spoiled, the most prized, the most praised, and overall the most widely talented. Alec was held to higher standards, naturally, as he was the eldest. But Jace had a natural grace, aptitude, and confidence Alec hadn’t developed until well after his formative years. To demonstrate so casually that Alec could best his brother would be all too easy. So Magnus passed his pole off to Alec with an easy grin.

Not that he was petty or anything.

Jace was good, Magnus would admit that much. He was strong and fast, and he definitely knew how to handle a weapon. But there was a natural intuition which came into play for sparring this way. Anticipation. You had to know both your weaknesses and your perceived weaknesses. Where would an enemy strike? Would they strike because it was a true weak spot or because they believed it was weak? Magnus highly doubted Jace had ever been taught he had a weak spot anywhere.

And his timing was off. He went too fast or waited too long. This wasn’t like boxing where you waited for an opening. You had to create an opening. So when Alec had Jace pinned to the floor by the throat for the third time in a row. He took a step back and looked at him appraisingly.
“What’s wrong?” Jace asked, looking worried and out of breath. Magnus pointed at him, wagging his finger.

“You’re missing something. Give,” he flapped his hand, indicating he wanted the cane.

Jace did so. Eagerly, Magnus thought idly, and almost like he was preparing to watch a show. He actually sat down on the edge of the mat, cross-legged, watching attentively. Magnus ignored the strange fondness in his gut and focused on Alec. Alec who was smirking like the arrogant, capable, flirty asshole he would have been if someone like Magnus had been around to validate him all his life.

“You sure you wanna do this right now?” Alec drawled, twirling the damn cane around like he was born with it attached to his arm.

Magnus scowled, doing his own little maneuver people likened to an air bender from that cartoon show everyone loved so much.

“We are demonstrating, Alexander,” he shot back, circling him with a swagger. “Our usual menu is not on the agenda.”

Alec followed that circle, eyes locked on him. “Oh really?”

“Yes, really. I am here to teach, Alexander. Not indulge your libido--”

“Boo!” Jace heckled from the sideline, cupping his mouth like a jerk, “boring gay stuff. Fight already!”

“There he is,” Magnus muttered. Alec tilted his head in confusion, but Magnus waved him off. “All right Jace, first thing: every point has a counterpoint.” He brought his cane around to Alec’s vulnerable side, cutting it short, to stop the blow. It didn’t matter, Alec had already blocked him. “You should always anticipate that your blow will be blocked and prepare for their counter,” even as he said it, Alec was proving his point, trying to land a blow to Magnus’ now exposed neck. Slowly, they moved through the positions, demonstrating to Jace what it would look like at a slower pace. Jace asked a lot of questions and Magnus moved Alec around to demonstrate better, essentially using him as a mannequin. Magnus quite liked moving Alec as he pleased.
“So show me,” Jace said after a while, crossing his arms. “Show me what it really looks like.” Magnus frowned at him, causing him to shrug. “I can’t imagine Alec learned all this by going slow. Show me what it looks like.”

When Magnus turned, Alec was already waiting to catch his eye. He found a glint there that was sexy and irritating at the same time.

“Fine. Alexander?”

“Oh no, I insist.”

“Your mistake.”

Just like that, they were in the thick of it, striking, parrying, countering in a blur. Alec was very obviously expending more effort on Magnus than he had on Jace. That was expected. Magnus hadn’t expected to enjoy that fact so much. They moved together fluidly, point and counter, strike, block, strike. Alec pulled back panting.

“Hand to hand?” he asked with a smirk.

Magnus laughed. “Thought you’d never ask.”

They tossed their canes aside, moving into a grappling stance. Alec moved first, always the aggressor, and Magnus defended. He got the upper hand, however, and knocked Alec to his back. It took all of a second for Alec to pull Magnus down alongside him, and then they were full on wrestling on the floor, each trying to get enough leverage to flip the other. Magnus got it first and pinned Alec with a self-satisfied huff.

“Gotcha.”

Alec scowled with an eye roll, making Magnus laugh and smack a kiss to his cheek.
“Is this foreplay for you guys?” Jace called out from the sidelines.

“Mature, Jace,” Alec quipped at the same time Magnus said, “Absolutely, it is.”

* *

Jace watched Alec and Magnus spar with his phone in his hand. He was getting some pretty amazing photos and took a couple of videos as well. All for the sake of posterity.

Clary and Izzy had respective secrets, which they had been unable to keep from each other. So Jace and Simon knew too. That was the thing. Izzy wasn’t good with secrets. She’d let slip that Uncle Magnus was already in the works. Jace wanted these kids to know just how badass their uncles really were. Because they would be great uncles. Better fathers. But great uncles too. If a family full of cops couldn’t keep the little ones safe, then their badass uncles would burn the city down to do it.

Chapter End Notes

Rant ahead. Please skip if necessary:

I HATE WIPs. I really do. Which is why I hate myself for this fic so much. Because people lose interest, both in writing and reading it. No joke. I went through my old Destiel faves (holla to all the SPN fans out there) and was so DAMN CERTAIN this one fic was a follow through. So certain. NOPE. 203 chapters in and the author just up and left it hanging during the middle of a FRIGGIN BATTLE SCENE. I'm livid right now. I completely forgot she left it like that. Maybe I was still reading it before she quit? I don't know. I'm mad. So I apologize to anyone who feels that way about this fic. I'm gonna do my damnedest to finish it soon.

Anyway...have a lovely evening ya'll. Blessed be!
Alec had been nothing but excited all damn day. They caught and booked a killer, closed two other investigations, had a long lunch, and now he was racing home to meet Magnus, Max, and his “girlfriend” to head out to the Hamptons for the week. He hadn’t been this giddy in a damn long time. Germany was great. Germany was fantastic. But Alec was finally getting to show Magnus something new for once. It was a great feeling. Not to mention all of his siblings would be there, with no parental pressure, no job pressure, just sun and beach and an overload of Magnus.

He jogged through the lobby of their building and took the stairs instead of the elevator. He was too energized to sit still. It was a lot of floors, but whatever. He needed the exercise anyway. When he finally got to the penthouse floor, he punched in the code to open the door, strode quickly through the foyer, barely stopping when he realized (slightly annoyed) that their door wasn’t locked. Alec immediately caught whiff of Magnus’ presence in the kitchen, so he tossed his duffel, and walked straight up to him.

* 

Magnus didn’t even hesitate to sling his arms around Alec’s neck and give his weight over as Alec lifted him onto the counter. Max was young, not dumb. It was very much a practiced move. There was hardly a pause before they were kissing like they hadn’t seen each other in months.

Max Lightwood had several reactions to this. 1) Astonishment, as Alec’s entry had been rather abrupt and no words were exchanged before the subsequent makeout session happening in front of him. 2) Disgust, because it was Alec. 3) Respect, because Magnus was not some tiny chick who could easily be lifted, and it was pretty damn impressive that they were still going at it like horny teenagers after 2 years. 4) Nausea.
“I know this is your place, but damn, get a room!” Max snapped, throwing his hands up to shield his eyes. Cute gayness or not, that was his big brother shoving his tongue down somebody’s throat. He did not need nightmares, no thank you.

Alec ripped his mouth away immediately, and dropped his head to Magnus’ shoulder. Max would have laughed if he didn’t want to vomit. Alec didn’t even look all that embarrassed. Actually, he just looked tired. Which, Max thought very, very quietly, was a nice change of pace. He’d always thought his older brother was prudish or just judgemental. Jace and Izzy certainly didn’t have problems expressing their sexuality, and Max knew damn well how to have a good time. And yeah, sure, the whole gay thing was a big part of Alec’s former behavior, but it wasn’t like he’d changed at all after he came out. He seemed...relieved after everyone knew, sure, but not...happy. Alec didn’t start acting like himself, the Alec Max had grown up adoring, until after he met Magnus. So to Max’s mind, Magnus could do no wrong. The guy could burn the city down, and Max would defend him with his last breath. Whatever the guy had done to his brother, well, it was nothing short of pure magic.

“He’s early,” Alec grumbled quietly into Magnus’ shoulder. Magnus was stroking his brother’s back soothingly, not looking remotely contrite.

“First time for everything.”

“Coulda told me.”

“Well, that’s not fun.”

“All right sickos,” Max complained. “Wrap it up, grab your stuff, we gotta go get Paula.”

Alec stood up straight, looking right ahead at Magnus. And Max would go to his grave testifying that they pulled the same face, turned to look at him in unison, and said the same damn thing in the same damn tone.

“Paula ?”

* 

Alec did not like Paula. At all. Magnus didn’t need more than two seconds to be around them with Max’s back turned to figure that out. Well, Max didn’t even have to have his back turned, Alec was just that obvious. To Magnus, of course. Everyone else described Alec as being “stoic” or having a
resting bitch face, which meant they learned nothing about how he really felt. While true, his
Alexander had several painfully obvious tells.

1) Narrowing of the eyes. If Isabelle went into “diagnosis” mode, then Alec went into “cop”
mode. Magnus had watched Alec interact with criminals long enough to know this was the first
indication that someone was about to be interrogated. 2) Flared nostrils. Alec could keep a fake
bitch grin on his face all day long, but those nostrils would flare out the second he smelled trouble.
3) Parade Rest No. 4. Now, this one was far more subtle because Alec went into parade rest quite a
bit. Magnus had determined that Alec had five different types of parade rest stances. Military,
work, parents, hostile, and uncomfortable. The first three were easy enough to determine just based
on the height of his hands. The higher up his back, the more focused he was. Uncomfortable
parade rest was simply tension in the shoulders as he tried to appear more relaxed. With his hostile
parade rest, however, there was a certain aura about him which screamed...how had Izzy put it?
Right. *I could kill you in less than five seconds and no one would ever find your body.* Maybe it
was pheromones? Who knew? The point was that these things were very easily detectable to the
right set of eyes, and those eyes currently belonged to Magnus.

“Darling,” he said, sliding between poor Paula and Alec, intercepting him before he could respond
to her inane irrelevant comment. “Why don’t we let Max drive and Paula could sit up front with
him?” He pushed up closer to Alec suggestively and batted his lashes, “I’d rather cuddle with you.”
And it would be safer for other travelers, too, given Alec’s current mood. Something in Alec
seemed to fizzle out and untangle because he relaxed and nodded before tossing Max the keys.
Magnus nearly laughed out loud at how stupidly astonished the poor boy looked. Someone was
going to need Alec Lightwood 101 if they wanted to survive a prolonged vacation with him. Yeesh.

*A*

Alec wasn’t entirely sure that if Magnus wasn’t in the car that he wouldn’t have driven them right
off a bridge. His suggestion to let Max drive was an excellent one. Because Paula was...in short...a
terrible, terrible person. He’d thought Simon was flighty and dumb, but she really did take the
cake. He owed Simon so many apologies. Why was Max even with someone like that? Not that
lack of intelligence was inherently a flaw, but compound it with vapid, materialistic self-absorption
and behold! A monster. Alec didn’t even need more than a minute to suss that out, and Max was
sleeping with her. At least Simon was sweet and kind and apparently good at his job. Once in the
car he thought for a second that he was being horribly, horribly sexist, but then she started *talking*,
and even Magnus couldn’t control the eye rolling. And Magnus was usually pretty good about that
sort of thing. Alec decided right then and there that he’d have liked her a lot more if she could just
keep her mouth shut. Unfortunately, she kept up a steady stream of useless chatter all the way out
of the city.

The redeeming part of the drive was having Magnus pressed up against him. They didn’t usually
have to sit separately, as Ernesto consistently drove them everywhere, so it would have been
annoying to be separate and listening to this nonsense. Magnus had a firm grip on his hand, thumb
strok ed soothingly. Not for the first time, Alec wished they could have telepathic conversations,
and not just the ones Clary claimed were telepathic. That would have made the whole thing less terrible. Still. Proximity would have to do. He dipped his head so he could press his nose behind Magnus’ ear. He smelled really good. Magnus always smelled really good. That was a quarter of his seduction process. Alec had only recently been informed that Magnus wore certain scents when he wanted certain things from him. Mostly sexual. Or when he was trying to convince him to do something he didn’t want to do, like talk to his father or go to a party. Alec was just thankful that Magnus had yet to decide to use his powers for evil. Because he was fairly certain that he would walk right into hell (or a bar fight) if Magnus asked him to.

Regardless, all of that was much too heavy to be thinking about, so he focused on telling Magnus stories about their times at the beach house. Max’s distorted little kid version was pretty hilarious too. Jace was always getting into mischief when they were there. Not that it was any different than at home, there was just much less supervision and more opportunities.

“Have I mentioned that your darling brother is a menace?” Magnus said with a chuckle after his story about Jace pouring 50 pounds of blue and green discount Kool-Aid into a neighbor’s hot tub, dying him an interesting shade of green for a weekend. All of this in retaliation for insulting Izzy on the beach one afternoon. It really was no wonder that Jace became a great cop because he knew exactly the sort of weird shit people would do to get back at each other for perceived slights.

“He has a gift,” Alec said with a fond smile, earning him a kiss to the corner of his mouth. He readily would have responded and escalated that sentiment, if it wasn’t so obvious that Paula was watching them in the rearview mirror.

It was going to be a long week.

*

Magnus was not at all surprised at how stunningly chic and yet low key the Lightwood’s beach house was for a few reasons. Supposedly, Robert spent very little time there, which meant everything there was essential Maryse Lightwood and what she thought her children would enjoy. It wasn’t this big sprawling mansion with perfectly manicured lawns and modern lines. It was big, for sure, but more old-fashioned and homey. Magnus thought it was absolutely perfect.

Clary, Jace, Izzy, and Simon were already there, and in the kitchen making a racket. The first three were bickering about food and shooting down every recommendation Simon made. Max dragged Paula there, bags in hand, already shouting out his preferences. Magnus was fairly certain Alec would want to join the fray, but instead, he took Magnus by the hand with a small smile and dipped his head in the direction of the stairs.
Magnus’ breath caught in his throat for just a second in that moment. Alec looked so peaceful and relaxed in the soft afternoon light. Those hazel eyes of his lit up and soft around the edges. By freaking god, he was beautiful. It really wasn’t fair. Magnus had to take a second just to shake himself out of his dumb stupor so that he could follow him.

Alec’s room was up the stairs and all the way at the end of the hall, to the left of the large compass rose window. Alec ducked in, flipping on the lights and tossing their bags into a nearby chair. Magnus hardly registered him fussing with the toiletries as he went to the window. It overlooked the water, probably like most of the rooms did, but only half of the view was water. The other half was a garden with winding paths and mature trees. It faced East, so the sun would come up over the water and would brighten their room.

With a smile, Magnus felt two arms slide around his waist, pulling him back into a big, familiar body. Alec’s nose drifted over his hair, his lips over his ear and down to his neck. This was so familiar for them, standing like this. Magnus still couldn’t believe how touch starved Alec had been when they first met, how eager he’d been to make and maintain physical contact. Couldn’t believe he still felt that way. About him.

“What are you thinking about so hard?” Alec murmured against his skin. Magnus inhaled sharply, releasing it slowly.

“That I was told there was a hot tub, and yet I don’t see one.” Magnus nearly laughed outright when he felt Alec’s face scrunch up.

“We are not sharing a hot tub with Jace. Ever. I do have a pretty amazing shower…”

“We are definitely going skinny dipping.”

“This is not Germany-”

“All the better because you’ll know the best spots,” Magnus said, turning around in his arms and placing his hands on Alec’s chest to feel closer. Alec rolled his eyes, but there was a slight flush in his cheeks which meant he wasn’t totally put off by the idea.

“I know… one place.”
Magnus waggled his brows, “Somewhere Jace took girls?”

“One, ouch,” he said without heat. Magnus snorted. “Two, no. It was somewhere I used to go to be alone.” He bobbed his head. “My Abuela would find me out there, told me I lived in my own head too much.”

“Wise woman,” Magnus murmured. Their conversation was interrupted by a sharp shriek, following by an uptake in arguing. They both sighed, shaking their heads before dropping them together.

“I love them, I do, but I really hate them.”

“Yep.”

“Can we hide here for a bit?”

“Yep,” Alec agreed, dipping his head to catch his lips for a kiss. Magnus met it eagerly. They really needed this week together. Alec had been so stressed with work, and Magnus had been getting antsy as hell, feeling cooped up and claustrophobic under a microscope. He moved his hands over Alec’s neck and shoulders, feeling the tension there and making very detailed plans for getting rid of it. He was cut off from that line of thought, however, when Alec’s hands slipped up under his shirt, smoothing over his hips and dipped his fingers beneath the waistband of his pants. Magnus groaned.

“Don’t start something you can’t finish.”

Alec smirked against his lips, nipping at them playfully as he walked them over to the bed.

“Who says you won’t finish?” He stopped them just short of the foot of the bed, tightening his grip so that Magnus was trapped against him. Inwardly, Magnus snorted at the thought. Trapped. Like he was going anywhere. He reached down for the button on Alec’s pants, making quick work of it before getting to his own as Alec focused his attention on his pulse point, grazing teeth and tongue over the sensitive skin. They tumbled onto the bed as Alec tried to step out of his pants and shoes, making Magnus bark out a laugh before it was smothered out by heated kisses.

Magnus sighed as he settled on the bed, hands reaching for Alec's hair as he set about sucking
Magnus' brains out through his dick. His mouth was greedy as it moved over him, hands straining against his skin. Magnus honestly couldn't think of a single damn person who enjoyed getting him off as much as Alec. Couldn't think of a single damn person who was so good at it. Just served to further emphasize the point of quality over quantity. As he came, all Magnus could see was the glint of sunlight off of Alec's black hair, all he could hear was the light twinkling of wind chimes, and all he could feel was Alec's heat as he moved up along his body.

*

In the kitchen, the bickering over dinner had dwindled down to a dull roar as Jace and Clary duked it out over which pizza place to order from. Everyone had stopped listening to them when they heard laughter and creaking noises from upstairs.

“You’ve got to be joking,” Max whined, slumping in his seat.

“Are they--?” Izzy asked, lips spread wide in a smile.

“Can they never just go somewhere?” Simon asked reasonably. “Have a normal conversation, do something involving clothes?”

Jace was grinning like a proud dad at little league. “The only thing my brother does with Mags’ clothes is take ‘em off like a goddamn champ!” He had to dodge Max’s leg sweeping out to kick at his knee.

“I think it’s sweet,” Clary said firmly.

“Agreed,” Izzy seconded. “Speaking of,” she purred at Simon, clutching at his shirt, “the hot tub--” There was a loud squeak from the floor as Jace and Clary, hand in hand, darted from the kitchen in the direction of the door. “We called dibs!” Izzy shouted after them, irritably.

“Not if we get there first!” Jace called back.

“Finders keepers!” Clary chimed in.
Izzy and Simon shared a look, having a silent conversation, with nods and dips of their heads, for all of two seconds before they were chasing after the other couple with something to prove. Paula watched all of this, confused, before turning to Max for explanation.

He shrugged.

“My siblings are sexual deviants?” he offered weakly.
Chapter 90

Chapter Notes

My dudes. It is mid-July. CAN YOU BELIEVE?
I can't and I cannot believe it's taken me this long to finish these damn chapters. Life
gets crazy, laptop chargers go missing, and I can only tap out so much on Word Doc
on my phone. Sigh.
Anyhoo. This monstrosity of a story is ridiculously far from over (as if you won't be
able to tell from all the dino-dung size spoilers I'm dropping all over the place). I'm
extremely thankful and grateful to everyone who's been with me through this ride.
You guys have been pretty awesome, and it's so lovely to know that people enjoy your
work. I encourage everyone to spread the love and leave comments for writers and
artists whenever you can. We writers are a fickle, insecure lot, and loud love is a part
of the process.

Many thanks and blessings, and don't forget there's a new moon this Friday the 13th!

It was early evening before they all gathered together again. This is what Alec loved about these
family vacations. They didn’t live in each other’s pockets. They were free to do whatever they
liked during the day, and they all came back together again for dinners. This way they didn’t want
to murder each other at the end of the week.

When Alec and Magnus finally came down, the others were gathered in the living room and Jace
was walking through the door with a stack of pizza boxes. Before he could even get to the kitchen,
Clary was snatching the top box, which was the smallest, and catching his chin to kiss him. Alec
shook his head when Jace abandoned his progress to the kitchen in favor of kissing her back.

“Why does she get her own pizza?” Max whined, relieving his brother of the pizza with a scowl.
Jace jerked his head in Max’s direction with an absolutely vicious look on his face. Alec
snorted.

“Do you want tuna and broccoli pizza?” he sneered. “No? Really? That’s why she gets her own
fucking pizza!” Clary cackled and dragged him into the kitchen.

“Okay dude chill,” Max grumbled looking through the boxes. Jace flopped down in the chair at the
head of the table, folding his arms in something resembling a pout. The others filtered in, grabbing
plates and drinks, snatching chairs before their rivals could get them.

“I will not. I’m gagging just thinking about it.”
“That is...revolting, biscuit,” Magnus said sliding into Alec’s lap and placing a plate stacked with slices in front of them.

“Must you two always be plastered together?” Izzy teased, folding her slice.

“Yes,” Alec answered stubbornly, gripping Magnus tighter.

“Alexander is to be my cushion for the next two days.”

“Why-?” Max slapped a hand over his girlfriend’s mouth.

“Do not. Ask them. That.”

“We are hardly that bad…” Magnus drawled lightly.

“Not you. Him,” Max threw a finger at Alec, who snorted.

“Seconded,” Jace said.

Magnus snaked an arm back so that his hand drifted up to Alec’s neck, fingers brushing against his ear.

“I find it endearing.”

“Aww,” Paula said. “How sweet.” She swatted Max’s arm. “You’re never that sweet to me.”

“We’re not gay soulmates. Hush and eat your pizza.”

People laughed at that. Paula didn’t. But Alec felt a little smug about it, so he slid his hand under
Magnus’ shirt and let his nails drift over his boyfriend’s skin. He did want to focus on what his siblings were saying, but he was working with a Magnus withdrawal. They just got so busy and a quick fuck upstairs before dinner wasn’t enough to quiet him. Magnus didn’t seem too focused on them either, as a matter of fact. He kept feeding Alec pizza, slapping Max’s hand away from their shared plate. His other arm was slung around Alec’s neck, fingers occasionally drifting up to his hair. Alec was sure that his siblings were dropping commentary into their conversation, but he didn’t really care. His ears did prick up, however, when Clary was embarrassing Jace.

“Jace likes to be the little spoon,” she told Izzy with a snort. Izzy had to cover her mouth and look away.

Alec and Max immediately responded, “Everybody likes being the little spoon.” They looked at each other and silently high fived. If Alec missed Magnus’ eye roll, then he definitely caught it in his voice.

“Alexander *insists* on it. And that I rub his head.” He pointed at Izzy. “And I blame your mother for that. I should never have indulged him the first time, but I didn’t *know* .”

Izzy was nodding with a rueful smile on her lips. “Mom would let the boys lay on her lap and rub their heads for *hours*. It was ridiculous. We will spare our children’s future spouses that same fate.”

“Oh no,” Magnus said gravely, “Any child of mine will be spoiled rotten. Head rubs for days.”

Everybody laughed and teased Magnus about how ridiculous and amazing he would be as a father. Alec stayed quiet, but couldn’t help the stupid smile on his face as he watched Magnus declare himself the most competent with children out of the bunch.

“I’ve had *practice* !” he bandied back. “I have my goddaughter for fuck’s sake!”

“He is very good with Madzie,” Alec conceded with a sage nod.

“Thank you-!”

“But I am better.” This pulled out a huge protest from everyone around, citing all of Alec’s run-ins with children. Magnus was spluttering in his protest and need to defend Alec, which was amusing
all by itself.

Even while they teased him, Alec met Izzy’s gaze over the table. She was watching him intently with a wry grin stretched across her lips. When he looked at her, Izzy tilted her head expectantly, as if waiting for a specific answer. Alec just shrugged, as he didn’t have one for her. They’d have to talk later.

*

That moment came the next morning before the sun rose. He and Izzy had a long-standing tradition of taking morning beach walks together because the rest of their family were lazy bums who couldn’t be bothered to get out of bed before 10 AM.

Alec woke himself fairly early, the sky was still gray outside, and Magnus was out cold. He rolled out of bed to find his gym shorts and tank top he wore pretty much constantly on vacations at the Hampton house. His movement must have disturbed Magnus because he stirred a little, mumbling something Alec couldn’t make out. He went over to Magnus’ side of the bed, crouching down in front of him and stroking his hand over his hair. Magnus mumbled something else, but didn’t open his eyes. He was probably grousing about Alec being a morning person and disturbing his beauty sleep. Alec smiled. Magnus was so calm and still when he slept that Alec almost couldn’t believe it. Even pictures of Magnus were alive and dynamic, full of movement. Almost like he couldn’t contain himself. Sleep was his only respite, and Alec absolutely loved watching him sleep. Magnus grumbled again, so Alec dipped forward and kissed him lightly.

Magnus’ response to his light presses was sluggish but immediate. He instinctively turned into Alec, nuzzling their mouths together without opening his eyes, hand reaching for its favorite place on Alec’s neck thoughtlessly. Alec indulged him a little for just a moment, but then murmured against his lips that he should go back to sleep, that he would be back. Magnus nodded, eyes still closed, and brushed their lips together once, twice, before burying himself back into the sheets and pillows. Alec smiled, pulling his shirt over his head, and watched him there for a long moment before going to meet Izzy.

They didn’t start talking until half a mile into their walk.

“Remember when we would sneak out to do this when we were kids?”

“Jace snored too loud. That was my first alarm clock.”
“I miss it sometimes. When it was just you and me against everybody.”

“Me too,” he said with a smile. “But I like this better.”

She beamed at him. “Me too. Even if I wish you’d be nicer to Simon.”

“I am nicer to Simon.”

“Three out of ten at best.”

“It used to be negative three, so that’s progress.”

“I do appreciate that. Speaking of. Where are we on our plan?”

“He’s not there yet. I don’t know. I thought about doing it here—”

“Really!?”

“But I decided not to. It’s like—I don’t know. He’s not quite there yet. It’s like he’s waiting for something. I don’t know.”

“I say you just sweep him off his feet, whisk him away to some small town upstate, and tie the knot there.”

“Magnus would want a huge party. I’m not gonna deny him that.”

“I don’t understand you at all.”

“I don’t understand it either! I just know that I’ll know when he knows. That’s it.”
Their walks always ended up being 10 miles round trip. They liked going by their old haunts and going through the same stories over again. It was nice, pleasant, and it made them both feel a little less guilty about their less than rigorous workouts while on vacation. So as they were coming back to the house, it was almost 8 AM. Much to their surprise, everyone seemed to be awake, as Magnus, Simon, Clary, and Paula were gathered on the beach. Doing...yoga? Alec did a quick sweep, looking for his brothers, an ingrained habit, only to find them sleeping on the deck chairs. Jace had sunglasses on and his arm thrown to one side, and Max slept with his hands clasped on his chest and a hat on his face.

“Our brothers are idiots,” Izzy hissed with no small amount of fondness in her voice. Alec agreed, but his attention was fully on Magnus attempting to teach the others a few yoga poses. Clary was a natural, of course, because like Jace, she quickly took to any activity she was taught. Paula couldn’t seem to master the basics and kept falling and laughing, which distracted Clary long enough for her to break concentration and lose the pose. If Magnus was irritated by this, it didn’t show. Besides, he was too busy correcting Simon, who seemed to understand, arbitrarily, how to get into position. Magnus kept making minute adjustments, each bringing increasing looks of distress to Simon’s face.

Then Magnus dipped into a forward bend to transition to something more complex, and Simon quickly copied. Neither Izzy or Alec noticed that the other had tilted their head for a better look.

“Damn.”

“My boyfriend is hotter than your husband.”

“Simon has a better ass.”

“Do you see his arms? Magnus’ bicep has a bicep.”

“Simon’s face is nicer.”

“Not true. At all.”

Simultaneously they said “His di—” They stopped short, looking at each other, and did a quick comparison with their hands. Alec won, barely, but he won.
Chapter 91

Chapter Summary

New Chapters 90-91

Everyone spent the day on the beach together. But Clary and Magnus decided they were going to pull out the tandem bike and go for a ride. Jace insisted that they didn’t know where they were going and would get lost, but all it did was light a fire under Clary’s stubborn butt. And off they went. The damn ginger stole his boyfriend. Alec tried not to be too annoyed, but he was a little sulky. Max called him out for it when he stayed on the deck instead of putting a chair in the sand. To retaliate, Alec got Jace to gang up on Max and throw him off the dock into the water in the especially seaweed-filled area.

Eventually, everyone came in for lunch, and Alec was already in the kitchen cooking. Alec wasn’t sure what had gotten into Magnus, but he immediately came over and situated himself between Alec and the counter. He hung from Alec’s neck as he kissed him. Alec kind of forgot they had an audience and lifted Magnus onto the counter to bring them closer.

“Boo! Get a room!”

“Hey, I did not sign up for Cute Gays the sequel!” Max shouted. “Cut that shit out!”

Magnus scowled and pecked Alec’s lips once more. “No more group vacations.”

“Agreed.”

Magnus stayed perched on the counter while Alec worked just to spite the rest of them. Alec may have been a little too pleased and kept allowing his hand to drift back to Magnus’ leg, fingers reaching or lightly squeezing. He couldn’t help it. Especially not when Magnus was shooting him glowy smiles and hooded glances. Nope. Couldn’t be helped.
The next few days were full of sun and relaxation and Magnus overload. They spent too much time in the sun, mocked Clary for not being able to step outside of shade due to her gingerness, took the boat out, water skied, and generally loafed about. Alec just liked that Magnus insisted on sharing a lounger with him, sitting on his lap, and was entirely too obnoxious with the PDA for his family's tolerance level. Alec, however, loved it. Ate it up. Magnus was rarely relaxed enough to overindulge around other people.

Alec watched him with the others, playing cards and drinking just a little too much. Well, Jace, Paula, Max, and Magnus were drinking. Magnus and Clary had ganged up on Jace and Izzy in euchre and were kicking ass. Alec was more than happy to sit back and observe. But eventually, he was feeling a little overstimulated, so he snuck outside for some fresh air. He almost got away with it, until Simon came up the stairs of the deck. He stopped short, looking at Alec in sheer panic before hiding something behind his back.

"Shit," he muttered. Alec lifted his brows.

"Are you--are you smoking?"

Simon sighed and brought the cigarette around to his lips, taking one last puff before extinguishing it, delicately blowing the smoke from his lips.

"Yeah, don’t tell your sister."

"Lie smoking? Really, Lewis?"

But Simon just shrugged, unaffected and tossed the butt in the trash can without reacting much to it. Truth be told, Alec was a little impressed. Not very many people outright went against his sister and lived to tell the tale. Smoking was a pretty big issue for her, too.

"Habit I picked up in grad school. I quit…" he bobbed his head, "mostly, but I still indulge every once in awhile."

Alec nodded and moved forward to put his forearms on the deck railing. "Gotta say, doesn’t sound like you."

Simon barked a laugh, coming to stand next to him, "I’m in a band, Alec. Not that you’d
remember that since you haven’t been to one of my shows in years.”

Alec winced, knowing that was absolutely true. He reached a hand up to scratch his neck sheepishly.

“Ye-ah, sorry about that. I kinda...hooked up with the manager at the bar where you play?”

“What!?” he squawked indignantly. As if he were supposed to be privy to every part of Alec’s personal life.

“Yep, the night I met you. Got trashed. Never went back.”

“That does explain a few things.”

Alec shrugged. “There’s sort of unspoken rules about that kind of thing. It was his place. I moved on, you know?”

“No,” Simon answered with his eyes wide and mouth in an “o” shape. “No, I do not know how the seedy underbelly of the closeted gay world works.”

“Nice.”

“Thanks. And thanks for telling me. I pretty much thought you just hated me.”

“Nah.”

They stood together quietly for a long while, watching the water as the sun went down. This was probably the longest Alec had spent in Simon’s company alone without someone else running interference. It wasn’t terrible. He and Simon actually stood there chatting quietly about Simon’s band, and music in general. Since meeting Magnus, Alec had been more culturally assimilated in some areas, music being one of them. Unsurprisingly, he liked older genres, folk, jazz, swing, blues, and Motown. Magnus was delighted by this and went out of his way to indulge his interest. Simon actually seemed impressed by some of his favorites. Alec just assumed that Simon was used to being around hipsters, so hearing a former Marine/cop talk about Sarah Vaughn and Ella
Fitzgerald must have been jarring.

“So you do realize you’ve gone nearly fifteen minutes without insulting me,” Simon said teasingly. Alec snorted, realizing that was probably true.

“You do realize the last guy my sister dated got her hooked on heroin?”

“I do. I do know that. But I don’t even know what drugs look like and I married her, so I thought maybe you’d chill a bit. Not totally...just a bit.”

Alec sighed, “Yeah well, my father married my mother, and look how that turned out.”

“Still pissed?”

“He calls, I don’t answer. He leaves a message to call him back. I don’t. We have dinner on Sunday and pretend I never got the messages.”

“So...that’s a yes?” Alec scoffed but didn’t answer. “My dad died when I was 8. I was old enough that I still remember him but too young to remember details.”

Alec automatically rolled his eyes. “I get it. I should appreciate him, right? Because he’s my father and the only one I’ve got and I should be grateful he’s around at all--”

“No.”

“No?”

“I hated my dad for years. Literal years. I blamed him for dying and for leaving us. Hated him for not taking better care of himself.” He huffed a laugh. “I still hate him some days.”

“I’m sorry,” Alec said weakly, not sure what else to say about it.
“Don’t be. I grew up. I deal cause I have to, but you? Shit. I don’t want to think about what it’s like for you guys. Having bombs dropped on you like that once you’ve gotten used to things.”

Alec pulled in his lips, biting at the lower one. “Iz said you’ve helped her a lot with all of that. So thanks.”

Simon waved him off. “I’m sure Magnus does the same for you. Part of the deal, right? You hold on, don’t let go, and clean up the bumps and bruises. Marriage is like making your own bubble and you do your best to keep the bad stuff out. Stay on each other’s team. Well...that’s what my grandmother always said anyway.”

“Magnus and I aren’t married, Si.”

For the first time in their long acquaintance, Simon turned a wry grin on him, looking more knowledgeable and wiser than his 29 years. Alec had never considered Simon as someone who might have worldly experience, as someone who had a whole host of issues he’d dealt with over the course of his life. He was always so cheerful and innocent-seeming. To Alec, he’d always been an annoying untrained puppy who needed someone to take him on a long walk before he could settle down.

“Right. You’re not.” He bobbed his head again. “Yet.”

Alec smirked. “You been talking to Izzy?”

Simon shook his head and laughed as he walked back into the house, “Nah. I just have fully functional eyes.”

Right.

They were interrupted by Magnus swanning out the back door, as if making a spectacular entrance for a larger audience. Simon laughed, but Alec just shook his head with his hand out. They would never get any easier sharing Magnus with the audience he so absolutely deserved. Magnus smirked and winked at Simon before sidling to Alec with his hand out.

“Beach walk,” he informed him as if that was the only necessary explanation. Alec pulled a face.
“Right now?”

“Absolutely right now. Don’t wait up, Sheldon.” Just like that, Magnus was tugging him down the deck stairs and the beach path toward the water. Alec should have predicted that Magnus would eventually feel trapped and claustrophobic, and need to move. Magnus asked for so little that Alec almost felt guilty for not even indulging the smallest of his whims. Besides, a nighttime stroll on the beach with his hot boyfriend wasn’t exactly a hardship.

“What was Simon interrogating you about?” Magnus asked, swinging their hands between them. There was a teasing quality to his tone that had Alec scowling.

“He was not interrogating me,” he shot back.

“Is that why you have that I’ve just admitted to something look on your face?”

“First of all. I admitted nothing.”

“Except that Simon was asking.”

It took Alec a moment to realize his mistake. He let out a heavy sigh and gave his boyfriend a shove. Magnus cackled, signaling victory.

“I think I’ve hit my teasing limit for the day,” Alec grumbled. Magnus sighed, latching back onto Alec’s arm, closer than before.

“Too bad,” he said airily, sounding disappointed. Alec laughed through his nose and dropped a kiss to the side of his head. “It’s beautiful here. Truly.”

“Were you expecting it not to be?”

“I was expecting...plastic, perfectly manicured lawns and beaches overrun with drunk teenagers?”
Alec barked a laugh. “This house has been here a lot longer than the new developments. It’s a little more natural, more overgrown since my mother has been in charge of its upkeep. Maintains privacy.”

“Your mother,” Magnus mused, “I’ve always said she has taste, but she still manages to astound me at every turn.”

“She has that effect on people.”

“She does indeed.”

Alec tilted his head back, looking up at the clear night sky and feeling the warmth of Magnus beside him, that cool sea air on his face. It was perfect. Almost. There were several things keeping it just shy of perfect, and one of them weighed heavily in his pocket. But it wasn’t the time. The place? Sure. Gorgeous. Perfect. But Magnus wasn’t ready. Not quite. Not yet.

Magnus sighed heavily. “Clary and Izzy are pregnant,” he told Alec lightly.

“I know. Izzy left the letter from her OBGYN on her desk when I went to visit.”

“And Clary?”

“When’s the last time she didn’t drink at a family function?” Magnus snorted. “I’m sure they’re being cautious. Waiting until after the first trimester. That’s pretty common.”

“Well,” Magnus answered, hand stroking his arm, “you’ll be one hot uncle, Detective.”

Alec smirked, a blush tinging his cheeks, and he slid his arm around Magnus’ shoulders to bring him closer as they walked through the sand. And there was only one thought spinning in his head.

So would Magnus.
Chapter 92

Chapter Notes

Look, don't hit me, okay? We gotta BRIDGE to the fluff. BRIDGE to it. The natural flow of storytelling, I need a catalyst, so DON'T HIT ME.

Alec woke up not feeling quite right. He couldn’t place his finger on why, but he had the inane urge to force Magnus to stay home. Magnus probably would have listened. Despite this, he kept his feelings to himself. Magnus had this weird idea that Alec was secretly psychic and was deep in denial. Alec contended that he was simply intuitive and good at reading human behavior due to his job. Magnus argued that this is precisely what a secret psychic would say in order to keep their powers a secret from the media circus which would inevitably follow them. Alec shook off the thought. Besides, he’d probably force that horrible “aura-cleansing” tea on him again, and Alec was in no mood for that noise so early in the morning. He loved his boyfriend. Adored him. But he was a weirdo.

Later in the day, after a particularly grueling interview with an uncooperative witness and a hostile lawyer, Alec would come to regret that thought. He would regret not saying something. He would think about their all-too-brief kiss that morning. He would think that Magnus was right and never distrust his gut feelings ever again.


Those words blared out over everyone’s comms just as lunch was coming on. Alec froze in his seat, lifting only his eyes to the radio as the words repeated.


Captain Garroway came bursting from his office, shouting at everyone to gear up. There were two known armed robbers who had taken civilians hostage within a restaurant not too far from the station. It was suspected that they were intoxicated and had just robbed a jewelry store across the street. Supposedly they were making some seriously demented and radicalized demands regarding immigration laws due to their importance to some homegrown terrorist group wanting to keep the country “pure.”
“Whatever the fuck that means!” the captain growled out, completely out of character. Every word out of their captain’s mouth left Alec feeling colder and colder. For a moment, his brain completely blanked out, not wanting to process the information being presented to him.

“Apparently, the restaurant is a ritzy place that serves a lot of foreign dignitaries. Called Mario’s…” After that, Alec could only hear white noise. Everything beyond his nose was a blur. That is until he was roughly shoved out of it by Jace slapping him upside the head.

“--ec! Where is Magnus ?”

Alec blinked back into reality, turning only his head to look up at his brother, who was looking more freaked out than he’d ever seen him.

“He hates his office. Wanted to be around people,” Alec answered blandly, going numb for a moment.

“ Alec! ” Clary screeched at him.

“He wanted to work out of Mario’s today.”

Alec couldn’t seem to look away from Jace’s fraught gaze. Couldn’t seem to get his bearings. But then Jace was reaching his hand out to him, pulling him out of his seat, and they were making their way out the door. They ignored shouts of protest. Ignored Garroway’s orders. They just kept walking. As always, Jace kept him focused. Kept him grounded. He opened the precinct door and nudged him through it.

“Let’s go get your man.”
They arrived on the scene and immediately cut through the command central, Jace pushed anyone who tried to stop them out of the way. He was big enough to be effective. When they got to the guy with the phone, Jace waved him over. He was good friends with a lot of the SWAT guys, and they instantly recognized him.

“Wayland, what the fuck are you doing?”

“My brother’s boyfriend owns the restaurant!” he shouted over the din. The negotiator waved him over. He was tall and lanky and had a horrible blond goatee. Alec couldn’t help but dislike him immediately, especially since he seemed like a stereotypical arrogant SWAT asshole. He did not understand why Jace spent so much time with those dicks. He looked directly at Alec.

“You know the layout?”

“Yeah.”

“We’ve got a line with the guy pulling the strings.”

“I want to talk to Magnus Bane. Tell him to put Magnus on the phone.”

“Out of the question.”

“Not if you want to get out of this with minimal loss of life.”

“We have an officer down.”

Alec wasn’t sure if it was his tone or if the panic had faded, or even if he just snapped back into himself, but snap he did. His fury rose up in him like a wave of bile and he couldn’t choke it back down.

“The love of my life is being held hostage in there, so you’ll forgive me if we have different
priorities right now!"

“You’re pushing it,” the man sneered impatiently. Alec lunged at him, but Jace held him back and nudged him aside. Frustrated, Alec raked a hand through his hair, put his hands to his hips and hung his head while Jace bickered with his friend. He couldn’t feel his feet, but he could feel his heart pounding in his ears. And fingertips. And stomach. He was probably going to be sick.

“Drake, quit fucking around and get the owner on the phone!” Jace spat viciously, pairing it with a shove that obviously shocked the negotiator. “He can give us info and it’ll cool this one off.” They glared at each other for several long seconds and Alec thought they were going to get kicked off the scene and he was going to have to find another way in...

“Fine, fucking--give me a second.”

Alec blew out what felt like every ounce of air in his lungs and listened as the negotiator, Drake, dialed and got the suspect on the phone, there was some back and forth. Alec couldn’t listen to the nonsense, he just pressed a palm to his eye and tried to keep his breathing under control. He felt Jace’s hand on his shoulder, which was steadying, but not having much of an effect.

“That’s right, Magnus Bane. Yeah, it would go a long way to getting us all out of this situation. I really appreciate it, pal. Thanks so much...Is this Magnus? Hi there Magnus, I’m Drake, the crisis negotiator today. I’ve got your boyfriend here...”

“Alec,” he supplied, more out of breath than he’d previously realized. His hand was shaking.

“Yes, I’ve got your boyfriend, Alec. Now listen, Magnus, I’m gonna let you talk to him yourself, but be careful not to say anything that might set this guy off, all right? Sure thing, Mr. Bane, here’s Alec.”

He handed over the phone, and Alec thought he’d collapse with relief.

“Alexander? You there?”

“Yeah, yeah I’m here. Are you doing okay? He didn’t hurt you, did he?”
“No, no, we’re fine. Except for the host. Oliver. They shot him when they came in. He’s...I think he’s dead.”

“Take a breath, all right? Try to stay calm.”

“I really don’t like having a gun pointed at me.”

“Well, it looks like we’re taking turns with that one.”

Magnus let out a rueful laugh, sounding tired. “I suppose we are.”

“Can you overpower him?”

“Even if I could, I wouldn’t take the risk.”

“What?”

“Cat and Madzie met me for lunch.”

“Fuck.” Alec whipped around to face the front of the restaurant. He could perfectly picture the two of them walking in, giggling and waiting for Magnus who would have greeted them like queens and made a spectacle of it. The thought of her inside, alone, with those men settled every nerve in his body into cooled steel. His training came rushing back. His instincts were suppressed in favor of rigid adherence to the mission. He wasn’t Alec anymore, he was a goddamn soldier with an innocent to save and enemies to annihilate.

“He’s got Madzie separated,” Magnus confessed softly. “I don’t know where she is.”

“How’s Cat?”

“Losing it. Fast.”
“I’m coming for you, Magnus.”

“Don’t do anything stupid.”

“Well, maybe you should have thought about that before getting taken hostage in my precinct.”

Magnus cleared his throat. “Helen’s always late, you know.”

“Yeah, I remember.”

“Good, good.”

“Sit tight, papi.”

He handed the phone back to Drake, who looked pointedly at him.

“Who’s this Helen?”

“Waitress who works here. She uses a side entrance when she’s late.” He pointed to the building next to the restaurant. “The previous owner lived in the second-floor apartment there and had his office on the second floor of the garage. There’s a door between them.”

“Then that’s where we’ll go in.”

“Sir, permission to enter first.”

“No.”

“It is in your best interest to send me and Wayland in first to try and clear out some of the hostages. We can get them out of the way to minimize casualties when your guys come in the front. We’ll cover the back door so they can’t escape.”
“Give us five minutes,” Jace asked. “Five minutes to clear them.”

“Fine. But we go in hot in five minutes.”

“Yes, sir,” they answered. They grabbed vests and earwigs, and snuck off to the side, trying not to attract too much attention to themselves. Instead of going in the front of the garage next door, they went in the back, up to the second floor, and quickly located the door. The lock had been picked, probably by Helen years back, and it led into Mario’s storage room. Alec signaled to Jace that the door was opposite them, stairs to the right, and they would make a left down the hallway. Jace nodded firmly, adjusting his grip on his gun, and went first. Alec covered him.

They made their way, with painstaking caution, to the kitchen first. Jace cleared the kitchen indicating there was no one watching over this group of hostages, while Alec hustled them, mostly staff, up the stairs and through the door to the garage offices. Once they were gone, they took the service hall to get eyes on the dining room. Dead center sat Magnus, Cat, and several patrons with a lone gunman circling them, assault rifle in his arms. Madzie was nowhere in sight.

“Go find the kid, Alec. I’ll get Magnus,” Jace whispered.

“Jace--”

“So find Madzie! I got this!” Alec hesitated again. “Alec, go!”

So Alec went, sneaking through the back, trying to keep quiet as he checked the closets and back offices. The last office at the end of the hall had its door open and the light on. Alec crept toward it, gun ready, and tried to get a visual as he crossed the opening. There were three people: the gunman, the manager, and Madzie. The manager was tied to a chair and gagged, and Madzie was huddled in front of the desk, the suspect pointing a gun in their general direction. Madzie’s cheeks were stained with tears, but she didn’t look frightened. She looked angry. Alec was hardly surprised.

Alec waited for the gunman to turn slightly and he slid silently into the office. The manager started struggling in his chair and Madzie’s face brightened immediately, but Alec shook his head and held a finger up to his lips. In one smooth motion, he darted out of the gunman’s line of sight as he turned again, and circled around behind him. Alec holstered his gun quickly and attacked him from behind. The gunman yelped, but Alec was able to disarm him before he got a shot off. The gun fell to the floor, and Alec wrestled the screeching man to the ground, yanking sharply at his arms to
“Don’t move! Don’t yell! You open your mouth or struggle, and I will knock you out.” But Alec had other problems. Madzie had moved forward and now had the man’s gun in her hands. Her little fingers could barely reach the trigger, but it wouldn’t take much. She was pointing it at the guy with a deep frown on her face.

“Madzie, pececito, I need you to give me the gun.”

She looked at Alec, wide-eyed. “He hit mommy,” she whispered.

“I know,” Alec said, moving slowly toward her, hands out where she could see them. “I know. And he’ll get punished for that, okay? You just need to give me the gun first.”

Alec could see her indecisiveness, could see that palpable struggle for control which had been constantly snatched away from her most of her life. All Alec could do was hold out a hand and hope for the best. So when she offered the gun up to him, he nearly collapsed in relief. He immediately dropped the magazine from the gun, tossed the empty frame to the furthest corner and gathered her up in his arms.

“Thank god,” he muttered, “It’s okay, everything’s okay.” He couldn’t decide if he was saying it more for her benefit or his. He quickly set about untying the manager and tying up the prisoner. He put him in the chair, threaded one arm through the opening, cuffed him again, and tied his ankles to the separate legs. He gagged him for good measure. Once he was absolutely certain the guy wasn’t going anywhere, he herded the manager and Madzie out the back door and into the arms of waiting police officers. He told one of the men to take Madzie directly to Lydia or Clary, whoever they found first.

He had a minute and thirty seconds before SWAT was coming through the front door.

Alec ran back inside and quick trotted along the wall, gun up and ready, trying to get a visual into the dining room. Jace was hidden behind the bar, edging along to the other opening. Their target had Magnus, Cat, and four men at a center table. He stood behind them, closer to Alec, with his gun pointed at Cat’s head. He was ranting about something. Racist psycho-babble, probably. Alec didn’t really care. His focus was fully on Magnus. Because he expected his partner to cover him from behind, the target wasn’t paying attention to anything but the front door. So Alec took advantage, moving at a low crouch until he could get in position to make eye contact with Magnus. Madzie was safe, so there was no reason to bench him. Once Jace locked into position, Alec waved to get Magnus’ attention. He caught sight of him, startled a little, and then settled his features. The
target whipped his gun in Magnus’ direction.

“What was that about?”

“What?”

“That face, why’d you make that face?”

Magnus scowled, cool as ever, “Indigestion. Someone disturbed my lunch.” The guy roared back at him about watching his mouth and showing some respect to the guy with the gun, he pistol-whipped him and kept yelling. Magnus straightened and cut his eyes to Alec, then continued his verbal assault, riling him up further. While he was good and focused on Magnus, Alec moved forward, gun raised, until the muzzle was pressed to the man’s back.

“Drop your goddamn weapon or I will blow a hole right through you.”

“You shoot, I shoot.”

“I don’t fucking think so,” Jace shouted, moving into position from the front, gun trained on him. “You have ten seconds to surrender or SWAT is gonna bust through that door and put a bullet between your eyes, and I will let them.”

He didn’t have the chance because Alec moved to knock his unsteady arm out of alignment. A shot went off, but the gun went flying to the floor. Alec did the takedown while Jace covered him.

“You move an inch and I shoot you, understand?” Jace roared at him.

Alec ignored that comment and slammed his fist into the guy’s face, unable to control his temper in light of the state he found Madzie in, the sound of Magnus’ panicked voice on blast in his ear, another goddamn gun pointed at the love of his life. Besides, you hurt Magnus, Alec hurt you. Those were the rules.

In the next moment, Jace was comming command center, telling SWAT to stand down. But the room quickly filled with SWAT members and a few wayward EMTs. The cops swarmed Alec,
removing the gunman from his custody and followed his directions to his partner in the office. One EMT followed them back, one stayed, checking on the remaining hostages. There were a few nicks and bruises, and it looked like Cat probably had a mild concussion, but she struggled out of their grasp and pushed her way to Alec.

“Alec, Alec, Madzie!” she panted, getting hysterical. “Where’s Madzie?” She was clutching his forearms tightly, barely able to stand up. Alec helped steady her.

“She’s outside. I got her out,” he said, nodding reassuringly. Cat was nodding with him, taking in short breaths. “Go with this man,” he said, passing her off to an EMT, “go outside with him.” He grabbed the EMT by the jacket. “Her daughter is with Detective Branwell or Fairchild. Find her immediately, do you understand me?” The guy nodded, obviously scared shitless, and escorted Cat outside.

Alec’s brain immediately switched over from work mode to panic mode. There were too many people around, and he couldn’t get his bearings, he couldn’t see Magnus. He felt a hand on his arm and spun immediately to see Magnus, looking a little harried and ready to fall over. Alec launched himself at him, throwing his arms tight around him. Alec’s hands moved against his will, brushing over Magnus out of sheer instinct. Once he found no cause for alarm, other than the cut on his forehead, he was slamming their mouths together, wrapping him tight in his arms and kissing him furiously. They clung together, shaking and kissing intermittently, trying to shut out everything around them.

“Lightwood!” Drake called out. “Debriefing now!” Alec looked up and over his shoulder to glare at him. He tossed a useless hand up. “Fine. Five minutes! Wayland, now!”

“Yeah, whatever,” was Jace’s disinterested response. “How come I can’t make out with my girlfriend before debriefing?”

“Because I don’t like you.”

“Ey, whaddai I ever do t’you?”

“That. That right there is an insult to my Long Island-fucking ears.”

“What are you talking about, Drakie?” Jace’s annoying voice faded as they walked out of the restaurant. Magnus was still snug against Alec, who kept firm arms around him.
“C’mon, you need to get checked out.”

“I’m fine.”

“Please,” Alec said dropping his forehead to Magnus’, “please don’t argue with me right now.”

Magnus huffed a short sigh. “Okay. All right, where do I go?”

“Just come with me, okay?”

Alec ushered him to the door and out to an ambulance. The EMT sat him on the back of the ambulance and started doing a cursory exam. Alec stayed right next to him, leaning against the truck and watching everything intently. Magnus attempted to argue once or twice, but Alec interrupted him, backing up the medical professional instead of the stubborn pain in the ass he loved a little too much.

“Yes, I’m seeing double. You have two eyes, two ears, and two nostrils, is that what you mean?”

“Magnus, behave.”

“He asked.”

“He’s trying to do his job.”

“Where’s Madzie?”

“Probably with Cat by now.”

“Can we go find them, please?”
“Yes. Once this nice gentleman says you’re okay to leave.”

“I’m okay.”

“Are you a licensed medical professional? Oh, no? I didn’t think so. So hush.”

They didn’t have to go anywhere though because Clary brought Cat over, who had Madzie in her arms. Magnus got up immediately and was hugging the both of them, pressing kisses to their foreheads and speaking quietly to Madzie who nodded at him. But then she was reaching out to Alec, all but jumping out of her mother’s arms. Alec took her silently, hugging her to his chest, letting her wrap her arms and legs around him. Alec pressed his nose to the side of her head, feeling calmer just having her physically present.

“Thank you for saving me,” she whispered. Alec pressed a lingering kiss to her temple.

“I’d do anything for you, pececito. Absolutely anything.”

Magnus came back to them, rubbing his hand up and down Madzie’s back and slipping an arm around Alec’s waist. He dropped his chin to Alec’s shoulder, smiling at Madzie. She unwrapped her arms from Alec’s neck and threw them around Magnus’ even though she kept her legs around Alec. They both laughed, feeling the tension leave them as they stood there huddled together. Cat came over and completed their circle, kissing all of their cheeks.

“All right, muffins, let me take my girl home. I’ll call you later, okay? Or call me. Just check in, yeah?” Alec was quick to reassure her, and grabbed an officer to drive them home. He promised to call her at least three times and Madzie asked if he would come over and tuck her in.

“He’ll talk to you on the phone, baby--” Magnus was at her side immediately, soothing the little girl while Alec spoke to Cat.

Alec turned to the side and muttered, “Cat, if she can’t sleep--”

“You don’t need to do that.”
“Call me,” he said insistently, “if you need something, call me.”

She sighed, looking a little relieved, and she put a hand to his forearm. “Thank you. Take care of Magnus.”

“I will.”

Magnus slid back into his arms, pressing his face into his shoulder, and breathing deeply. Alec rubbed a hand up and down his back. They watched the girls slide into the car and waved them off. Alec felt calm and tense all at once. Logically, he knew they were safe, but he wanted his own eyes on them. It wasn’t rational, but that’s how he felt.

“I think your five minutes are up.”

“Probably.”

“Can I go with you?” he asked, looking up at him hopefully. Alec shrugged.

“I don’t see why not. You’ll have to give a statement too. Could take a while, though.”

Magnus shook his head. “Don’t care. Just want to be with you.”

Alec squeezed his shoulders and dropped a kiss to his head. “All right. C’mon, before Drake comes looking for us.”

“You know that guy?”

“No. Friend of Jace’s. They met at some conference.”

“Guy’s a douche.”
“Hey,” Alec chastised, “did you get shot today? No. So he’s good at his job.”

Magnus looked up at him and scowled. “He didn’t break into my restaurant to save me, my best friend, and my goddaughter.”

Alec sighed, trying not to smile. “No, he did not. But he let us go in, so you’ll forgive me if I like him a little.”

“Can’t argue with that.”
Chapter 94

Chapter Notes

This chapter still reads weird to me, but that's the way the cookie crumbles, my dudes.

The debriefing was not a pleasant experience for anyone involved. First, they tried separating Magnus from Alec so that they could get individual statements. Alec protested this to the point that Captain Garroway had to intercede on his behalf. Though, Jace would later contend that it was more to prevent Alec from murdering Drake in front of two dozen police officers. Alec really truly didn't give a fuck, and Magnus wasn’t trying to reign him in, so that just egged him on. Usually, Magnus would tease Alec into calming down some. Since he wasn’t even attempting to do so, Alec got all the more fierce, all the more protective, and it was not looking good for Sergeant Drake’s case.

It was all fine and good while Magnus recounted his morning, what he remembered of coming in, Cat and Madzie’s arrival, and then when all hell broke loose. When he talked about the gunman shooting down their host, Oliver, he grabbed for Alec’s hand and held on tight. Alec immediately clasped his hand in both of his. Oliver was young, only just 21, and he’d been working, going to school, and trying to get an acting career off the ground. Alec remembered him as sweet and too nice for New York. And now he was dead for no reason. Magnus didn’t falter throughout his account of them striking Cat, taking Madzie away, and generally terrorizing them. After that, Jace and Alec contributed their accounts, recounting and justifying their own actions.

Overall, it took three hours. They were all irritated, tired, and hungry. All of Alec’s attention was on Magnus’ comfort, making sure he had water and that someone brought him something to eat, and snapped at Drake when his questions were too forceful.

“Hey! Ease up!”

“Lightwood, it’s pertinent! We need to know why they picked his restaurant of all places!”

“Then go ask them!”

“Alexander--”
“No, I’m not gonna listen to this. They just want a scapegoat so it doesn’t incite panic. Well, tough shit. Magnus had nothing to do with this. Do your fucking job. We’ve given our statements, you have your information, now I’m taking him home. If you want to talk to him again, call his lawyer.”

“Alec, come on--” Jace started, sounding reluctant.

“No! We’re done. Come on, Magnus, we’re leaving.”

When he got up, Magnus didn’t hesitate to follow, willingly being led by the hand out of the conference room and through the precinct. Alec completely ignored everyone’s attempts to get his attention and stormed outside, keeping Magnus close and waving down a cab.

“I can call--”

“No, it’ll take too long.”

“Alexander--”

“Don’t argue with me right now.”

“Alexander, look at me.” He put a hand to his bicep, and Alec turned. His whole face crumpled, that carefully composed mask had completely evaporated. He’d finished his job, and now had nothing left holding him up. So Magnus did. He nodded, leaning into him.

“Okay,” he agreed hoarsely, “okay.”

A cab pulled up and they climbed in. Alec didn’t let Magnus get very far and barked the address at the driver. He really must have been on edge because he usually didn’t take a tone with service people. He kept Magnus tight against him the whole ride, tossed cash onto the front seat when they arrived and hustled him out of the car. It felt like the elevator was moving in slow motion, and Magnus’ feet felt numb under him. He and Alec were the only thing holding them up. Alec used his own key to get them in, dragged Magnus straight to the bedroom and into the bathroom.

He was silent the whole time, as he turned on the tub faucet, pouring in oils, and turned back to Magnus. Then slowly, and so gently, he started to undress him. Magnus watched, assisting the
process when he could, but his throat felt too tight to speak. By the time Magnus was fully undressed, the bathroom was warm. Alec’s hands moved over him methodically, searchingly. He moved around behind Magnus, repeating the same process. It was right then that he realized what was happening. Alec was checking him for injuries, reassuring himself even though the EMT had signed off on his release. Even though they’d been together for hours and there had been no signs from Magnus that he was in any pain. Magnus submitted to the process, feeling tears sting at his eyes. It had been a rather trying day, after all. He’d been hit and held at gunpoint, terrorized and threatened. Alec’s intense gentleness was so jarring as a result.

Eventually, Alec led him to the tub, helped him in, but didn’t follow. Instead, he knelt on the floor, and bathed Magnus. He used the nearby wipes to remove his makeup, washed his hair with sandalwood shampoo, kept his hands on him. Magnus moved as Alec wanted him to, watching him all the while. When he was finished, Magnus put a hand to his cheek and turned his face so that he could kiss him. It was painfully sweet. Chaste but intense. It nearly took his breath away.

“It’s right here,” he said pressing their foreheads together. Alec nodded and pressed another kiss to his lips before getting to his feet. He went to get Magnus’ robe, so Magnus stood, and put out his arms for Alec to put it on him. Then Alec led him back into the bedroom, urged him onto the bed and under the covers, quickly undressing and following behind. Magnus barely got settled before Alec was hauling him into his arms and curling his big body along Magnus’ back. Magnus sighed and settled into him, clutching Alec’s forearms where they held him.

Alec let out a huff against the back of his neck, like a frazzled dog who finally sighed in contentment once settled. Magnus could feel the energy finally drain from him, yet still held him tight.

It was the strangest thing, actually. Magnus had been in countless bad situations over the years, some with guns, some without. Being on your own so young, without money, then with money, it didn’t really matter: you were a target. He’d been afraid before in his life, but when they’d ripped Madzie from Cat’s arms and took her away, Magnus thought he would never be able to breathe again. He’d been so beyond terrified that his brain just shut down. He’d never once experienced that level of fear. But then he heard Alec’s voice. I’m coming for you. Sit tight. I’m coming for you.

He hadn’t doubted it for a second. The fear just evaporated. He hadn’t doubted that Alec was going to get them out safely, that he was going to get to Madzie. There just wasn’t another possibility.
Chapter 95

Chapter Summary

Absolute shameless smut.

Chapter Notes

New chapters 92-95

Magnus woke up to find Alec not in the bed with him. He was over by the window on the phone with Cat and Madzie. Apparently, she was having trouble sleeping already, and Alec was just talking to her. Magnus rolled onto his stomach, watching him, feeling safe and content. After a moment, Alec noticed him watching and smiled, eyes soft, even as he reassured Madzie that the bad men were locked up and Jace was most definitely being mean to them. That information must have pacified her because not long after, Alec was hanging up the phone, putting it on the nightstand, and climbing back into bed with Magnus.

He blanketed Magnus’ back, half on top of him, and pressed kisses to the back of his neck and shoulders. His hand drifting up and down his side, clenching into the give of his hip and sliding back up. Alec’s lips trailed over his skin and Magnus arched into his touch, wanting that closeness. Alec shoved the duvet aside, and sat back to kiss down Magnus’ spine, hands moving over his hips, thighs, and eventually to his ass, squeezing. When Alec lips and tongue slid between his cheeks, he pushed back into it. Magnus let the feeling sweep over him, skin too hot and too tight, flushing at the idea of Alec eating him out. Fuck, it must have made such a pretty picture. They really needed to make a sex tape, purely for the aesthetic value. Magnus started contemplating persuasion tactics right up until Alec sunk two fingers into him, stretching him efficiently. Fuck, it felt so good. Alec was so damn good at this, so damn thorough and attentive that Magnus wanted to scream for it. Instead, he just let out a series of moans and expletives, attempting to last longer than a teenager on his first try. Just when he was about to lose himself in the current, Alec was gone.

Magnus whined, but Alec’s hands were tight on his hips, yanking him back onto his knees. Magnus pushed himself back against Alec’s dick, the heat of it making Magnus’ balls clench tight. Alec kept a hand squarely between Magnus’ shoulder blades, keeping his face and shoulders pressed down. His other hand pulled at Magnus’ ass cheek, separating them long enough so Alec could push himself inside. Magnus choked out a groan, lifting his hips in response, trying to get him deeper.

“There you go, papi. You good?”
“Fuck, you’re amazing,” he answered, pushing up on his elbows. Alec grunted and shoved hard into him in response. Alec’s hands smoothed over the curve of his ass, fingers clenching into the muscle, massaging as he swiveled his hips, grinding into him. Magnus moaned. “So good...you’re so good--” He cut off when Alec slammed into him a couple of times, punctuating it with a twist of his hips. Alec fell forward, changing the angle sharply, his hands braced on the bed. Magnus twisted his head back to catch his lips in a sloppy kiss. Alec undulated on top of him, body rolling and keeping up a steady slide in and out. Magnus sighed, lifting his hips up in time, meeting him thrust for thrust. He had such a hard time staying still when Alec was inside him. He couldn’t help it, it felt so good, and he just wanted to stay at the plateau of perfect for as long as possible. Alec always seemed to know when he needed this to be drawn out, when he needed the surplus of affection, when he needed the raw intimacy, or when he needed to just breed him like an animal. There were so many moods, each better than the last, and Alec was just perfect. A perfect protector. A perfect provider. Magnus never felt alone, never felt lost, because Alec was always right there waiting for him. Waiting and willing and able.

Magnus could feel Alec’s movements get a little more frantic, a little more desperate. He let out a low growl, chanting out rumbling yeahs as he hit Magnus’ prostate repeatedly. Magnus clenched the sheets, whining in the back of his throat, and Alec picked up the pace. His thrusts were sharper, rougher, faster. Magnus, ever vocal, spurred him on, letting out long trails of filthy encouragement. Alec dropped his weight on top of Magnus, arm sliding around his neck and chest, holding him up as he spoke in his ear.

“No one’s touching you,” he said gruffly, hips pumping frantically now. “No one, nothing, you’re mine.”

Magnus twisted his head back to kiss him, throwing Alec’s rhythm off. But it didn’t matter. They sucked and tugged at each other’s lips hungrily, tongues twisting together. In a rough jerk that was almost painful, Alec pulled them both up to their knees, making Magnus scream at the sudden deepness of Alec’s cock in his ass. Magnus twisted his hips, pushing down in retaliation, forcing a choked gasp from Alec who braced his arms tight around Magnus’ torso, nails digging in as he thrust upward. Alec dropped his face into Magnus’ neck, mouth hot and open on his skin as he kept up his pace. Magnus reached one hand around to Alec’s ass, clenching into his skin, and dropped the other to his own, unattended cock, pumping himself in time to Alec’s thrusts. Everything around them was quiet and calm, except for the sounds of Alec’s hips pounding against his ass, their strained grunts, and murmurs of encouragement.

“Yeah, that’s it, papi, fuck you are so hot. Love you, te amo, love you, love you,” he chanted.

Alec’s grip tightened and he leaned back, moving his legs so that Magnus was couched tight in his lap. He put his feet flat on the bed, held Magnus in place, and thrust up into him at a frantic pace. It was so hard and so fast that Magnus couldn’t get his breath back, and he felt every muscle bunch and tighten. Magnus came with a howl through gritted teeth, dropping his head back uselessly as
Alec fucked him through it. When Magnus went limp in his grasp, exhausted, Alec was rolling him back onto his stomach and finishing with rough, sharp thrusts. He collapsed with a groan onto Magnus, panting and covered in sweat. Magnus reached back weakly, getting only to his neck. So Alec rolled off of him. Magnus turned and cuddled into him, throwing an arm over his chest and a possessive leg over his hips, drawing his face towards him for a lazy, sensual kiss. Alec hummed, his hand snaking up to Magnus’ neck and ear, fingers slipping into his hair as he held him in place.

“How do we ever leave this bed?” Magnus asked tiredly, pressing sweet, intermittent kisses to his lips. Alec nuzzled their mouths together, lips brushing sloppily over his skin.

“Dunno. Lots of annoying alarms?”

“Stupid idea.”

“Hmm, agreed.” He rubbed their noses together, sighing contentedly.

“Madzie okay?”

Alec nodded weakly. “Just nervous. Cat’s got it.”

“Wanna go see her.”

“In the morning,” Alec promised. “Both of you need sleep.”

“Whatever you say, Superman.”

“Hush, papi. Or do I need to fuck you again?” Magnus chuckled, pushing himself up against him suggestively, despite how drained he felt. The heat felt good on his tired muscles. Alec hummed again, kissing him and rubbing a hand up and down his thigh. They swapped lazy kisses until Alec fell asleep. For all his fussing and mothering, he had been through just as much and needed just as much rest. Magnus just settled against him, hands stroking where he could reach, pressing feather-light kisses to warm skin. Alec’s hold didn’t let up, even in his sleep, he clung a little desperately, keeping Magnus right against him. Magnus felt trapped for a brief moment, but when he focused on that beautiful face, that dear, sweet face, he wanted nothing but to stay right there for as long as possible.
Chapter 96

Chapter Summary

New chapters 92-96

Chapter Notes

Okay, I lied. ONE MORE. Just to bring a little more levity to the whole thing.

Shockingly, there was nothing written in a police officer’s contract about leave when your significant other was held hostage by armed madmen. Despite what you see on TV, it really didn’t happen all that often, especially not to cops’ families. So Alec was right back in the thick of it, and Raphael was keeping Magnus under house arrest for him. Alec only agreed to leave him because Raph agreed to stay. While Magnus wasn’t thrilled with the paranoid-bordering-on-controlling behavior, he evidently understood it and complied anyway. Alec was thankful because that meant he got to keep his job for the time being, instead of being labeled derelict of duty due to paranoid-bordering-on-controlling behavior.

Neither of them had much downtime anyway, as Jace and Clary’s wedding was only two weeks away, and the bachelor/bachelorette parties were that upcoming weekend. Alec was to go with Jace and Magnus with Clary because he was on her side of the aisle. Magnus was raring to go, ready to get out and be around people. Alec was hesitant on all accounts but obviously couldn’t say anything because it was Jace. Jace was one of the few things in his life which trumped all others. So his paranoid-bordering-on-controlling behavior got knocked sideways in favor of making his brother happy.

Magnus was so relieved he thought he’d pass out.

Everyone decided to meet at Magnus and Alec’s place to get ready. Clary’s side, which included Magnus, Izzy, Aline, Helen, and Lydia, was staying in. Jace’s side, with Alec, Max, Simon, an old army buddy of Jace’s, and Raphael (a fact which shocked even Alec), was going out. Magnus stood at the drink cart, making something for himself and Clary, eyeing his guest room with some trepidation. The women-folk were making a great ruckus from back there, and he was...concerned. He put that aside, knowing Maryse would cover whatever cleaning bill came of... that, swept his eyes back to his beloved boyfriend, who was busy in the kitchen. Seemingly busy anyway. He was putting together food for their guests, but there was a tension in his shoulders that didn’t sit well with him. Oh sure, he’d play pretend for Jace’s sake, but Magnus was the one who did the cleaning up when he busted his knuckles bloody on a punching bag. He sighed and handed Clary her drink as Simon and Max wandered in.
“You know, I almost nixed this whole thing…” Clary started hesitantly. Magnus’ eyebrows shot up, and he pointed to his chest.

“Because of--”

“No!” she insisted, looking immediately regretful. She took a sip of her drink and set it on a coaster like a civilized person. So unlike her soon-to-be spouse. “It’s well… it’s Jace’s party, there will be strippers.”

“Ew.”

“I know,” Clary agreed, bobbling her head. Obviously, she didn’t like the idea either. “But that doesn’t concern you? With Alec…”

Magnus snorted. “I’m about as concerned about Alec around naked women as I am concerned about him around Simon.”

“What are you saying over there?” Alec called out from the kitchen, obviously having heard his name. Clary tried to lie, but Magnus answered directly. He had a towel tossed over his shoulder and came into the living room with a cheese tray with grapes, crackers, and strawberries. Clary immediately snatched one, and Max tried, but Simon swatted him away.

“That I’m more concerned about you running off with Simon than I am about you running off with a stripper!”

Alec scrunched his face in confused disgust. Magnus looked at Clary and gestured toward that expression as if presenting evidence.

“Both of those things are horrible.”

“You see my point.”
“Simon? Really?”

Clary crossed her arms, challengingly and Alec squared up to her, straightening his shoulders.

“If you had to pick: boobs or Simon?”

“Neither. I would die alone.”

“If you had to.”

“Boobs, definitely boobs.”

Simon squawked indignantly. “You would go straight or die alone instead of cuddling with me?”

Alec wrinkled his nose in disgust again. “I would go straight, castrate myself, and die alone if it meant I could avoid cuddling with you.” Simon’s jaw dropped.

Clary shrugged with her mouth and turned back to Magnus. “All right, point taken.”

Magnus and Max laughed, even though Simon was still outraged and Alec still looked disgusted. But Magnus caught his gaze and saw that glint there. It prompted a small smile from him, which caught Alec’s full attention. It was a prolonged moment that was utterly destroyed by a crash and a shout from Jace and Aline at...someone.

They both sighed and got up to assess the damage.

Everything would be fine. They would be fine.
“So, I’m pretty sure I don’t need to introduce myself. I see most of you people way too much.” Some chuckling rippled throughout the crowd. “I’m not really good at this kind of thing.” Alec shifted his weight. “But this really isn’t about me. It’s about Jace and Clary.” He cleared his throat again. He’d been over this with Magnus about a dozen times. He’d rehearsed it in the car with Lydia, and he still couldn’t help but shake.

“I was ten when we adopted Jace into our family, but he’d been like a brother to me long before that, so...I didn’t even question it. And the thing about being the oldest is that they don’t really tell you how often you’re going to be cleaning up your siblings’ messes. It’s a lot, especially when it’s Jace.” Laughter rang out. “Naturally, when I met Clary,” he chuckled, “I assumed she was going to be another mess I had to clean up.” He paused with a short laugh, “Shockingly, it wasn’t Jace’s mess, it was my own.” That didn’t earn him as much laughter, but more thoughtful hums. “So yeah, Clary and I have not always gotten along. We butt heads a lot, but even I can’t deny that she’s changed my life for the better. And I can’t really hate her when my brother’s got that big, dumb smile on his face…”

“I look dumb? Have you seen yourself, huh?” Jace heckled him from the side. Alec kicked lightly at his chair.

“Clary, I know Magnus really overdid it on your wedding gift, but I have one just for you,” he finished mysteriously. He raised his glass, “To two of the best detectives we’ve got!” The room cheered them, and Alec stepped down to whisper his wedding gift to Clary. Magnus was at the far end of the table, and so couldn’t hear him over the applause.

But Magnus watched Clary’s face break into happiness. She squealed and threw her arms around him, and Alec actually hugged her back, lifting her from her feet like he always did to Izzy. Jace watched them, grinning broadly, with soft eyes. Magnus could only wonder what that gift was; they’d picked out art for their new apartment.

* 

Magnus didn’t have very long to dwell on Alec’s strange behavior because Jace was leaping out of
his seat to snatch up Clary for their first dance. Even Alec knew she was a stunning bride, and Jace
looked very good in a tux. He’d forgone the idea of wearing his dress blues because Clary
wouldn’t be in hers, and he thought that would be odd. Alec thought it was very forward thinking
of him, no matter how unwitting. They danced to some cheesy 90s song Alec didn’t know the
name of, but he wasn’t really paying any attention to that. Clary’s face was so bright and so
exuberant that he almost couldn’t take it. Just when he thought his chest would cave in from the
weight of it, there was Magnus, holding out his hand, grinning down at him.

When they got up, so did the others. The wedding party joined the bride and groom on the dance
floor. It wasn’t particularly coordinated or rehearsed, but some of the groomsmen had taken
dancing lessons with Jace to surprise Clary. Well, Alec took them to surprise Magnus, but that was
neither here nor there. Magnus was laughing and smiling, suitably impressed that Alec wasn’t
tripping over himself.

“You sneaky sneak,” he admonished, shaking his head even as he looked over Alec’s shoulder.

“Shockingly, you are not at all difficult to deceive.” It was meant to be a tease, but there was a
sharpness to Magnus’ eyes that he didn’t like. He bent to kiss him, “Good thing too, otherwise this
would have been a disaster.” They sidestepped, and Alec spun Magnus out, only to bring him back
in closer. Magnus laughed happily, the edges all but gone, and held on a little tighter.

The song soon transitioned into another, and more people joined them on the floor until it was so
littered you could hardly see beyond the person next to you. Somehow, Alec ushered them closer
to the side, where there was a little more breathing room. Everyone was trying to get to Clary and
Jace, after all. Several people shouted at them as they went, trying to pull them back in, but Alec
needed space and a little bit of quiet.

“Do you know,” Alec mused lightly once Magnus settled down from all of his giggling, “that we
are coming on our third anniversary?”

Magnus’ tongue darted out quickly to cover a grin, “I do indeed.” Alec kept a remarkably straight
face, considering that he felt like shouting his excitement. “Any particular reason that thought
came into your head?”

“Oh,” he answered with feigned indifference, “no. Not at all.”

“Really. Interesting.”
“I was just thinking—”

“Of course you were.”

“I was thinking,” he continued snottily, making Magnus snicker, “about our first date. You remember?”

Magnus smirked, letting a laugh out through his nose. Did he remember their first date? Did he--? There was not a single person in his employ who did not know, in high-definition, technicolor detail, the happenings of their first meeting. Magnus had a script. Of course, Raphael mocked him mercilessly for it, but Magnus had never really cared. Magnus had loved every amazing, awkward second of it.

“Of course. I saved you from a cougar, you released a prostitute, we split of a bottle of wine, you blushed, and I was a jackass—”

“You were not a jackass,” Alec interrupted smoothly. Magnus smoothed his hands over Alec’s shoulders, stepping in a little closer.

“I was pretty sure I’d scared you off.”

“No, you weren’t. And you didn’t.”

“You blushed the whole time.”

“You told Cat and Ragnor you were in love with me.” It was Magnus’ turn to blush. The next song came on, one that was much slower. Alec moved his hand from Magnus’ hip to slide his arm around the small of his back. He leaned in to press a kiss to his cheek and spoke quietly, trying to keep the smile off his face. It wasn’t working.

“When I first saw you,” he paused for dramatic effect, “I was so disappointed.”

Magnus gasped indignantly, jaw dropping as he pulled back in shock. “What?!”
But Magnus felt his heart throb in his chest when he looked up at Alec. He had such a tender look in his eyes, almost like he was in a daze with all that love on the surface, and Magnus was more confused than ever by his confession. Alec just licked his lips and adjusted the grip of their hands.

“You came swooping in like a goddamn hero, and I was so disappointed because I thought I was going to have to sit through another boring dinner with one of Clary’s terrible friends, thinking about you and your stupidly cute smile the whole time.” Magnus leaned in, smile bright and cheeks tinged red. He wrapped both arms around Alec’s neck and hung a little.

“Oh, Detective Lightwood, you are very smooth.”

“I learned from the best.”

“Not Jace?”

“Definitely not Jace.” Magnus nuzzled against his cheek, smiling and pressing his lips there. “You were so beautiful,” Alec kept on. “I barely remember anything you said cause I just--” He shut his eyes and dropped his forehead to Magnus’, “I still can’t catch my breath around you, Magnus.”

“What are you--?”

But Alec interrupted him, “You’ve been a lot of firsts for me.”

Those words hit Magnus like a wave of bricks. He immediately chastened, his whole body softening, “Oh, Alexander, you’ve been a lot of firsts for me, too.” Alec bent to kiss him, soft and
sweet, making Magnus melt against him. He kept their foreheads together.

“I didn’t know how starved I was until you showed up. Didn’t know how lost I was. Magnus, I was so off the mark for such a long time…”

“Alec,” he whispered brokenly, not sure how to handle that. Alec answered with another kiss. It was more of a warm press for reassurance, a moment to punctuate the feeling, to prepare for the next.

“Marry me.”

Alec breathed those words so quietly Magnus almost thought he hallucinated them. But no, Alec watched him intently, ever patient as he processed. Words escaped him.

“Magnus,” Alec kept on, “I love you, and I love that you were so many firsts for me. But I want you to be my last. I want to be your last everything. Because our ending will be nothing short of a goddamn tragedy.” Their faces were pressed together, brow to brow, noses to cheeks. They’d essentially stopped dancing, barely swaying as they clutched each other close.

“Marry me, Magnus,” Alec said, kissing his face, “te amo, cásate conmigo.” He pecked his lips, “Marry me.”

Magnus couldn’t get the words out because of course, this is what Alec did to him: rendered him shocked and speechless. He moved them back into dancing position and Magnus felt the cool slide of metal onto his left ring finger and teared up when he saw the ring now there. It wasn’t much, to be quite honest. Just a simple silver ring with a rectangular face and a scripted “L” in the center.

“I know it’s not to your tastes, but it’s a family heirloom. Mine to keep or give.”

Magnus reached up to kiss him, halting their progress temporarily.

“I love it,” he whispered through a smile. Alec kissed him again.

“I just wanted you to carry something of mine. I don’t want you to ever think you’re alone
Magnus beamed and nodded before bringing Alec’s face down to his to kiss him thoroughly. He kept saying yes against Alec’s lips, over and over again.

They heard a choked off squeal from behind them and turned together to see Clary nearly jumping up and down, shaking her fists in the air in victory. Jace was laughing hysterically, but still trying to get her to calm down. Once she caught sight of them looking, she went right from smiling to flapping a hand in front of her face and crying. Alec was pretty sure she said something to the effect of I gave them to each other. Jace, still laughing at her, moved her off the dance floor with very nonreassuring nods of his head. There were amused murmurs of pregnancy hormones circling the dance floor. Alec and Magnus crashed back together, trying to contain their own laughter at her antics. Magnus went so far as to hide his face against Alec’s neck and shoulder. He was giggling, completely unable to suppress his absolute joy. It felt really good to laugh about something so ridiculous, especially with Magnus so close and affectionate.

Alec’s skin was feeling a little too tight, his throat burned with the desire to shout, and he very much wished they were anywhere else in that moment. They could be somewhere else. They would be somewhere else. But right then, they needed to celebrate his brother’s happiness. They needed to bask in someone else’s joy because theirs was too much to swallow. Theirs was burning and sharp, and it needed time to cool before they could handle it properly. So instead, they exchanged short kisses, more for reassuring and promising than anything else, and kept dancing to the song Simon had picked out for them.

And I know, and I know it's a different love
And I know, and I know that you make me better
It's a love that will keep me holding on
And I know, and I know we only get better

Chapter End Notes

Listen ya'll, life is hard. Kicks your ass sometimes. I'm incredibly grateful for everyone who's read this monster and stuck with me through it. It's not over yet, but a lot of people have been thanking me for updating/writing. Totally not necessary. This thing is getting me through insanely frustrating experiences, and being able to make even one other person happy right now is a huge win for me. So practice some self-love today on my behalf! Ya'll are awesome!
They didn’t tell anyone at the wedding. Clary was sworn to secrecy, and of course, she told Jace who already knew because Alec could rarely hide anything from him for more than a few minutes anymore. Simon was just told that Alec wanted to do something cute for Magnus at the wedding. Alec insisted they keep it to themselves for a couple of days. Magnus managed to restrain himself for three hours before he texted Ragnor, Cat, and Raphael. Alec tried really hard to be annoyed about it for roughly a minute before Magnus, bouncing with energy and beaming like the goddamn sun, kissed him and dragged him into bed.

Alec smirked to himself thinking about that night. It had been a pretty great day, but it really paled in comparison to Magnus that night. Alec was so distracted thinking about it, that Magnus had to hip check him to get him to pay attention to their conversation.

“Well, it doesn’t matter if you don’t want to do it. You got to propose, so I get to announce.”

“You are gonna use that one against me for--”

“Forever. Yes, absolutely for forever.”

“You had ample opportunity--” He was cut off by Magnus flicking lettuce in his face as he passed him. “Point taken?”

“You need to go get dressed.”

“I tried to get dressed--”

“Thin ice, angel, thin ice.”

“Getting dressed now.”
Magnus really overdid it on the announcement party. Even he knew that. But social media was not their thing, and there didn’t seem to be a point in delaying or singling anyone out. (Other than those select few who had already been singled out?) Whatever, it didn’t matter. Of course, they had waited for Clary and Jace to return from their honeymoon. Now, they were hosting a party which they described as a welcome back party for the happy couple. Honestly, people were really very used to Magnus having parties for silly reasons. No one questioned it. Was it a good idea to hold it in their own apartment? Probably not. Had they done it anyway? Absolutely. Alec had insisted in order to force Magnus to tailor down the guest list and therefore the budget. The man was annoyingly practical at times.

There were too many people and plenty of food, and people were asked to bring their own booze. Did it matter that people were spilling out into the foyer and the balcony? Absolutely not because everyone was having a good time and Maryse was running around like a crazy person, maintaining the integrity of their apartment without being asked. Raphael had posted up in front of their bedroom door and happened to be scary enough to ward off anyone getting too curious. And, best of all, Alec had been plastered to his side the whole time, so everything was fucking perfect, thank you very much. Magnus’ eyes flickered over to Will’s picture sitting on the mantle, his lip twitching in response. Almost perfect. As close to perfect as his life would ever get, and Alec was the primary reason for all of it. So he shook off the somberness creeping up from his gut and tried to get everyone’s attention by hopping up on the coffee table and clapping.

It was absolutely not enough. Between the music and the conversations carrying on a decibel of familiarity, there was no hope for his usual tactics. Fortunately, Alec had extraordinary lung capacity, and let out such a sharp and piercing whistle that everyone covered their ears. Clary immediately ran to cut the music, looking absolutely gleeful. Magnus rolled his eyes in her general direction. Poor biscuit was not accustomed to having to keep secrets. It was absolutely against her nature, so she’d been behaving like a small child who already knew what her Christmas present was and everyone knew that she knew, so she wasn’t even trying to hide that she knew. Honestly, that woman. Magnus snapped back to attention now that he was the sole focus of everyone else’s.

“Thank you, angel,” he said quietly, a pleased smile on his lips. “Alec and I are so thankful that all of you could be here tonight. We tend to do things like this quite often, but...it was important to have everyone around us today because...well, we have an announcement to make.” There was a sharp gasp of anticipation from everyone. “We’re engaged.” Izzy let out a half-screech. “We’re getting married!”

Everyone erupted at that. There was applause and cheering, whistling and catcalling. They were immediately overtaken by well-wishers, including Madzie, who darted through everyone’s legs to get to them. She jumped up on the table and clung to Magnus’ leg. Naturally, he had to pick her up and kiss her little cheeks. Eventually, she hopped down to hug Alec, which meant Magnus was getting tugged off the coffee table to get hugged and congratulated. He could hardly hear himself think, let alone hear what anyone was saying to him. In the chaos, he looked for his friends, only to
see them standing over to the side, where Raphael had been most of the evening. Raphael, Cat, and Ragnor, stood together, smiling over at him. He grinned back at them and shrugged. All three lifted their glasses to him, their fondness for him so obvious in their expressions. He mouthed a love you in their direction. Ragnor dipped his head, Raphael scowled, and Cat blew him a kiss. But then he was being swarmed by colleagues and Alec’s family members and pulled back into the fray.

Chapter End Notes

Lol, so not everyone was super impressed with the proposal. I totally understand that it seems like a dick move to propose at someone else’s wedding, but in this fic Clary sets them up. Clary is very possessive of their relationship, as it's what transforms her relationship with Alec. Obviously, I don't go into her side of things cause it's not her POV, but I think that's pretty obvious from the many, many sections dedicated to their relationship. Also, it's like a quiet thing? Between the two of them. Not something super elaborate to take away from the big Clace moment. Anyway. I felt like I had to justify it cause it was probably one of the few things that was "planned" in this whole monster of a fic, and I thought it would be really sweet for Alec to include Clary in that way cause that's how it all got started. I like things to be circular, guys, all right?
Chapter 100

Chapter Summary

Continuation of the announcement party.
I totally forgot!
Clary is almost 4 months pregnant, Izzy is almost 5.
The Clace wedding was at the end of July.
Malec's anniversary is in late August/early September
Cool.

Alec had expected Magnus to go a little overboard with their announcement party. It was totally expected, and yet, totally overwhelming. They had a spacious apartment, yes, but not spacious enough for all the people Magnus had invited. Alec was having trouble being irritated, of course, because Magnus was oozing happiness and excitement in such an endearing way. Besides, all of the people invited were people who loved them and they absolutely wanted to have everyone around them to celebrate.

He wasn’t surprised at all at the extremely excessive reaction from their friends and family after Magnus made the announcement. Did he enjoy being touched by so many people at once? Not at all. It was worth it though to see Magnus hauling Madzie up into his arms and smiling so wide it must have hurt.

Eventually, though, he and Magnus were given room to breathe again, and people were making toasts, taking shots in their honor, and turning up the music louder than before. Alec just drifted back to Magnus, reaching for his hand thoughtlessly and feeling infinitely better for the contact. Naturally, this meant several people were clinking glasses to get them to kiss, and Alec really had no problem with that. However, Magnus’ attention was consistently forced to people asking about the details of the proposal and wanting to see the ring. People, of course, were surprised it hadn’t been a huge, loud spectacle considering Magnus was involved. Alec was more surprised when Magnus leaned onto his arm, promptly informing them it was absolutely perfect. Like he meant it, too.

He’d had a moment of doubt after the wedding when Clary mentioned that she’d been surprised by his plan. Raphael and Cat had mentioned something as well. So Alec had taken his insecurities to the one person who would be totally honest with him when it came to Magnus: Ragnor. The Brit had shaken his head at him and grumbled about gays being so melodramatic.

“Alec, Magnus is utterly devoted to you. He would sell me down the river if it meant helping you. Thank the heavens that choice will never be placed before him, as it is unflattering to all of us.”
“Ragnor--”

He’d held up a hand. “You could have proposed with a paperclip, and Magnus would have treated it like precious metal. Because it came from you.”

“You don’t think he deserved more? I mean, they’re right. Magnus likes a spectacle.”

“But you don’t, Alec, and that is the beginning and the end of it. Would he have enjoyed it? Of course, the man is ridiculous and enjoys the ridiculous, but Magnus picked you for a reason. If you ask me, he was probably insanely jealous that all of those other people were around. Magnus... in my opinion, he considers you to be the only thing that’s his. Bloody barmy, yes, but true nonetheless.” Alec opened his mouth to argue, but Ragnor ignored it. “Magnus doesn’t like to share you, Alec. Never has. What you did was perfect. I can’t imagine anything he would have loved more. Now the wedding... I’m anticipating ice sculptures of the Chairman, butterflies released into the open air, and fireworks over a watery horizon...”

In the present moment, Alec caught Ragnor’s gaze. The latter dipped his head and lifted his glass in their direction. Magnus always said Alec had given him a family, but in reality, it was a two-way street. Alec honestly couldn’t imagine life without Magnus’ stitched-together, ragtag bunch, and he didn’t want to.

*

The party ended just as Magnus recounted the proposal for the 613th time, having streamlined his script by the 5th. Everyone except for Maryse, Simon, and Izzy had gone home already. Robert was just now making his exit, having congratulated them for the third time. Alec shook his hand, behaving with too much reserve for Magnus’ peace of mind. He’d hoped Robert would have patched things up with his son before this moment, but it didn’t seem likely to happen anytime soon. Magnus was merely going to wait for the opportune time to overstep the line and prevent mayhem at his own damn wedding.

Maryse relaxed almost completely the second Robert was out the door. Magnus noticed Alec noticing, too. The whole thing was too tangled, but Maryse had been an absolute angel for the whole evening, so he couldn’t muster a single complaint about it. Part of him knew she’d been in hosting-mode to keep her mind off her ex-husband’s presence, but it didn’t mean she was relaxed about it. Magnus took pity and asked for her continued help in the kitchen. Alec reached for and squeezed his hand as he passed him, probably seeing the offer for what it was.
They rinsed out dishes together in silence for a long while, passing things between them wordlessly, not acknowledging the tension.

“I know I’m not always the easiest person,” she started quietly.

“You really don’t have to--”

“Yes, I do,” she insisted with a firmness that grabbed the whole of his attention. “You came into our lives at what possibly might have been the worst time in this family’s history.” Magnus cleared his throat, uncomfortable, but Maryse was nodding. “And I don’t think we would have gotten through it without you.” He truly felt like he’d been slapped and froze completely. “Alec certainly wouldn’t have, not as well as he did, and not with such a perfect outcome. I was so angry for so long because I never wanted his life to be hard. Certainly not as hard as mine was. And I thought he was making everything harder than it had to be. I thought it was my fault.” She shrugged. “But it got him here. To you. So.” She breathed out sharply. “I stand by everything. Every decision I ever made. It’s what he needed.” Maryse cupped his cheek. “You’re what he needed.”

Magnus, absolutely stunned, felt the tears pricking at his eyes. He was starting to understand where Alec got his blunt sincerity from. Honestly, he felt like he was holding his breath and couldn’t release it. Maryse cleared her throat and batted at the tears which were slipping from her own eyes.

“Anyway. I know it’s probably overstepping, and that you’ll hire a planner, but if you need anything, any help--”

“Thank you,” Magnus breathed out shakily, not able to manage much more than that. She smiled and pulled him in for a hug.

“Thank you ,” she whispered. “Thank you for loving my boy.”

*A*

Alec stepped into the kitchen just as his mother reached out to hug Magnus. Even though she whispered it, he heard what she said, and his chest went tight. She really had no idea how much she affected Magnus when she was kind to him in any way. He’d mentioned once to Alec that he’d never had any kind of maternal presence in his life, and that Maryse was sometimes overwhelming in that capacity, no matter how much Magnus tried to distance himself from it. Not that he’d ever admit that to Alec’s mother. Alec smiled to himself; this would probably prompt a need to watch
He ducked back into the living room in search for the aberrant cat, who had been mightily displeased once the number of humans in his space hit the ten mark. Alec couldn’t remember if they’d put him in the bedroom or not. Hopefully--

Alec noticed Izzy sitting out on the patio, hands folded over her belly in that indicative kind of way. She looked peaceful out there, with Brooklyn as her backdrop. Alec couldn’t wait for the babies to come. She and Clary would be such good mothers, and his own mother was going to be so excited to have little ones around again. Sometimes he saw her looking a little too wistfully at Madzie when she was being particularly cute. It was time, and everyone was ready for it.

“It’s good for her, you know,” Simon said, having come from the bathroom, apparently. Alec looked over at him, brow arched in question. He felt too content to speak. Simon gestured toward his general direction. “You getting married. Or, knowing that you’re getting married. She’s been...I don’t know, anxious, I guess?”

“About me?”

Simon bobbled his head. “Sort of. What with the pregnancy and Jace and Clary...I think she just felt torn. Sometimes she thinks she’s your only protector, and the baby will definitely take her energy away from that.”

Alec snorted softly with a shake of his head. “That’s crazy.”

Simon shrugged with his mouth. “Not really. I guess she just feels better knowing that she has an official stand-in. That she can officially pass the torch.”

Alec scowled, “And what about Max?” It was Simon’s turn to snort.

“Please. Max is tougher than all of you combined. Kid’s always got a plan, so Izzy never worries.” Alec wanted to argue, but he really didn’t care to, so he just nodded in defeat. Izzy had always tried too hard to make things easier for him. He loved her for it, he did, but he wished she would worry less. Simon clapped him on the shoulder.

“We’re all really happy for you. Not surprised, but happy anyway.”
“Thanks, Si.”

“Well, I’m gonna try to pry her away, force her to get some rest.”

“Need help?” he asked with a grin.

“Nah, I have a secret stash of ice cream to tempt her.” He lifted his brows and went to Izzy. Alec chuckled, thinking that Simon knew his baby sister a little too well for her peace of mind.

Simon was out there for less than a minute before Izzy was on her feet and dashing into the kitchen to get her mother, who was getting a ride home with them. The two women came back into the living room, Magnus in tow, and hugged Alec tightly, kissing his cheeks, congratulating him and demanding that he call or text or whatever. Alec honestly stopped listening because they were being crazy considering he saw them all of the time. He hugged and kissed them back, and maneuvered them toward the door, which Simon had graciously opened. He nodded continuously while he pressed the button for the elevator, and ushered them inside once it arrived.

“Kay thanks bye, love you!” he said as the doors closed. Alec immediately spun on his heel and shut the front door behind him, sinking against it. The silence in their apartment echoed in his head, still buzzing, and just like that the adrenaline and antsy-ness evaporated, leaving him extremely tired. Alec refocused to see Magnus leaning against the wall near the kitchen, watching him with no small amount of amusement.

“I do realize that this is just the start of it--” he said slowly.

“But you’re already sick of it?” Magnus laughed, somehow bright and happy in the face of Alec’s surliness. Alec bobbled his head and pushed off the door.

“Sick of it is a little strong, but…”

“But,” Magnus confirmed, moving to accept Alec’s embrace. As usual, Alec immediately relaxed into it, feeling calmer than he had in roughly two days.

“Thank you for letting me make a fuss,” Magnus continued.
“I’ll always let you make a fuss,” Alec mumbled against the fabric of his jacket. He really felt too comfortable in this position, it simply wasn’t sane. Magnus smelled really good, too, and Alec definitely knew he was getting laid because he was being incredibly obvious about wearing the same cologne he had on their first date. Alec would remember that scent until the day he died. Magnus’ hand went to the nape of his neck, fingers slipping into the short hairs there, nails scratching.

“You do know you’re absolutely perfect, right? It’s obscenely unfair.” Alec pulled back with a laugh, lifting his hands to Magnus’ neck so he could tilt his head back.

“Well...if I am perfect, then my taste in people is perfect, which makes you perfect by default.”

Magnus rolled his eyes, lips forming a barely there, exasperated smile. Alec smirked.

“That totally worked, didn’t it?”

Magnus sighed, spinning on his heel in the direction of the bedroom. “I hate myself.”

Alec chased after him, catching him around the waist, so that they had to walk together. He nuzzled into the side of his head and ear before nipping it.

“C’mon papi, if I’m perfect, my lines must be too--”

“Perfectly terrible, yes.”

“You love it.”

“No, I hate it.”

“Then why are you hard?”
“Because your hand’s down my pants, you big weirdo.”

Alec nipped at his neck, kicking the door shut behind them. “So hostile.”

“I’m gonna get real hostile if you don't take your pants off soon.”

“Hostile and bossy, tsk, tsk.”

“Whatcha gonna do 5-0? Cuff me?”

“We can get more creative than that, papi.” Alec grabbed Magnus up by the face again, bringing their lips together in a searing kiss that was nothing like the PG versions people had been calling for all night. Alec focused on keeping their mouths together while Magnus’ hands scrambled for buttons and zippers. Alec walked them steadily back toward the bed, smiling and teasing him in between kisses. They were hasty as they scrambled to shed the last of their clothing and crash onto the bed.

So hasty, in fact, that they crashed right onto Chairman Meow. Who was heartily sick of his humans at this point in time, thank you very much.
Chapter 101

Magnus was perfectly aware that an imbalance had been created within his relationship with Alec. Especially given the whole hostage situation and then the proposal and then his tolerance with the party. Alec was so giving and so self-sacrificing that it was difficult not to want to give it back twice over.

Magnus, however, was having some trouble coming up with ideas. Not that he was lacking in them. He was Magnus Bane. He had a thousand ideas for romantic gestures, big and small. He could have implemented every single one of them without breaking a sweat, and Alec would probably love...most of it. Not all of it, but most of it. He liked anything Magnus did; he was biased that way. No. Magnus wanted something special. Private. Something that wouldn’t attract so much attention that Alec would be uncomfortable. Something meaningful and memorable.

Which meant he had to talk to the two people who would set him straight: Jace and Raphael. He invited both of them to Pandemonium, somewhere Alec would never set foot in unless forced, and sat across from them anxiously bouncing his leg while he explained the situation. Raphael looked bored, but Jace just looked confused.

“You want to what?”

Magnus scowled. “I want to make a gesture. A romantic one. Make a statement.”

“I thought you already said yes?”

“Jace--” Raphael groused, with a scowl on his face.

“Why are you asking me of all people? Why not Clary or Izzy? Or a hundred thousand other people?”

Magnus set his lips in a firm line. “You know your brother best. Clary is...highly emotive and Isabelle is all flash. Alexander appreciates a little more subtlety.”

Jace nodded, fingered the neck of his bottle, brow furrowed in thought. “He gave you the Lightwood ring, right?” Magnus flashed it in his face. He hadn’t taken it off since Alec had slipped it on his finger. “Well, that’s the thing about my brother. He likes to...mark his territory. Clearly.
He appreciates good symbolism.” Jace patted his chest over his heart, probably right where the Lightwood family crest was permanently inked into his skin.

“Symbolism.”

“Blatant symbolism.”

They looked at each other pretty intensely for a couple of moments. Magnus wanted to be sure Jace was really saying what he thought he was saying, and that he truly meant it. If he did...well, it would be an incredible thing. It was the type of love and acceptance Magnus hadn’t experienced until well into adulthood.

“What the hell are you two talking about?” Raphael asked finally and irritably.

“We’re talking about a gesture you can’t take off.” Jace nodded. “And you’d be cool with that? Just like that?”

Jace smirked. “Just like that.” He tilted his bottle in Magnus’ direction. “I’ll talk to Clary when I get home.”

“Okay,” Raphael said as Jace took a drink of his beer, “whatever. The next step of your problem is picking out a ring.”

“That should be easy enough--”

“You’ll be swindled in half a moment. I insist on going with you.”

Magnus turned a dreamy grin on his best friend. His gruff insult was a front for wanting to be involved in the process. He got competitive that way when it came to Magnus, so he probably didn’t like that Blondie was already so involved. Raphael didn’t know it, but Magnus had already planned to ask him to be his best man in an incredibly dramatic fashion. Actually, his face journey alone would be extremely entertaining. So, Magnus just smiled and patted his cheek lovingly.

“I insist on you coming with me, then.”
Raphael grunted, but even he couldn’t suppress the pleased look on his face.

* 

Ring shopping was quite the ordeal. Between the two men, they knew all of the best jewelers in New York. They decided to make a day of it; sending work calls to voicemail and forwarding emails to assistants. Magnus hadn’t had decent quality time with Raphael in a while anyway, so he was plenty pleased to be fussed over. Raphael had booked several showings at various dealers and even offered to set up a viewing for custom jewelers at the Brooklyn office. Magnus dismissed the custom jewelry offhand because it would take too long.

“I don’t want to put off the wedding longer than necessary.”

“What do you mean?” Raphael asked idly as they walked out of the office, fiddling with his phone. He missed Magnus’ shrug.

“I want to get married this year.”

“What?” Raphael turned on him, looking horrified. “That’s--”

“In December. That gives us five months. People will be around for the holidays, and Alec can get time off for a honeymoon after New Years.”

“You’re going to plan a wedding in five months,” Raphael repeated incredulously.

“I’m going to have help, Raph, I’m not completely insane.”

“Yes, you are. You got engaged at his brother’s wedding, and now you’re getting married in the same year.”

“I don’t see why we should have to wait. Alec isn’t going to want some extravagant, drawn-out affair. We’ll invite his immediate family, the important co-workers, and my people. I can’t imagine
the guest list going over 50 people and a cat.”

Magnus turned his head to see Raphael’s expression, and he looked absolutely gobsmacked. Instead of responding right away, his friend lifted a finger and poked him in the cheek while they waited on the curb for Ernesto. Magnus frowned, batting his hand away.

“Who are you and what have you done with Magnus Bane?” Raphael demanded, his brow furrowed deeply. Magnus scowled. “Clary and Jace had over 300 guests.”

“Just because--”

“Your cat’s 10th birthday party had over 500 guests.”

“Yes, I remember.”

“You shut down a city block for it.”

“I just said I remember,” Magnus grumbled right as Ernesto pulled up. He opened the door jerkily and slid in. Raphael followed, still peppering him with questions and inane commentary about his questionable party planning history. He cited several incidents similar to Chairman Meow’s birthday party/rave, all of which were annoyingly true. Thankfully, Raphael had forwarded Ernesto a list of addresses, otherwise, they would have been stuck on the curb for at least ten minutes. Magnus really was going to have to give his driver a raise. And put him and his family on the guest list. He smiled even as Raphael ranted because he knew Alec would absolutely love that.

By the time they got to the first shop, Raphael was all ranted-out and still bewildered. So, Magnus stopped him before they went in, if only to settle his feathers.

“Look. I understand that it seems...implausible that I would be content with something on a smaller scale. But trust me when I say, it is absolutely what I want. Alec won’t want a bunch of people he definitely doesn’t know, and people I barely associate with, celebrating with us.” He brushed lint off of Raphael’s shirt, even as the man frowned deeply at him. “Besides, I absolutely intend to throw an after-rave at Pandemonium which he will be forced to endure before the honeymoon. Capiche?” he finished with a lift of his brow. Raphael just tsked and went into the store.

The next few hours consisted of bickering with Raphael and long, extensive conversations about
Alec and his personality. He’d want silver, not gold. Something flat and not too flashy because he was a cop. Definitely something that wouldn’t throw off his aim while shooting. But not too simple either. Alec would be totally accepting of a simple silver band, but Magnus wanted something unique. He saw none of that at the six different stores they went to. The salespeople were irritated by his incredibly high standards and low sense of what he was really looking for. Granted, his parameters were quite vague, but he wanted to feel his way through it. Once he saw the perfect ring, he would know it was the perfect ring. Anything else was subpar, no matter how exquisite or expensive.

They were about to get in the car to go to the next store, and Magnus was feeling prickly and irritated. He thought he’d probably smack the next blonde woman who asked him to describe Alec’s eyes or his interests or his style. The men were far more intrusive in their questions, but he was sick of summarizing. He’d looked at a thousand rings and none of them were right. Raphael prevented him from getting into the car.

“Let me make a few calls, okay? I think I have an idea.”

“An idea?” Magnus snipped grumpily. Raphael smiled sympathetically and rubbed his shoulder.

“Yes, because I really don’t need to watch your fiance book you for the homicide of some poor shop girl trying to make it in the big city.”

“She was exasperating !”

“I don’t disagree. But you’re frustrated and require food, and there’s no point in trying to do something for Alec when you’re a bundle of negativity. Am I right?”

Magnus scowled and nearly stamped his foot. “You’re right.”

“Good. Sushi it is.”

He narrowed his eyes at his best friend. “I hate when you two collude against me.” But Raphael merely smirked and opened the car door for him.
Regardless of Raphael’s saintly patience and generosity, Magnus was decidedly not optimistic that he would find anything worthwhile the next time with him either. Raphael was very hush-hush about the whole thing, insisting that Magnus not know where they were going so he couldn’t poo poo it offhand. By the time they arrived at the small shop, located in a loft above a tourist trap in Claremont of all places, Magnus totally understood the subterfuge. Instead of commenting, he fixed Raphael with a suspicious glare, slipped his sunglasses over his eyes and went in wordlessly.

The shop looked just as antiseptic as the other places, but Magnus decided to give Raphael five minutes before waltzing out. The counter had been left unattended, so after ringing the bell, Magnus perused what was laid out. He wasn’t exactly impressed.

“You’re making a face,” Raphael pointed out with some level of amusement Magnus didn’t understand.

“Men’s rings are either boring,” he pointed to a plain gold band, “or gaudy,” and then at a square, diamond-crusted monstrosity. “Of which, Alec is neither.”

“A man of discerning taste, I see,” the salesman said as he walked up to the counter. He was prim and too slick, and Magnus had a sinking feeling he knew exactly how he and Raphael were acquainted. Again. Not impressed.

Magnus smiled thinly at him. “Obviously. Spare me the act.”

“Magnus,” Raphael chided, “behave. I didn’t bring you all the way to Claremont for nothing.”

“I should hope not,” Magnus grumbled.

“Derek, could you bring out that special collection I called you about earlier?” Raphael asked gently.

“Of course, sir.”
The man brought out a tray of rings which didn’t sparkle or shine too much. They looked relatively unique but nice-looking. Shock of all shocks, they actually looked like something Alec would wear. Magnus’ eyes immediately landed on one near the side. It was a matte silver on the inside, with a dark gold band in the middle and two stripes of wood bracketing the gold. He’d never seen anything like it.

“My, you do have discerning taste. That is a handcrafted ring from a relatively new collection to our store from a couple in Missouri. It’s made of Indian sandalwood,” he said as Magnus traced the lines of wood, “sandblasted titanium,” Magnus traced the inner shell too, “and gold shavings within a resin. The jeweler uses the remnants of her other items to make this one. I like this one in particular because the gold has a pretty greenish hue you don’t see in the polished, standard yellow gold. That’s not something you could replicate in a lab, in my opinion. I’ve seen people try, certainly, but it’s never quite the same.”

“I know what you mean,” Magnus murmured nonsensically. “I’ll take it.”

“Are you sure?” Raphael asked. “That’s the first--”

“It’s perfect. This is it.”

*

“Do I get to see the ring?”

“Nope.”

“What? Why not?”

“Because it’s a surprise, that’s why!”

“It’s my ring!”
“And it’s my surprise! You got to propose, I get to surprise.”

“That’s ridiculous!”

“Maybe, but I’m sticking to it.”

“Fine. Then you better get me one of those rubber stand-in rings cause I want something on my finger.”

Magnus snagged Alec’s hand with a smirk, and slid said stand-in ring on his finger. “Already did.” Alec flushed, looking between Magnus and ring, stupidly pleased considering how annoyed he was.

“I hate you.”

“Love you too, angel.”

*

Chapter End Notes

Chapter 103

Chapter Summary

Wedding Planning!

Magnus viciously threw his phone into the couch, just as Alec was walking through the door. He slumped at his faux pas. Bugger. Because Alec stood there, shocked, with his bag over his shoulder and his eyebrows reaching for his hairline. Instead of appeasing him, Magnus went to the drink cart to sulk like the brat he felt like being at present and ignored his absolutely perfect fiance in favor of drinking the stress away. He heard the door click shut gently and Alec’s bag hitting the floor. He didn’t have to hear Alec’s footfall to know that he’d come to stand behind him and slid his arms around his waist. Pouting, Magnus fell back against his chest, dropping his head back to Alec’s shoulder. Surprise of all surprise, Alec waited patiently for Magnus to snap.

“I may have spoken to every wedding planner in the city. Possibly the state. Haven’t gotten to the tri-state area just yet,” Magnus grumbled, folding his arms over Alec’s.

“No luck?”

Magnus snorted. “Evidently I have too many parameters, and the only planners willing to meet them are terrible and too eager. I really would prefer it if my wedding details didn’t end up all over the internet as some tacky inspo board.”

“Huh?”

Now he sighed and patted Alec’s forearm. “Nothing, darling, don’t worry about it. I suppose I shall manage.”

Alec moved into his line of sight without releasing him fully. “You have way too much going at work to do everything. There’s really nobody that you liked?” he asked skeptically. Magnus immediately pulled his lips in and felt his eyes widen just a little. Too much to pass inspection, anyway. Alec crossed his arms, expression going from concerned to salty in less than a second. “Spill it.”

Magnus cleared his throat, speaking as airily as he could muster, and gestured dismissively. “I’m
just not entirely sure that you’ll be on board--”

“Magnus.”

“It’s your day, too, and I don’t want to create any more anxiety than strictly necessary--”

“Dear god, just tell me!”

Magnus let out a sharp, steadying breath and steeled himself.

“I want to ask your mother.”

And just like that, all of the sound was sapped out of the air and Alec’s lips pursed in his salty-bitch face, how can you even look of complete displeasure. Magnus was quite familiar with that look because it was so often pointed in someone else’s direction instead of his own.

“Hear me out--”

“Okay,” Alec said immediately, cutting off the very reasonable argument Magnus had scripted while his wedding planner candidates blathered on about his “aesthetic” and what they could do to showcase it with a bigger budget. Magnus froze.

“Okay?”

“Yeah,” Alec answered with a nod, stepping forward to run his hands up and down Magnus’ arms. He actually looked serious too. “I think you both get along, you know how to wrangle her in, and she’s been restless since retiring, so it’ll give her ideas on what to do next.”

Magnus shifted his weight, tilting his head to look up at him. He scanned Alec’s expression for any hint of doubt or deceit. Sometimes he eagerly agreed to things just to make Magnus happy, which was not what Magnus was going for in this situation.

“You’re serious,” he breathed out, more statement than question.
“Yeah,” Alec repeated with a laugh. “I am serious. Call Mom, ask for her help. I’m sure she’ll jump on it.”

*

“Jump” was an underwhelming word choice in the face of Maryse’s actual reaction to being asked to plan their wedding. It was more of a full-body tackle. Over the phone, of course, because Magnus didn’t have a death wish. So he scheduled a formal meeting with her, giving her permission to invite Clary and Izzy, who would, at the very least, be a little helpful. If only to ease any initial tension.

Magnus set it for a Sunday morning, providing brunch essentials sans the alcohol since two pregnant women would be in attendance. Maryse came in holding two extremely thick binders, the girls trailing her with 4 and 5-month baby bumps and bags full of what looked like samples. Half of the table was used for food, the other half for spreading out materials. Magnus completely ignored the latter in favor of serving food first, especially since Alec was using him as a human shield against the wedding planning space. He just rolled his eyes and ordered Izzy and Clary to eat. Not that they needed much prompting. Maryse reluctantly took a muffin when Alec glared at her.

“All right. First things first,” Maryse said when they were all settled. “Venues.”

“Brooklyn Botanical Gardens this December,” Magnus said without looking up. “Talk to Gabin.”

Izzy’s brows shot straight up. “The botanical gardens this winter? Magnus, are you kidding, it’s impossible to book that!”

He flapped his hand dismissively, ignoring the shocked expressions around him. “The events coordinator owes me like...several hundred favors. Besides, he’ll love you Maryse, and he’s a good person to know because he’s gossipy as hell and knows everyone who’s anyone. Tell him it’s for me, and he’ll jump, I promise.” He astutely did not address the plan a wedding in five months elephant in the room. He’d already discussed it with Alec, who didn’t care in the least what date he chose. Actually, his exact words were “we could go to the courthouse tomorrow morning and I’d be ecstatic.” And he’d said it over breakfast the other day before Magnus even looked cute, so he knew he meant it.

Maryse was making notes with a tight expression. “All right. Botanical Gardens it is.” She lifted her head with a legitimate smile. “Easy.”
“So, what are we thinking for colors?”

“Gold,” Magnus said at the same time Alec said, “Burgundy.”

They turned and looked at each other, confused.

“You look good in gold (burgundy),” they said simultaneously. They drew their heads back in tandem watching each other for a moment before turning back to the women across from them. Magnus shrugged.

“Well, that was easy, too.”

Maryse sighed through her nose. “Burgundy and gold, it is.”

* 

They made lists of the vendors they would need to contact and lists upon lists of options. His mother was going to vet them, narrow them down, and then bring everything to Magnus for final decisions. By the time they got to flowers, Alec was so bored out of his mind he thought he would cry. There was a lot of bickering over the catering. Both his mother and Magnus knew far too many caterers and had too many opinions about the possible menus, making it difficult to narrow down a list.

“Why don’t we go traditional?” Clary suggested. “Chicken or fish? Simple sides--”

“Clary please ,” his mother said at the same time Magnus said, “I am not serving fish at my own wedding!” Alec, for once, thought he was going to have to be the one to defend Clary, of all things. But then Izzy spoke up, smacking her hands down on the table.

“All right,” Izzy said, “time for Plan C.”

“What happened to Plan B?” his mother asked.
Izzy frowned. “They’re gay. They don’t use Plan B.”

Everyone stared at her until Alec broke and let out an extremely undignified snort.

“Oh my god,” Magnus sneered.

“Isabelle, do try to be mature--”

“Oh my god,” Magnus interrupted, “it’s genetic.” But the targets of his quip barely heard him because they were too busy laughing.

“J-Ja-Jace told me that one!” Izzy cackled, reaching out to Alec. He hit the table in her direction, still laughing too hard to be normal. Clary was rubbing her eyes, obviously too tired and too pregnant for this. She’d been extremely irritable and low energy since she hit the four-month mark. Of course, Izzy was the opposite. She was practically glowing and bouncing with energy, not to mention 4 weeks further along in her own pregnancy. Their mother insisted that she’d been the same way, but Clary grumbled that it was “unnatural.” Jace wasn’t particularly thrilled with the glaring differences either, but he had enough common sense to keep his mouth shut. Alec, however, did not and continuously brought up how different their experiences were, amusing Izzy and pissing off Clary all at once. Raphael insisted it was because Alec was so very gay that he had no concept of self-preservation when it came to interacting with women. Magnus was just hoping that Alec didn’t provoke her into absolutely ruining their wedding photos by scarring him too horribly before the end of it.

So the debate about the food continued until it was loudly interrupted by Alec’s phone buzzing.

“Lydia?” Magnus asked quietly, knowing that was probably the case. Dead people were always interrupting his time with Alec. His fiance (!) shrugged lightly, a rueful grin on his lips.

“Gotta go. Case.”

“Text me.”

He nodded and got up to go for the door, and Magnus’ jaw dropped as he spread his arms out.
“Hey!” he shouted after him incredulously. Alec immediately swung around, wincing sheepishly, and jogged back to kiss his cheek before running out the door with a muffled *I love you*.

“Aww,” Clary cooed, “he’s trained.”

“Better than that,” Magnus grumbled, much to their amusement. But the annoyance faded completely when he got a text consisting of 20 x’s not a moment later. Weirdo didn’t like using emojis. Izzy looked over his shoulder to read and pulled back with a smirk.

“You two are the worst.”

“If worst means adorable in whatever heathen language you’re speaking, then yes, I agree,” Magnus mused, tapping out a response. It mostly consisted of sexual promises if he solved his case quickly. “Now back to the main point. I don’t care how trendy it is, we’re not doing *tapas* instead of a full meal…”
They were two months into the planning process before the discussion of their honeymoon was even broached. Which Magnus thought really said something about how much this was just a formality to them. Yes, yes, it was a celebration-declaration of their love, and absolutely deserved due credit and attention, but really, at the end of it, marriage was just a piece of paper and a title change. Magnus was already a part of the Lightwood family, and had been for some time. Alec was already included in his groupchats with his friends, and had been for some time. Their lives were so interwoven that there was no picking it apart. Marriage was just the official announcement. Plus Magnus was so busy with work and planning that he hadn’t even thought about the honeymoon until Alec brought it up.

Magnus was running late for the third time that week, and Alec had promised to have dinner on the table. If his fiance was annoyed about his perpetual tardiness, he didn’t mention it, and Magnus had no desire to provoke an argument. However, Alec had been much quieter than usual for a few days now, so that would eventually have to be addressed. Magnus was just hoping it wasn’t another round of nightmares that would escalate into full-scale panic attacks.

He walked in the door of their home, harried and irritated by his phone’s consistent dinging. Irritated to the point that he turned the thing off and shoved it under a couch cushion for a minute of peace. Even if Maryse was technically planning the wedding, people knew Magnus Bane was getting married and were, therefore, trying to push their services in his direction. A personal endorsement from him would go a long way for any business in the city. He tried to shove it aside as Alec walked up to kiss him hello.

It wasn’t as brief as it usually was, his kiss. Alec lingered, focusing his attention on Magnus’ bottom lip, and savoring it. Almost as if someone had flipped a switch, Magnus was instantly calmer. Fuck, if he could figure out how Alec knew his moods so well, he would bottle it up and sell it for a pretty penny. But then Alec nipped lightly, and Magnus’ jealous-monster side trashed that idea and set the can on fire.

“Long day?” Alec asked gently.

“The longest. If I have to hear one more pitch about menus, flowers, or baked goods, I’ll scream.”

“Papi, all you need to worry about is your suit. Mom’s got the rest of it.”

Magnus pulled a face. “My voicemail box filled up twice today.”
“Jesus fuck--”

“Yeah,” Magnus confirmed, as Alec led him toward the kitchen. Which happened to be a complete disaster area. “What’s all this?”

“Dinner!” Alec said brightly. “I-uh-I’ve been learning how to make some stuff…”

“I can see that…” Magnus sniffed the air for the first time. “I can smell that...Is that-?” he trailed off, pointing toward the dinner table and going to see what it was. He found several dishes that were extremely familiar to him, including kerak telor, which he hadn’t had since he was a child.

“You made kerak telor?”

“Yeah. It’s so much trickier than they say online. I think I got it right, but you’ll have to try it and decide.”

Magnus sat down, grabbing up a fork, but still eyed him skeptically. “What’s the occasion?”

“We’ve never had it.”

“What?”

“We have never had Indonesian food. Magnus, we’ve been to damn near every restaurant in Brooklyn, hell maybe Manhattan too, and we’ve never had Indonesian.”

Magnus took a bite of the kerak telor, making a slightly impressed face. “So what?”

“You don’t think that’s a little ridiculous?”

“No,” Magnus said around another mouthful. His brow furrowed. “Why are you pushing this so hard?”
“I’m not. I just thought it was time to...I don’t know, try it out.”

“Okay.” He wiped his mouth with a napkin and put his hands in his lap. “What’s going on?”

Alec took a deep breath to bolster himself. “I wanna talk about our honeymoon.”

Magnus slumped in his confusion. “Okay…”

“I--” He grimaced. “I want to go to Indonesia.”

“Absolutely not.” He spread his arms incredulously. “Why would you even ask that?”

*

“Magnus--”

“Alexander, I have no good memories of that place. None. I’ve spent my whole life escaping it. Why would I agree to take you to a place like that?”

“Look, I--” He sighed again and sat down, hands out in front of him. Alec had known this was going to be somewhat of a fight. Which is why he’d debated it for so long. “Do you remember when you asked to meet my parents that first time?”

“Vividly. You ran off and were MIA for three hours.”

Alec looked up at him with a smile and chuckled softly. “Yeah, yeah I did. Not my finest moment.”

“No,” Magnus agreed with a small sway. Alec laughed again.
“You could barely get a word out and I was shooting you down because I thought bringing my worlds together would end things between us. I was convinced and I was so angry that you would even consider it.” Magnus nodded, but he didn’t say anything. He didn’t argue, but he didn’t agree either. Magnus wasn’t like Alec. Verbal assent and consent were absolutely required.

“I understand what that feels like. I know that place...I know what it’s like to hate your own home.” Magnus brow furrowed as his jaw worked out tension. “What I’m trying to say is that we didn’t end because of my parents. Hell, I think it made us stronger. Cause that’s what it’s been, you and me against everything else. All of this bullshit? It isn’t us, it’s them.” Magnus grabbed his hand and squeezed, looking like he was frozen in place. “If we go, we can make better memories there. Because...I love you more than that asshole could ever hate you.” Magnus offered up a broken smile, letting out a half whimper. “And I think...I hope...that you love me more than you hate your dad.”

The corners of Magnus’ mouth slowly lifted, his face scrunching in that adorable face he made when he was too happy to try to look attractive. Alec thought it was probably his most beautiful face, its best state. Magnus put his hands to Alec’s face and leaned forward to kiss him sweetly. It was a soft and short kiss, too brief and yet very much needed.

“Yes, I do.” He nodded, sniffing. “I do love you more than that.”

“So you’ll think about it?”

Magnus smiled again and let his thumb drift over Alec’s bottom lip. Alec submitted to his ministrations, his fingers memorizing the lines of his face.

“I’ll do you one better.”

Alec felt an insane surge of happiness, “Really?” Magnus didn’t answer, just nodded happily when Alec all but crawled into his lap while peppering his face with kisses and thank yous.
Chapter 105

Chapter Summary

Magnus handles his business.

The next morning, Magnus was wide awake at 4:06 AM. He’d had trouble sleeping, even if Alec had valiantly attempted to wear him out. Alec was sleeping peacefully, his face half-planted in his pillow and limbs spread out starfish. He’d become something of a bed hog since he’d moved in, and Magnus was seriously considering upping their bed game to a California King. He smiled to himself. Not that it would make much of a difference. Maybe he was a bed hog, but Alec didn’t let Magnus get too far away from him, even in his sleep. Which was his current predicament.

Alec usually woke first. His job required him to be in early, and he was stupidly regimented, unlike Magnus who could get up at noon and no one would question it. Alec had a possessive arm flung over Magnus’ middle, which didn’t seem to be going anywhere without some help. So Magnus slid, carefully and gently, out of his grasp and scooched along the bed so as not to disturb him. Alec did grumble and reach for his warmth. Magnus just leaned over the bed and kissed the back of his head.

He’d leave a note.

Despite what everyone else seemed to believe, Magnus was perfectly capable of using public transportation. And he certainly wasn’t going to disturb Ernesto so early on a weekend. He took a train all the way to Queens. Calvary Cemetery, specifically. Calvary Cemetery where Will and Jem were buried. Magnus hadn’t been there in years. He’d gone on the year anniversary, and not since. It was just too hard for him. He couldn’t face Will, not when he was making so many questionable decisions. His years with Alec? Maybe he’d felt a little resentful. Here Magnus had met the one person Will would have approved of, and Will wasn’t around for it. The ironic bastard.

He brought flowers. Of course, he brought flowers for both Will and Jem. White roses because, as usual, he was too much, and couldn’t help it. He placed them down gently in front of their side-by-side headstones. He brushed a hand over Jem’s, wiping away some dirt. Poor kid never got a chance to get his second chance. Then he looked back at Will’s. Something solid and heavy settled in his gut. Headstones were very final.

“I know it’s been awhile. It shouldn’t have been so long, truth be told, but you’re never too far out of my thoughts.” He let his voice trail off. There was a chill in the air. Fall was coming. He and Alec’s anniversary had been weeks ago, but he could have sworn the temperature was the same as
“I thought about bringing Alec here to meet you. But he knows you. I made sure of that. I’ve told him everything I know about you.” He held up his hand. “Except that one time in Belize, I know you’re still sensitive about that.” Magnus let out a long breath, trying to focus on why he’d come in the first place.

“I’m going to do whatever it takes to make him happy. Alec, I mean. I’m going to Indonesia for our honeymoon for him. Insane, right? Remember when you tried to get me to go? That was a hell of a fight... I just wanted you to know that. Cause I learned it from you, even if I did think you were stupid at the time...Everyone keeps asking why Alec was the one to propose, if we’d talked about it. We didn’t, of course. But I think he knew. I think...I think he knew that I couldn’t make myself go to that place because…” He bounced on the balls of his feet. “Because I hate making life decisions without you. I know it’s stupid, trust me I know, but….I never imagined my future without you in it. I never imagined being happy without you standing next to me, and--” he broke off, throat clenching tight, a tear slipping. “Fuck, I said I wasn’t going to do this! I’m happy, Will. Fuck am I happy. And that’s what you always wanted, that’s what you needed from me, and it’s five years too late, but Raph says I don’t know the meaning of the word punctual, so…” He sighed heavily, shoving his hands into his pockets. “I’m never letting you go, but I am going to move on. I have moved on. Alec is...he’s everything. I hate myself a little for it, but he’s fit so easily into the space you left. I told myself...after you died I told myself that whoever I ended up with...it just mattered more because you weren’t there. Who gave a shit about who I slept with when I had you, right? Everything has just been harder since you died.” He sniffed and wiped the tears from the corner of his eye.

“Whatever. I love you and I miss you, and wherever you are I hope that you’re proud of me.”

* 

By the time Magnus left the cemetery, it was coming on seven in the morning. It was going to take an hour and a half for him to get into Manhattan. Specifically to the Police Commissioner’s office, where he was going to finally have a long overdue conversation with Robert.

It did take him a significant amount of time to get through security, especially since he didn’t exactly have a scheduled appointment. Magnus sat patiently through all of it, though, knowing that this would be where Robert was at his weakest. In public, in front of colleagues who he wouldn’t want privy to his private life, leaving him vulnerable and, best of all, compliant. Magnus was in no mood for games. He breezed past the assistant, who looked like a zombie staring at a computer screen with coffee in his hand.

“Magnus?” Robert said as he swanned into his office. “I wasn’t aware we had an appointment…”
“We don’t,” Magnus clipped, lifting a hand to cut him off. He immediately went to the conveniently placed drink cart and poured himself something without being offered. He was going to need it to have this conversation. Robert was tapping his pen to his desk, face drawn in anxiety.

“Is something wrong with Alec?” he asked hesitantly. Magnus shook his head.

“No, Alexander is perfectly fine. But this visit is highly unauthorized, so I’d appreciate you keeping it to yourself.”

“I don’t understand--”

“The tension between the two of you has gone on for too long, and it is officially absurd. I’ve let it slide because, let’s be honest, your son can be quite convincing. But, I won’t tolerate it at my own wedding, so now is the perfect opportunity for you to make amends.” Magnus set down his glass and clasped his hands behind his back, a habit he’d picked up from his lovely fiance. Robert sat behind his desk, eyeing him warily, as if he were some rabid animal preparing to strike. Oh, he was prepared, but it wouldn’t be necessary. Robert sighed, looking ready to argue.

“You have fixed things with all of your children except for Alec. Why is that?” Magnus snapped irritably. He truly did not have the patience for Robert’s nonsense, especially not at this juncture. Robert had the nerve to roll his eyes, and Magnus saw red.

“You know how he can be--”

Magnus held up a finger. “Let me stop you right there. Because I think you’re forgetting that I’ve been here since the start of,” he made circular gestures in Robert’s direction, “all of this. I was the one who witnessed how devastated Alec was. I was the one who cleaned up your mess. I was the one who suffered through a good many of my prized and private moments with your son when they were ruined because of you. So don’t you dare try to tell me what Alec is like because I know exactly what your vapid, little fling did to him.”

Robert let out a long exhale through his nose. It was very obvious that he knew a shouting match with Magnus would be fruitless. Right now, Magnus held all of the power. Robert’s wife and children wouldn’t spend more than a second considering which side to take, and it wouldn’t be Robert’s. He was at a clear disadvantage. It wasn’t that Magnus liked it per se, but he could appreciate it. He hadn’t been in this position very often before in his life; people backing him unconditionally. Magnus moved forward, putting his hands on Robert’s desk.
“Here’s the bottom line: you will fix things with Alec, or you will not be at our wedding. Because I won’t tolerate *anything* upsetting him on that one specific day, least of all you. Do I make myself clear?”

Robert nodded.

“Good. See you Sunday, then.”

And so Magnus left to return home to his probably still-sleeping fiance, hoping he could convince him to stay in bed all day and order in.
Chapter 106

Chapter Summary

New chapters 99-106

The wedding was a month away, set for December 30th. Magnus hadn’t wanted a Christmas or a New Years wedding, but the Botanical Gardens, specifically the Palm House, would be decorated for the season anyway. Their coordinate, Gabin, assured them that their colors and the decor wouldn’t clash in any way. And Alec’s mother was going to make sure of it.

But even though his mother was in charge of the wedding, that didn’t mean she was in charge of Magnus’ mental state. Which, by all accounts (primarily Cat’s), was not totally fantastic at that moment. Cat called Alec on her lunch break, asking him to check in.

“And when I say check in, I mean--”

“Interrogate and force self-care. Got it.”

“God, you are an angel. See you tomorrow!” Cat smacked a kiss over the phone and promptly hung up, probably to go stitch someone up or get puked on, which was her norm. Alec just closed out the call and pulled up some websites on his computer, looking for something very, very specific.

Alec left work at 3, having clocked some overtime, and went to run a couple of errands before circling back to Mario’s. He and Magnus were scheduled to have dinner there tonight, which meant that Magnus had been there for at least two hours working. Much to everyone’s surprise, the whole being-held-hostage in his own restaurant had not deterred him from entering it in the least. He did, however, have a beefy security guard posted at the host stand. And it was one that didn’t recognize Alec, so he eyed him warily when Alec came in the door maybe just a little too fast. Thankfully, Helen caught sight of him and walked him over to where Magnus was set up, talking his ear off about all the latest gossip. Alec processed about 30% of it because Magnus was sat in the middle of deep piles of paper with a frown on his face that Alec had the itch to kiss away. He didn’t even have to say anything to get Magnus’ attention, his eyes leapt up from his work the second he was in the aisle.

“Alexander!” he chirped happily. “You’re here--five hours early?”
“Yeah,” Alec agreed vaguely as he bent to kiss him. “I am. These are for you.” He handed him the deep red bouquet, he’d picked up down the street.

“Flowers?”

“Dahlias,” he amended. “And before you ask, there’s no occasion. Also,” he set down the bottle of wine, making Magnus gasp in delighted surprise.

“You found it!”

“Had to make some calls, but yeah,” he said bending to kiss him again. “I did.” He straightened, turned, and started making his way toward the kitchen.

“Where are you going?” Magnus pouted. Alec gestured in the direction of the table covered with papers.

“Have you eaten?” he accused lightly. When Magnus’s neck disappeared into his shoulders and he pulled his lips in, Alec tilted his head in vindication and continued his trek. He stopped at the bar and told Mike to get a vase of some kind to Magnus’ table, and ducked back into the kitchen.

They all greeted him cheerfully, and Alec went right to the chef.

“Signore Alec!” He lifted a hand in greeting instead of shaking. “What can I do for you? Signore Bane had not ordered, has he?”

“No, no Mario, he’s buried in paper. As usual,” he added with a scowl. “But he does need to eat. So when you get a chance?”

“Sure, sure, Signore, whatever you like.”

“That shrimp dish you did with the lemon a few weeks ago? He really liked that one.”
Mario kissed his fingers. “Perfecto. I make it so healthy his doctor think he cured, yeah?”

“Grazie, capocuoco.”

“Anything for you, Signore, just say the word!” He immediately turned around and started bellowing at some of the commis chefs, who apparently were doing everything wrong.

Alec went back out to see Magnus arranging his flowers in a vase and chatting happily with Mike, looking much more relaxed than when he first came in. He brightened even further when he caught sight of Alec. He went back over to sit down, and stole a kiss before settling into his seat with a smirk.

“How did you know I like black dahlias? I have never once said anything to you about flowers ever.”

Alec shrugged, his lips moving in the same gesture, “I didn’t. I just decided to buy you flowers. Saw those and thought of you.”

Magnus’ lips twisted up in that adorable, shy smile. “They get a bad rap, you know. Everyone associates them with Elizabeth Short, and they’re supposed to represent betrayal.”

Alec arched a brow. “They’re flowers. And they’re pretty. Like you.” He leaned forward to kiss him again. “Don’t think so much.”

Magnus reached out and tugged at his jacket lapel, straightening it. “You’re too nice to me.”

“I’m just as nice as I should be. What are you working on?”

“Trying to broker a deal with a hotel. Maddening. Have you spoken to your father recently?” he asked, hardly taking a breath. Magnus even looked like he was trying to be subtle. Which meant that he wasn’t subtle at all. So Alec could only imagine what that was about.

“No, not recently, unless you count Sunday dinner—”
“I don’t.”

“Then no. Any reason why I should?”

“Not at all.”

“Magnus,” Alec said firmly, starting to get irritated and suspicious. Magnus sighed, his shoulders slumping infinitesimally. Well, enough for Alec to notice them slump. But the mask was immediately back on, and he turned with a soft smile to bring a hand to Alec’s cheek.

“Let me have my things,” he said gently. “Please?”

Alec bit the inside of his cheek, wanting very much to argue. Anything involving his father and Magnus in the same conversation made him nauseous. In his mind, the two were distinct and separate. Magnus had shown him what commitment meant. Magnus had shown him what it meant to be a man in a relationship. Magnus had shown him how to love and how to take responsibility for that love. Not his father. But he swallowed and nodded.

“Of course.”

Magnus smiled again and brushed a finger over Alec’s lips, watching him intently for a long moment. Any further questions were put out of Alec’s mind when Helen brought over Magnus’ food, which instantly sparked bickering between the two of them and had Alec shaking his head like a put-upon mother hen.
My dudes. It feels like it’s been such a long time. It hasn't. But it feels like it. I'm neck deep in this new job and still completely overwhelmed, but I do have a few chapters to put out! Sweet, right? Anyway, sorry for the delay. There's a few more parts left, but I may add more? Idk. I told you from the start, I really have no idea where I'm going with this. But we'll end up there together, yeah?

When Magnus strolled out of their bedroom, Alec was already in the kitchen making breakfast. Alec watched his fiance stretch, revealing a swath of skin. He dropped his arms and scowled, leaving a grumpy look on his face. It was kind of adorable.

“Stop being perfect this early,” Magnus groused. “It’s not normal. Or healthy.” Still, he accepted Alec’s offering of coffee. He slid onto the barstool across from Alec and dropped his forehead to the counter. Alec couldn’t stop the grin from spreading across his face because the man he loved was so not a morning person. He didn’t move from his position on the counter.

“Is there a reason you’ve woken me up at the ass crack of dawn? Or is this you attempting to kill me before we sign the marriage license?”

Alec laughed quietly. “We’ve got Madzie today. Izzy is coming over for breakfast, and Max made vague references to a group hang. While I don’t know what that means, I imagine it has something to do with being here.”

Magnus barely lifted his head, his eyes still glazed over with sleep, not looking pleased at all.

“Why do we like people? Why do we let them in here? We don’t really like them like them. It’s more of a byproduct of how we cute we are.”

“Papi, you know I love it when you get introspective in the morning, but you need to go put your laundry away because Madzie will insist on dressing up like you, and that never goes well.”

Magnus dropped his head back to the counter. So Alec took the eggs off the heat, covered them,
and turned off the stove before going around to Magnus. He rubbed his back, that is until Magnus
turned and wrapped himself around Alec like a clingy koala. Alec chuckled but accepted what was
happening. Magnus slid his arms around Alec’s neck and dropped his face into the empty space
there. He even put his legs around Alec’s middle, not trying to get anywhere, just clinging.

“This will not change my mind about the laundry,” Alec reminded him.

“I’m too cute to do housework,” Magnus mumbled.

“Oh my god,” Alec teased, getting ready to move away and stop indulging him. It didn’t work.
Magnus just held on so that Alec was forced to hold him up. “Are we really doing this? Seriously?”
Magnus answered by tightening his grip and nuzzling into the side of Alec’s head. With an
exasperated sigh, Alec carried him over to the sofa, and carefully eased them down so that Magnus
was couched in his lap. Naturally, Magnus pressed kisses to his temple and cheek, brushing his
nose against his skin like a damn kitten.

“Quit it.”

“Nuh uh.”

“Today is not going to be the day my sister walks in on us.”

“Isabelle’s a big girl, she can take it.”

“Magnus--” But his fiance cut him off with a kiss. It was light and sweet, and just a little too
irresistible for Alec’s peace of mind. Magnus focused in on Alec’s lips like it was his sole mission
in life to give them attention. Rotten cheat. Alec had the tendency to forgive his slovenly ways
after sex. It was a glaring character flaw he wasn’t totally proud of, but Magnus usually made him
forget that he needed to work on it.

So, unfortunately, Alec got a little too caught up in kissing Magnus because it was a stupidly easy
thing to do. He was still sleep-warm and pliant, and he was demanding in his need for attention.
Alec let him push him back into the sofa cushions, then tip his head up so that he had control of
their kiss, and Alec kept his hands on Magnus’ outer thighs, holding him where he wanted him.
Magnus made himself comfortable, adjusting his legs and moving his hips to get closer. He
tangled their tongues together and slipped his fingers into Alec’s hair. Alec just accepted and
responded to Magnus’ long and lazy kisses, as he seemed so intent on distracting him. Alec froze,
however, when a clang came from the kitchen.

“How do you always know how I want my eggs?” Izzy cooed from the stove. “I swear, you are the best, hermano.”

Alec let his eyes shut even as Magnus shook against him from restraining his laughter.

“You absolutely knew she walked in,” Alec grumbled accusingly.

Magnus laughed through his nose. “Maybe.”

“So say something!” Alec whined just a little too pathetically. Magnus’ eyes flashed at him in amusement before he ducked to kiss Alec thoroughly one more time. Then he was sliding off his lap, limber, energetic, and fully awake now that he had a proper audience. Alec scowled but followed him anyway.

“You know,” Izzy said, eating the eggs out of the pan with her fingers, “for a cop, you are not very observant.”

Alec knocked into Magnus’ back, hiding his face in his shoulder blades, and grumbled something about witchcraft that made Magnus laugh harder and reach back to scratch his head affectionately.

“So are you two really this adorable in the morning or is it a special occasion?”

“What?” Alec spluttered at the same time Magnus said, “We’re adorable at all hours, Isabelle.”

She accepted the fork that Magnus finally handed her with a short nod. “Point taken.”

Alec tightened his grip around Magnus’ waist. “You still have to put away the laundry.”

“Oh no,” Izzy groaned, “you too?” She faux pouted on his behalf. “He used to make me match my socks and put them in those little dividers.” She gestured with her hand to emphasize the little compartments. Magnus lifted a hand to cover his mouth and turned over his shoulder.
“You have a problem,” Magnus muttered.

“I’m trying,” Alec insisted half-heartedly.

“They weren’t even your socks--”

“They were all over her floor.”

“But not in your room.”

“Yeah, but I basically lived in there once Jace discovered porn.”

“All right, maybe.”

They both looked back at Izzy, who had continued to eat, unimpressed. She cleared her throat and put her fork down.

“Fine, I will help, but only if Magnus tells me embarrassing sex stories about you.”

“Absolutely n--” Alec started even as Magnus said, “I have the perfect one. But you have to tell me one about Sheldon.”

Izzy tossed her hair as she walked toward their bedroom. “Of course. I have so very many.” Alec groaned when they linked arms and disappeared through the door together.

It was going to be a long day.
Chapter 108

Madzie came through the door like a tornado with Cat hot on her heels. Apparently, the little girl had been up most of the night, totally excited about spending the day with her two favorite people. She all but tackled Alec to the ground on sight and babbled hysterically about everything that had happened at school the day before, using the phrase “and then” at least twenty times before she was finished. Cat looked exhausted and at the end of her rope, so Alec scooted her out the door with a scone (he’d baked the night before) and espresso. Did Alec know his girl, or did Alec know his girl?

Unfortunately, that meant he quickly lost track of Madzie. Then he heard a squeal from the bedroom and slumped. With a heavy sigh, he resigned himself to his fate, and made his way in that direction. Upon entry, he found that the laundry had not been put away, more things were out and all over the bed, and Madzie was chasing the Chairman around, already swathed in a hundred thousand scarves.

Alec leaned against the doorframe, crossing his arms against the chaos. Almost as if due to a sixth sense, Magnus immediately ducked his head out of the closet. He pulled a face, looking chagrined.

“Oops?” he offered with a half shrug.

“Your funeral,” Alec mumbled back, trying hard to stay mad at the mess. Much to his dismay, he was in too good of a mood and Madzie looked absolutely thrilled trying on Magnus’ jackets. It was very, very difficult to frown and snipe at the sheer joy in the room.

Izzy came out of the closet in one of Magnus’ couture overcoats, which nearly swept the floor, and had so much gold detailing that it could have funded a year-long Coachella (which is where his buddy got the idea for the coat, as a matter of fact, and he’d designed it specifically for Magnus), a fedora, and some of Magnus’ platform heels.

“That closet is like menswear Nirvana, and I regret nothing,” she said very seriously as she swept by Alec to throw herself in a chair and smirk at him. Alec tracked her progress without moving his head, not at all impressed with her. The whole effect was ruined when Madzie crashed into him, giggling.

“Uncle Alec can we play Knights and Doctors? Can we can we can we?”
Alec was briefly distracted by Magnus ducking to hide his laugh behind his hand. He scowled at him before looking back at Madzie who was smiling like she wanted something.

“Yes, we can play Knights and Doctors. But Uncle Magnus is the victim this time.”

“Yes!” she shrieked, shooting past him to the guest room where her toys and playthings were kept. Izzy immediately tilted her head in question.

“It was originally Knights and Princesses,” Alec answered without being asked. “Magnus thought it was sexist.”

“You wouldn’t believe what they teach children in your school systems,” Magnus drawled.

“Like you’d know, delinquent,” Alec shot back as Magnus went to monitor Madzie’s mayhem. His fiance’s response was to spit his tongue out and swat at his ass. When Izzy cackled, Alec had to duck his head to cover his blush. Izzy was privy to way too much of their private life as it was, she didn’t need to witness their physical intimacy too. Not that most people didn’t anyway...because well, they were a little more demonstrative than strictly necessary. But honestly? Alec had spent 90% of his life dampening his impulses, hiding his thoughts, and repressing any feeling which didn’t “fit” with his persona. He was engaged. To a man. Who wore heels and eyeliner, and had no problem confusing the hell out of people. So resisting what was natural, at this point? Ludicrous.

Izzy was stroking a hand over her belly, watching him now with a much softer smile.

“C’mon,” Alec said after a beat, “I’ve got something for you.”

By the time they left the room, Max had shown up with leftover pizza from the night before (for some reason), and he’d been requisitioned as the “victim” for Madzie’s game. Madzie was currently in a princess costume with a stethoscope around her neck performing CPR on Max while Magnus battled whatever monster had tried to kill him. Alec stepped over Max’s legs and held out his hand to help Izzy across. Max shot his eyes open.

“Guys?” But he groaned when Madzie pushed down on his stomach instead of his chest and whimpered a bit.
“Doctor!” Magnus shouted thematically, “We’re losing him! Get the shocks!”

“Shocks?!”

Magnus kicked at Max’s stomach, indicating that he should be dying not crying, as Madzie raced to get the cardboard defibrillator she’d made in art class. That one definitely got a letter home.

“Get the paddles!” Magnus shrieked. Madzie picked them up and rubbed them together.

“Charging!” She clapped them together twice. “Stand clear!” Magnus moved out of the way as Madzie brought down the paddles to Max’s chest, pushing down a little too roughly. Max was prepared for that. He was not prepared for Magnus to use the lowest setting of a prototype training taser Alec had picked up at a conference on the bottom of his foot when she did it.

“Ah! Fucking--What the--?! Fuck! Fucking--Magnus!”

Magnus pointed the taser at him, jaw dropped with a suspicious amount of amusement. “*Language in front of the child, you heathen!*” Madzie was giggling like mad, hardly able to get a breath in because the tasing was her favorite part, and Max hadn’t been expecting it.

Max froze, looking livid. He pointed at Magnus. “You’re gonna get it.”

Magnus squeaked, tossed the taser, and leapt over the couch to escape to the kitchen, with Madzie cackling in the background. Izzy tugged on Alec’s shirt.

“So that was dangerous.”

“Yeah, Magnus has a terrible sense of humor.” Truly terrible, actually. “Madzie’s not allowed to be the victim. She’s either the doctor or the knight.” And Cat assumed that when Madzie said she “shocked” her uncles with paddles, that she was being figurative. They had no intention of ever telling her the truth.

“Please tell me that wasn’t what you were gonna show me.”
Alec chuckled, shaking his head, “Absolutely not. Balcony.”

He ushered his very pregnant sister onto their balcony, and helped her sit down into the overstuffed patio chairs Magnus favored. She complained about how her whole center of gravity was off, and it was ridiculous that the baby was so big.

“She’s got Simon’s big ol’ head, I just know it.”

“Someone’s cranky.”

“Someone is nine months pregnant with no end in sight.”

“He said it could be any day now.”

“He said that a month ago.”

Alec shook his head, holding his hands up in defeat. “Okay. I give.” He went over and turned the space heater on so they wouldn’t freeze to death on the balcony. Both of them liked colder weather, so it wasn’t too much of a problem. Then he took the carafe he’d set up on the table near the door and poured them both espressos. Izzy’s eyes glazed over as she watched it, looking ready to drool.

“I couldn’t.”

“There isn’t much that could hurt the nugget at this point. And, you’ve been without caffeine this whole time, and it’s less than 200 mg, I checked.”

“Really?”

“Really. Now drink before it freezes or Madzie finds us.”
They enjoyed the calm and the quiet for a good while, drinking their espresso and choosing not to talk. Magnus and Simon tended to...fill the room, and while the Lightwood siblings adored them, they also liked their quiet moments, too.

It wasn’t long for this world, though, because the game inside had morphed into something loud and rowdy. Alec turned and caught sight of Magnus darting past the windows with what looked to be like silly string. He was going to regret that when it ruined a loose Versace. Alec felt the hairs on his neck stand up and turned to catch Izzy looking at him again, smiling.

“What?”

“You’re getting married in two weeks and I’m about to have a baby,” she answered simply as if it were obvious. Alec settled back into his chair with a sigh, picking at the arm with unusual focus.

“Things are definitely changing.”

Izzy let out a bright laugh, “Not the important things. Jace has texted me twenty times since yesterday to check in. Which he’s been doing for months.”

Alec snorted. “He claims to be the calm one about everything. I honestly can’t wait for Fairchild to not be pregnant anymore.”

Izzy hummed and let her eyes drift shut. “We did good, big brother. Didn’t seem like it for a while, but we did pretty damn good.”
Izzy and Alec braved the cold for a while longer to avoid braving the chaos inside where it was warm and loud. When they did go in, they found that a goose down pillow had exploded, silly string was everywhere, and Madzie was getting creative with some popsicle sticks. Magnus was trying to shove feathers down Max’s shirt while avoiding getting silly string in his hair. Alec cleared his throat loudly to get their attention. Magnus was the first to freeze, which meant silly string tamped down his spiked locks as Max crowed his victory. Madzie jolted, sending her stick tower hurtling to the floor.

“Uncle Alec!” she shouted in her exasperation. Only Magnus looked truly guilty. He shrugged.

“We got...carried away?” Max snorted and Magnus glared at him. “Max broke the pillow.”

“Nuh uh! That was all you, Bane!”

Alec rubbed his forehead as they bickered over the sequence of events. Izzy just lumbered out of the doorway and plopped onto the couch to help Madzie pick up her popsicle sticks.

“I was pretty sure only one child was invited over today.”

*

Magnus and Alec worked side by side to serve up lunch. It wasn’t anything special, just enough to appease Madzie. Mac and cheese, celery with peanut butter and raisins, and, shockingly, mango slices. Ten-year-olds had weird palates, and Magnus just followed orders. Izzy wasn’t displeased with the selection either, even though Max was having an “I’m almost a real adult, I don’t want to look childish too” moment. Magnus just rolled his eyes; he’d get over that phase eventually. Magnus never went through that phase because he was childish at every opportunity. Alec never went through that phase because he’d never truly been childish. Maybe once. Before age 5. Maybe.

So it was nice to see him be ridiculous with Madzie, especially when they had an in-depth discussion about ants and ant beds and ant heaven. Magnus was fairly certain that Alec had no concept of what was coming out of his mouth, but Madzie definitely was taking it seriously enough. He cut his glance over to Max, who was eyeing the bowl of mac and cheese just a little too desperately. Magnus pushed it over to him with a pointed look, which Max answered with a sheepish grin as he lifted his fork.
Izzy had been given a much larger bowl of mac and cheese, topped with sour cream and sriracha. Magnus wasn’t sure how pregnancy hormones worked, but maybe she was on to something because she seemed to be in cheesy heaven. Poor thing had been obsessed with “maintaining her weight” simply because Clary hadn’t put on more than ten pounds for her pregnancy. Clary was also a raging hormonal psychopath with a certified license to carrying firearms of varying sizes, so Magnus wasn’t exactly sympathetic. He thought it was amazing how differently they were handling making their own humans, but all it did was make him wonder what his own mother had been like during that time. Probably not very good, given her condition. His shift in thought attracted Alec’s laser-focused attention, so Magnus shook it off. Alec was typically hypersensitive to his moods, but he’d been obsessive as the wedding got closer and closer. Not everything had to be about Magnus, despite his superior judgment on the subject.

However, his internal rambling was cut rapid short when Izzy squealed and doubled over. All three men were at her side in a flash, not bothering to hide their concern. It turned into full-blown panic when they heard a splash against the tile.

“Oh. My. God.”

“Was that--?”

“Ew, Iz--”

“Guys? Hospital. Now.”

Everything after that happened in a quick blur. Max ran around grabbing Izzy’s things, while Magnus called for Ernesto, and Alec helped Izzy down from her chair and toward the door. The men were so focused on Izzy that they nearly forgot Madzie, but at the last second Max flung himself back into the apartment, swept her up from the chair into his arms, and dashed out into the elevator behind the others.

*  

The car ride was chaotic because Izzy started to have contractions while Magnus tried to delicately answer Madzie’s many questions. Max sat up front bickering with Ernesto about the best way to get to Mount Sinai, as if he were the full-time, salaried driver. Alec tried to stamp down his panic and not focus too much on the indents Izzy was leaving on his hand as she squeezed it through her contractions. Seeing her in pain was decidedly Not Fun, and Alec decided right then and there that
he was going to show up after the birth with cake, balloons, and flowers, instead. He also took that
time to text Simon a 911 and call the hospital to give them a heads up. That’s what all the blogs
said to do, anyway.

Thankfully, the ER staff at the hospital was more than ready for chaos when it came through their
doors. Because Simon and Raphael were already at the hospital, and Simon was screaming at the
nurses behind the desk as Izzy came through the door.

“What do you mean my wife isn’t in the system!? She’s having a baby!”

Alec rolled his eyes as he helped steady Izzy on her trek to where a nurse was approaching them
with a wheelchair. Evidently, cool heads did not prevail that day. Max was shouting for a doctor, as
if the baby was half out already and Madzie was starting to look pretty worried, despite Magnus’
best efforts to soothe her. Shockingly, it was Raphael who saved the day. He smacked Max upside
the head and shoved Simon in Izzy’s direction before apologizing to the nurse in a wildly
flirtatious manner. Alec checked in with Magnus as they started to wheel Izzy back because she
wasn’t letting go of his hand. But Magnus waved him on.

“Go, go, we’ll meet you over there.” He bounced Madzie with a smile, and asked if they should go
find some Jell-O in the cafeteria. That seemed to perk her right up.

* 

Alec was gone a long time before he met them in the waiting room of the maternity ward. Maryse,
Robert, Clary, and Jace had shown up in the meantime and were generally kicking up a fuss. Clary
had to repeatedly explain that yes, she was pregnant, but no, she was not in labor and did not need a
room. Apparently, hospitals weren’t accustomed to pregnant women hanging out in the waiting
room while another baby was being born. Who knew?

However, it took Alec so long that most of the Lightwoods were up and pacing the room, driving
everyone nuts. Madzie had drooped against Clary and they were both sleeping, mouths hanging
open. Magnus took a picture for posterity’s sake.

When Alec did finally come out, he was in a gown but held up his hands to stop any unwarranted
celebrations.

“She’s still in labor. Contractions are getting closer, almost fully dilated. But it could be a while, so
everybody needs to chill.”

Magnus took him a water bottle and reminded him that he didn’t have to be back there the whole time. Simon and the hospital staff were perfectly capable of taking care of his sister. Alec just grinned at him, accepting the water as the forced self-care it was.

“I know. They only want the two of them in there anyway. I’m just gonna check on her one more time and I’ll be right back out.”

Magnus preened. “Good.”

Alec let out a soft laugh through his nose, kissed him lightly, and disappeared through the doors again.
When he returned, Alec immediately went to Magnus’ side and slumped against him. Naturally, Magnus intercepted him, curling an arm around his shoulder and pressing his lips to the top of his head. Alec had yet to figure out why being around Magnus was so calming, but he was truly in no state to analyze it right then. Unfortunately, that moment of comfort was short lived because not two minutes later, Alec’s father approached them, looking tense and embarrassed.

“Alec, could I speak to you in private for a moment?” he asked gruffly, not making direct eye contact. Specifically not acknowledging Magnus’ presence. Alec narrowed his eyes and grew even more suspicious when Magnus nudged him forward. He shot his fiance an unimpressed look as he followed his father into an empty hallway, just a short distance from everyone else. When he said private, he meant it, evidently.

“What’s up?”

“I wanted to talk…”

Alec frowned. “At a hospital? While Izzy’s in labor?”

His father shifted uncomfortably. “Well, I figure you won’t be going anywhere, and I’d like to get this out before the baby and…”

“The wedding,” Alec finished darkly. He crossed his arms, his mind flitting back to odd questions over dinner and quiet concern. “Magnus said something to you, didn’t he?”

His father held up a placating hand. “He had the best of intentions--”

“Dad, you don’t need to defend Magnus to me.” He leaned forward a bit. “Because we trust each other, and I don’t need you to tell me he had good intentions. I know he did.”

“Alec, please, I really--” He cut himself off, folding his hands in front of his mouth and then holding them out. “I truly want to fix things between us. Not just pretend for your mother’s sake.”
Alec felt his stomach sink. “What would you have me do?”

“Tell me how to fix it!” his father snapped insistently. Tiredly, like it had been consuming his thoughts to the point of madness. Perhaps it had. There were three years of tension between them. Tension Alec had been forced to contend with; he had no idea how his father had dealt with any of it. They didn’t have much of a relationship anymore. It was purely transactional. Part of that was Alec’s fault. He did dismiss their remaining relationship pretty quickly once it started to deteriorate. Not that he regretted that decision in the least. His mother had deserved his full support, 100%, no exceptions.

But they were, in fact, at a crossroads. One which would dictate the dynamics of their rapidly forming family. Izzy was having a baby and he was marrying Magnus in two weeks. Still, Alec shrugged.

“I don’t know. If I had an answer, I’d give it to you. But I don’t know how to fix this. Because you’re meant to be the person I learn shit like this from, not the other way around!”

“I deserve that,” his father said with a sigh. He rubbed his brow. “The affair was a mistake. It was one mistake that snowballed into a thousand mistakes, and I suppose I just felt trapped. If I left Marissa, then what was the purpose of those mistakes? She was the only one on my side--” Alec opened his mouth to argue, but his father stopped him. “No, no you don’t know what that is like, son. It’s addictive. It’s isolating. It makes you feel bitter and vindicated and alone.”

Alec deflated at that. Despite his father’s certainty, Alec did know what that was like. Actually, it sounded extremely familiar. It sounded a lot like his life before Magnus. Maybe it wasn’t exactly the same, as Alec lied for self-preservation, but he did actually lie. And he hurt people with those lies. And he made a lot of mistakes because of those lies. Just because most people didn’t know about them, didn’t make them any less real. His father must have read some weakening in his resolve from his expression, but Alec couldn’t really say.

“I want to get your mother back. I want to convince her to come home.”

Alec shook his head in confusion. “You already signed the divorce papers…”

His father shoved his hands in his pockets with a shrug. “I never said it would be easy. Your mother is a very proud woman. What I did was unforgivable, but...but I have to try. For all of our sakes, I have to at least try.” He kicked at the ground. “It’s selfish, I know, but I can’t picture my life without her.”
“You’re right,” Alec said nodding. “That is incredibly selfish.”

His father actually snorted. “There really is no winning with you, is there?” Despite the fraught situation, Robert Lightwood seemed more amused and proud than anything else. There was no anger or defensiveness in his look or stance. Alec couldn’t figure him out in that moment. He wasn’t sure what to do with it. He tried to remember what their relationship had been before, what they had talked about other than work. How had they related to one another when his father wasn’t bossing him around and generally being a parent? Alec couldn’t recall. It was like the foundation had been ripped out, the earth beneath it scored so badly that there was nothing for it but to start over. So he crossed his arms and dropped his head a little.

“Did you hear that Simon wants to name the baby Cain?”

It took his father a moment to switch tracks, but once he did, his eyes lit up. And immediately narrowed and also crossed his arms.

“Cain? As in Cain and Abel? Isn’t he the murderer?”

Alec tossed his hands up excitedly. “Exactly! Why are we bringing that kind of energy into the family? We’re cops for god sakes!”

“I mean, if you’re going to go biblical, go all the way. Jethro, Micah, Thaddeus—”

“Gideon!” Alec inserted incredulously as if that were the obvious answer here. To name the baby after himself. His father gestured to him in avid agreement. But it seemed they had run out of steam. So his father dropped a hand to his shoulder, squeezing, until Alec made the first move to hug him. That’s when it struck Alec very suddenly.

He hadn’t hugged his father in three years.

They held each other tightly for a long moment, and Alec had a strong flashback of his father picking him up after his abuela had died. He’d been twelve at the time, so it probably hadn’t been easy, but he’d picked him up and didn’t put him down until he stopped crying.
“I’m so sorry I let you down, son. It’s one of my biggest regrets, and I don’t think I’ll ever forgive myself for it.” Alec shut his eyes. “You were going through so much, and when you needed me the most I failed you. That will haunt me until the day I die.” He pulled back and brought his hands to Alec’s face, giving him a watery smile. He shrugged and patted his cheeks. “Lucky for me, you found Magnus. And he has done more for you than I ever could.”

“Dad…”

He dropped his hands to Alec’s shoulders. “No need to deny it for my sake. I’m forever indebted to that man.” He wagged a finger in his direction as they moved to walk back to the waiting room. “Just don’t tell him that because his interpretation will be far too liberal…”

Alec snorted. “You have no idea.”

“I have some...did you know he threw a party with over 1000 guests for his cat ?”

“That story has gotten wildly out of hand,” Alec said firmly. He’d actually only invited 100 people, all of which brought multiple friends. The details had spread like wildfire and the whole block got shut down because people thought it was actually a rave. Given Magnus’ flair for theatrics, it probably looked very much like a rave, so it really wasn’t their fault for thinking that.

“What’s gotten wildly out of hand?” Magnus chirped, walking over to them with a half guilty, half smug look on his face. Alec pointedly lifted his brows at him, but Magnus just pulled in his lips as if trying to appear innocent and confused. Alec would deal with that whole...situation later.

“Chairman’s 10th.”

“Oh.” Magnus shot out a hand to his father’s arm, “crazy night. One of my best. I met Cher and Meryl Streep…”

“Magnus,” Alec said waringly from behind them. Magnus, however, ignored him completely and proceeded to tell his father a completely made up story about a compromising position he’d caught Cher in with a bartender and how Meryl was lovely but definitely a voyeur. Alec rolled his eyes.

He supposed they would have to entertain themselves somehow.
Alec was the first one to hold Micah Alexander Lewis when family members were finally allowed to visit. Magnus stood, looking around his shoulder, finger stroking the infant's little arm as Alec talked to him. The rest were crowded around, clamoring (albeit quietly) to get their turn. When Alec passed him off to Jace (they decided to go in birth order giving the grandparents last rights so they had more time), Magnus was more than content to lean against Alec and watch. Magnus had thought that all of the Lightwood weddings had been unifying events, but this? This was cement. This baby would start the healing process for a lot of things.

“So,” Clary said after a moment, “any ideas about godparents?” Everyone complained, including Simon’s mother, who was against the Christian idea of godparents in general. Max accused her of trying too hard. Simon and Izzy shared an exasperated look before Izzy flicked her eyes toward Magnus. He paused for a moment because that look was significant, and he didn’t know what it meant.

“Well,” she said slowly, still watching Magnus, “Clary is the obvious choice for godmother.” Clary squealed and stole the baby from Jace, cooing at him about how spoiled rotten he and her little girl were going to be. Izzy was still looking at Magnus, a small smile on her face, and Magnus felt his heart clenching up tight. He squeezed Alec’s hand, feeling a little too vulnerable in that moment.

“And after talking about it,” Simon continued. “We wanted someone from each family, so we decided on Magnus.” He grinned dopily at him, endearing himself to Magnus more than he would ever be permitted to know. “If that’s cool with you.”

Magnus opened his mouth to speak, but the words were difficult to get out.

“I--of course, I’m...I’m honored.” He felt Alec’s lips press to his temple, and he realized just how integrated he was into this family now. He wasn’t merely Alec’s partner or fiance. He was truly part of their family. It was...humbling.

“Oooh!” Clary squeaked. “Godhusband!” She bounced over to Magnus, baby in her arms, even as Alec protested the new term, and slid Micah into Magnus’ unprepared arms. He fit easily, as he
was incredibly small. Magnus remembered holding Madzie like this, feeling like the universe had rewarded him for all of the bullshit it had put him through. He felt that way again.

“Yay!” Madzie chirped from her chair, “I have a brother!”

“Well…”

“Brother!” she shouted insistently.

“Okay then,” Magnus said under his breath, looking down at the newborn in his arms. “You’re a lucky little sod, Sir Micah, having so many people who love you.” He felt Alec’s arms come around his waist.

“We’re all pretty lucky,” Alec said quietly enough so only Magnus could hear. He wanted to respond, to say something snarky and witty, but the words just wouldn’t come.

Magnus looked up to see Jace and Clary grinning like idiots at him.

“Okay, Godwife, what’s our first move?”

Clary grinned wickedly and stepped around to stand at his shoulder.

“Magnus, have you ever been to Costco?”

“Clarissa Wayland, I will stab you!” Izzy hissed from her bed.

Immediately Clary picked up little Micah, “Not if I’m holding your infant so-on,” she sang back, smiling wide at the boy. Alec had a small smirk on his face.

“I like that you didn’t think to use your unborn child as a shield.”
She spat her tongue out at him. “You’re just jealous because I married Magnus before you did.”

“Iizzy, get the knife.”
Guys. So many things happening. Just found out I'm gonna be an auntie (squee!).
Work is chaos. Just joined Match. Date on Monday. I have money again. My dog's in
heat and driving me nuts. I'm trying to get my abs back. I can't wear deodorant cause I
have this weird rash? My hair looks awesome this week. I don't know, it's been a
rollercoaster of a month, but I managed to pump out a few chapters for ya'll.

He wasn’t nervous. He absolutely was not nervous. He brought Cat, Ragnor, and Raphael along
with him, even though it wasn’t advised. He really didn’t care, he wanted his best friends there for
this, especially since he couldn’t bring Alec. Clary had drawn up a version of the Lightwood tattoo,
one that incorporated a little of Magnus into it. She’d worked in his name and a quote Magnus had
chosen specifically.

“This is cra-zy,” Cat sang from where she sat, flipping through a magazine.

“Agreed,” Ragnor said. “Why you feel the need to mar your body with needle and ink is quite
beyond me.”

“It’s a gesture ,” Raphael explained, using air quotes and making Magnus scowl.

Magnus turned to the tattoo artist, who was cleaning up his bicep in order to put the stencil on.

“I am so sorry, ignore them.”

The woman smiled down at him, the gem in her lip winking at him. “No worries. I’m used to herds
of teenagers in my shop. Three relatively quiet friends are nothing compared to that.”

He looked down at his arm and then back up at her. “I’m getting this done for my fiance,” he told
her quietly.

“Lucky girl.”
“Man,” he corrected.

“Ah, my bad.” They smiled at each other and she deftly laid the stencil over his arm, molding it to the curves of his muscle. It was well done, and he knew he’d picked the right person. “How long have you been together?”

“Over three years. Feels like longer, though. I can’t remember my life without him.”

“Can’t say I know the feeling. How did you meet?”

“Blind date. Mutual friend.”

“That’s rare,” she told him, putting her tattoo gun together. A small smile stretched across Magnus’ lips when he thought about that first date again, and all the days after.

“I fell,” Magnus quote softly, “he followed.”

“That’s really fucking beautiful, man,” she told him, firing up the gun. “So, I’m gonna give you a really fucking beautiful tat. All I want you to do is tell me about your man. What’s his name?”

“Alexander. First thing I noticed about him was his gorgeous hair. Black.”

“Tall, dark, and handsome?”

Magnus smiled and lifted his brows. “Stunning.”

When Magnus got home that night, wearing a thick sweater to cover his wrapping, Alec was sitting up in bed waiting for him and reading. Magnus immediately climbed into bed, tossed the book aside, and insinuated himself in Alec’s lap, kissing him fiercely. Alec, as always, intercepted him, pulled his body closer, and kissed back with just as much enthusiasm. When Magnus needed air, he lifted his lips away, but kept their faces close, curling his body around Alec’s.

“I’m just really happy. I love you.”

Alec’s hands moved soothingly up and down his back, “I love you too, papi.”

Magnus ground their foreheads together. “I can’t believe I get to marry you.”

“Me neither.” Magnus sunk into another kiss, letting Alec manhandle him down to the mattress. He kept his sweater on though, claiming he was cold. It wouldn’t do to give away the surprise before the opportune moment.

“Seriously?” Alec whined pitifully. Magnus just laughed at him, sliding a leg over his and flipping them so that he was on top. He swiveled his hips, pushing back against Alec’s hardness. He clicked his tongue at his lovely fiance.

“Tsk, tsk, detective, I should have taken up Biscuit’s offer to stay over to protect my virtue.” Alec snorted lightly at the old joke, but kept his lips sealed shut, probably to prevent a scathing retort. His hands did skate up Magnus’ torso, however, and Magnus wasn’t so cruel as to deny him that. He scraped his nails back down Magnus’ skin, forcing a jerk from Magnus’ hips. That’s when his eyes when just a shade darker.

“You know I don’t sleep well without you, papi.” Unable to prevent a response when Alec looked so good spread out under him and his voice was so low and sultry, Magnus leaned down to kiss him, covering Alec’s body with his own. He grinned into the kiss when Alec’s hands went to his ass, cupping and squeezing, grinding them together.

Magnus hummed, pecking at his lips playfully. “I hate sleeping without you too, angel.” Their kiss turned open and messy, upping the tension. “Remember my trip to Indonesia?” Alec growled some response into the curve of Magnus’ neck. It was a good thing his wedding suit had a higher collar. “Those two weeks without you were awful.” He punctuated that point by reaching back and trying to guide Alec in him. As usual, Alec prevented that movement, and flipped Magnus onto his back. No matter what Magnus said, Alec refused to fuck him unprepped. It just wasn’t going to happen, not even if Magnus begged for it. Alec snatched the bottle of lube they kept nearby, prepped him with an increasing number of fingers until Magnus was a puddle on the sheets.
“I remember,” Alec said as he did so, “and it’s never happening again. I refuse to spend more than two nights without you.”

“Needy,” Magnus accused with a lift of his hips. Alec intercepted and thrust into him without pause.

“For you?” He hiked one of Magnus’ legs over his shoulder, adjusting himself and rotating his hips. “Always.” Magnus could hardly think straight when they were together like this, but it felt like his fresh tattoo pulsed against his flesh. More like a brand. He was incredibly excited for Alec to see it. When they finally rested peacefully against each other, Alec was kissing Magnus’ jaw, neck, and the curve of his shoulder, nuzzling into his skin.

“Two days,” he mouthed against Magnus’ cheek.

Two days.
Chapter 113

Alec woke up to find their bed empty with the glaring exception of a note on Magnus’ side. He read it, annoyed to find out that Magnus planned to be at the office all day, finishing up projects and finalizing details for the rehearsal dinner, ceremony, and reception. Alec had reports to finish, too, as they were leaving two days after the wedding for their honeymoon and planned to be completely unreachable. He was not looking forward to going into the station, if only because people would be making jokes and suggestive comments about Magnus and honeymoons. Raj had asked if Magnus was the bride, and Jace had been forced to physically restrain Clary from breaking his entire face. While that would have been entertaining, it wasn’t really conducive to finishing reports. Still, he forced himself out of bed, into his work clothes, and out the door with his coffee.

The station was as loud and chaotic as always. Normally, Alec would have been able to work through it and finish in record time. Alone time with Magnus was usually enough of a motivator. However, he was now motivation and distraction because Alec could think of little else. He’d been more responsive than usual the night before, even with that damn sweater on (which he still didn’t understand). He was going to have trouble whenever Magnus wore it again, quite honestly. Alec shifted in his seat, feeling the ache of the bruises Magnus had left on his hips and thighs. There were a couple of hickeys on his clavicles, too, which was ridiculous. But Alec was fairly certain he’d marked Magnus up just as much. They’d gotten a little carried away.

So yeah, Alec was thinking more about fucking Magnus stupid than writing up his findings from crime scenes. It was definitely more interesting, at any rate. He was so distracted that it took Jace throwing their Nerf football at him to get his attention.

“The hell, Jace? I’m working!”

“You’re daydreaming, you dirty liar!”

“He’s getting married tomorrow,” Lydia drawled, “I think he’s allowed.” This prompted a full-on verbal joust which Alec had zero interest in. He tuned them out in favor of thinking about things he wanted to do with Magnus on their honeymoon. They were staying at one of those resorts where the cottages jutted out over the turquoise water and you didn’t have to see anyone for days at a time if you didn’t want to. Magnus had demanded a resort since he’d agreed to Indonesia. But he promised to take him to Jakarta, the orphanage where he’d stayed, and other touristy spots as well. Alec had spent so much time googling images of their resort cottage that he’d come up with some pretty intriguing ideas for their first couple of days. None of those ideas involved clothes. Which made them better.

“Dude!” Jace squawked from across the aisle.
“What?”

“Stop thinking about naked Magnus or you ain’t gonna see Magnus naked for a whole week cause you’ll be buried in paperwork!”

“He has a point,” Lydia offered regretfully.

“This is hopeless,” Alec shot back.

“Alec,” Clary said, slapping her hands down on his desk. “Finish your report. Go see Magnus for lunch. Then get back here and do your frigging work before I have to strangle you!”

Clary was on desk duty since she was so close to her due date now, and she was scary as hell. Hormonal and bored didn’t mix well in his sister-in-law. So naturally, Alec recoiled away from her and winced.

“Okay, okay, okay! I’ll get it done. Just simmer! Didn’t the doctor say something about keeping your blood pressure down?”

“That’s my job!” Jace chirped, bounding over with something in his hands. He lifted a little, dark bottle to Clary’s nose and wafted something toward her. “Breathe it in, baby, there you go.”

“What the hell is that?” Alec asked, bewildered.

“Lavender essential oil. Only thing that keeps her calm. I’ve stashed bottles of the stuff everywhere.”

Alec turned a blank look at his partner, who looked confused and concerned.

“My brother is a lunatic,” he informed her blandly.
Lydia snorted, “So are you. Finish your report and get out!” Alec spat his tongue out at her, but did what he was told anyway. For whatever reason, it hadn’t occurred to him to interrupt Magnus’ day, but now that Clary had verbalized it, Alec couldn’t think of anything better. It was ridiculous, truly. They lived together, spent most of their free time together, and they’d be spending the next two weeks alone together. Still, Alec’s whole being just wanted Magnus close by, no matter what the context. It was almost like their first few weeks of dating. Or the first few weeks after they’d started sleeping together. Or the entire month after they’d first said ‘I love you.’ Alec expected that this feeling would eventually fade out and become more comfortable, but it increased with every milestone. Obviously, it had to lessen at some point, right? Most couples couldn’t tolerate each other after a few years of marriage. Wasn’t that the whole concept behind the seven-year itch?

At the moment, it didn’t make any sense to Alec, and he wasn’t entirely positive it ever would. How could anyone ever be more interesting to him than Magnus? He liked other people, sure. Got along with them all right. But Magnus was... Magnus. That was the beginning and the end of it. No one ever made him feel as happy or crazy or horny or furious as Magnus made him feel on a regular basis. That love-driven anger, that mad lust, that overwhelming need to defend, had always been interwoven into their relationship, no matter how sweet or calm they seemed to be. Magnus hated Alec’s job description simply because it was a threat to Alec’s person. Magnus had taken many, many thoughtless risks which sent Alec over the edge. They both clung too tight and pushed just a little too hard, but it worked and they came out the other side.

Alec all but ran out the door for his lunch break, calling Poppy quickly to ascertain Magnus’ actual whereabouts. She divulged that he’d come into the office, but taken his things to their usual coffee spot to throw Alec off the scent, so he wouldn’t be able to find him and distract him.

“I told him it was a useless endeavor,” Poppy mused over the phone, “but he insisted.”

“You’re perfect, Pops, and he doesn’t deserve you.”

“Aww, you too, boo.”

Alec pocketed his phone and quickly made his way over to the coffee shop, more excited than he had any right to be. It was kind of ridiculous, considering he’d been curled up with Magnus less than eight hours before, but he couldn’t help it.

The shop was crowded, as always, but Alec caught sight of Magnus almost immediately. He had reading glasses on and was nose-deep in paperwork, sitting at their usual table. His stuff was spread out everywhere and other patrons were pissed off by his overuse of space, but there was no way the manager would consider throwing him out. He and Alec were beloved regulars at this point, especially after Magnus had revealed that they’d had their first kiss there. Naturally, the manager actually remembered it for some reason which completely baffled Alec.
As he nudged his way through the grumpy crowd of professionals looking for a caffeine fix, Magnus inexplicably lifted his head, looking right at him. His lips scrunched up, trying to hide an exasperated smile unsuccessfully. Magnus shook his head at him, eyes crinkling, and he intercepted Alec who swooped down to kiss him. The briefest flash of their first kiss came to mind, but Magnus demanded Alec’s full attention in the present.

“Really needed to do that,” Alec said, quoting himself with a smirk against Magnus’ lips. His fiance chuckled and kept kissing him, until he finally sat down, easing the harsh angle of their necks.

“We’re supposed to be getting work done.”

Alec nipped at Magnus’ bottom lip. “I got kicked out.”

“I’m really going to fire Poppy this time.”

Alec laughed and snagged Magnus’ lips for a series of kisses that settled his brain.

“No, you won’t.”

“Fine, I won’t. But I’m gonna tell her I’m gonna do it.”

“She won’t believe you anyway.”

Magnus lightly knocked his forehead against Alec’s. “Probably not.” He sighed heavily, letting Alec grab up both of his hands. “I was sure we had a little more discipline than this.”

“Well I’m sure that my discipline stops short of you, so who cares?”

Magnus groaned. “It’s ridiculous.”
“Not any more ridiculous than the last three years,” Alec shot back. “I mean, I honestly haven’t felt this distracted since--”

“Since you yelled at me for saving you from that psycho who pulled a gun on you in the station?”

Alec pulled in his lips and tried not to laugh. “I was going to say since I told you I loved you, you big jerk.”

Magnus grabbed him by the face and kissed him again, and Alec felt more centered than he had all day. He curled an arm around Magnus’ waist to keep him supported, and craned his neck a little so that Magnus wouldn’t have to. He mumbled something against Alec’s lips, but Alec completely ignored it in favor of kissing him. So he wasn’t happy when Magnus pulled away, putting some distance between them.

“Public, angel.”

Alec scowled, moving closer again. “Like I care--”

Magnus slid a hand up his chest, firm in his decision. “Then let me care for you. We don’t need another Humphries incident.”

And that really had Alec scowling. Humphries was some washed up beat cop who’d worked with his father at some point. There had been some “incidents” with him and witnesses, so he’d been demoted years before, and still worked the same beat in Brooklyn. He’d stumbled upon Alec and Magnus at the coffee shop a time or two, and complained pretty loudly to everyone at the station. Lydia had taken exception to a few of his comments regarding Alec, which got her suspended for a week and put in anger management.

“Fuck that guy.”

“I worry about you enough at work, don’t make me worry more.”

“Fine,” Alec bit back sharply, “but only because you asked. I really don’t give a shit.”
“Angel--”

“Don’t start with me. I don’t wanna talk about that dick today. I wanna talk about the wedding. Everything good for the rehearsal dinner?”

This prompted Magnus to launch into a ten-minute tirade about the venue and how much trouble they were giving his mother for no reason other than she was a woman. Which happened to be a mistake because now he was convinced she was blackmailing one of the managers to make sure all of Magnus’ demands were met, and Magnus really hadn’t meant to corrupt his mother-in-law over table arrangements. Alec listened to all of this with no small amount of amusement. The combination of Magnus’ high standards with his mother’s would never not be hilarious to watch. Alec was pretty sure they should have been paying these people extra just so they could afford the therapy afterward. Magnus leaned into him.

“Honestly? I’ll be much happier when everything’s done with so we can be alone for five minutes.”

“We had five minutes alone last night,” Alec reminded him smugly. Magnus swatted at him.

“You know what I mean.”

“I do,” he admitted. “I’m just surprised that you’re not more excited about a party. You’re usually all about it.”

Magnus shrugged. “Parties are about other people. Not us. I want us-time.”

“Magnus--”

He turned and kissed Alec quickly. “I’m happy, I am. I just don’t like sharing us with everybody.”

“I get that.”

“You do?” Magnus asked skeptically. “Cause I think I sound insane.”
Alec deliberately decided not to tease him on this subject. Ragnor had summed it up perfectly: Magnus didn’t like to share Alec. It was an inherent selfishness born out of too much trauma. Alec did understand it, though. As much as he loved their family and friends, there was something irritating about being put on display and being subject to scrutiny. It was, in fact, something Alec had worked his whole life to avoid. But this was important. This was about Magnus. And Alec would cut off his own hand if Magnus needed it.

So Alec angled himself toward him, arm firmly around him, a smile on his lips.

“It’s just one more day. Then it’s just you,” he kissed just under Magnus’ jaw, “and me,” he kissed the other side, “and no one around for miles.” Alec pressed their lips together, brushing against them gently. Such a tease. Magnus hummed, amused.

“Nuh uh,” he countered, “it’s two days. Wedding and reception,” he flashed his eyes mischievously, “then rave.”

“Mean.”

“It’s a consolation prize, remember?”

“You wanted to book the Cirque du Soleil. That’s insane.”

“Or brilliant.”

“We’ll have to agree to disagree on that one.”

“We didn’t invite most of my friends and business acquaintances, so the after-rave is necessary. You don’t have to like it, you just have to accept it.” Alec caught a flash of self-consciousness in his expression before he looked away, so he grabbed Magnus by the chin and forced his gaze right back.

“Hey, listen to me. You could have put our wedding at Madison Square Garden, invited every single person you’ve ever looked at, met, slept with, shook hands with, or acknowledged, had us show up in a horse-drawn carriage, walk down a red carpet with a fireworks display and Beyonce
singing from a platform, and I would have been ecstatic.”

“Dionne Warwick would have been more affordable, but do continue.”

Alec smiled and shook his head. “As long as it’s you meeting me at the altar, I don’t really care what else happens.”

Magnus offered him a thin-lipped smile, red tinging the corners of his cheeks and looking inordinately pleased by that statement. Alec even saw that little hint of gold in the rims of his brown eyes.

“You are too smooth by half, Detective Lightwood.”

Alec flashed his eyes teasingly. “I guess that’s why you’re marrying me.”

But Magnus didn’t continue the back and forth. His hand automatically went to Alec’s face, fingers curling against the line of his jaw. Alec turned his head to kiss his palm briefly, and asked him when he figured he’d be finished for the day. The short answer was that he wouldn’t finish anything, but that was due to the sheer amount of work he was supposed to complete before they left and not his distractedness. They were doing the wedding rehearsal at 6:30 and dinner at Mario’s afterward. They would have the whole restaurant to themselves for the evening, and everyone was beyond excited about it. Mario was going off-menu especially for them, and not even Magnus knew what they would be served, although he was taking dietary preferences into account.

Alec had a brief moment of pure, unadulterated contentment right in that moment. His arm around Magnus, Magnus’ warm hand on his cheek, the calm of Magnus’ natural breathing and the casual sharing of space. He really didn’t need much else, and right in that moment he would have pulled Magnus down the street to the courthouse and demanded an impromptu ceremony just to speed things up and keep it this way. Of course, Alec knew better than anyone that chaos would eventually descend, but he wanted to stave it off just a little longer.

“Let’s ditch work,” he suggested impulsively.

“Alec…” Magnus answered with a sigh, almost as if he’d predicted it. Alec clenched the hem of his shirt and tugged a little.
“C’mon, you’re not gonna finish your pile, and I definitely won’t concentrate, and no one can yell at us for a while.” He pressed a kiss to Magnus’ nose. “Let’s go walk around Brooklyn like we used to. Go too far and make Ernesto come find us.”

“Tempting,” Magnus started, stopping short of his follow up statement when Alec leaned in to nuzzle at his neck and ear. “Raph will kill me.”

“Not the night before your wedding,” Alec pointed out. He kissed the hinge of his jaw and down his cheek. “C’mon, papi, I’ll protect you.” Magnus squirmed in his grasp and Alec knew he was caving just a little. He knew he officially won when Magnus nudged at his face for a proper kiss, and Alec reveled in that victory just this side of too smug. Not very many people could pull Magnus away from his first love: work. Raphael complained that Alec had ruined his very nearly perfect business partner, even if Bane, Inc was just as profitable as ever.

“Fine!” Magnus groaned, ripping his lips away, “but we have to drop this shit off!” Alec pecked his lips as he got up. “Poppy needs it!” He went for a longer kiss. “Would you stop? I’m serious!”

“So am I!” Alec answered, moving to pack up Magnus’ papers without hesitation. They bickered about the organization of it for a moment until Alec threatened to set it on fire if he didn’t hurry up.

“Brat,” Magnus sneered at him, still managing to look sheepish.

“Uh huh, keep it moving, Mr. Bane.”
They were not late to their own rehearsal dinner, thank you very much. It was a close call because they’d gotten stuck on the train and then begged Ernesto to come pick them up. Thankfully, their trusty driver was able to maneuver through the worst of the New York traffic. And his wife didn’t mind the last minute call because the whole family had been invited to the wedding and Ernesto had the next month off.

Everything that evening went smoothly. Shockingly smoothly. Magnus thought it was a bit surreal. Alec reminded him that Maryse was running interference on all sides, and she definitely would not have told Magnus if anything was actually wrong. Magnus found that he’d never been more grateful to have met Maryse Lightwood, and was very much pleased to have her as his mother-in-law.

Dinner had been perfect. Their friends and family had been perfect. Alec was consistently perfect.

So naturally, Magnus was waiting for the other shoe to drop. And drop hard. He was anticipating it in the same way he always anticipated disaster: on his balcony with a drink in his hand. It was an unfortunate aspect of his personality that anything good had to be balanced out with something not good, even if that something was his sour mood. Par for the course, Alec noticed and understood this mood, and gave him the space required to move past it. He’d said it once, and he’d say it a thousand times more: if he could figure out how Alec navigated him so well, he’d bottle it up and produce it for the masses. It was nothing short of miraculous that he and Alec could exist so harmoniously in one space. Almost supernatural. Sometimes, Magnus just couldn’t trust it. So he did what he always did.

“You should be asleep, Mr. I’m getting married tomorrow.”

Magnus scowled. “I can’t. I’m too…” He stopped short and shifted his weight, adjusting the phone so he could take a drink of his martini. “Ragnor, tell me I’m an idiot.”

“For what this time?” Ragnor asked airily, sounding like he was settling into a nightcap as well.
“For having any doubts. For brooding. For getting married. I don’t know, pick one,” Magnus drawled and set his drink down on the side table. He walked over to the ledge, resting his elbows there and watching the city move and breathe below him.

“Marrying Alec is the best decision you have ever made in your life to date, and you’re having doubts because of trauma, you idiot.”

Magnus inhaled and exhaled deeply, feeling his insides realign and settle.

“You’re right.”

“Of course I’m right! I’m always right. You didn’t call me because I’m wrong.”

“Why did I call you, then?” Magnus shot back. “I shouldn’t be feeling like this. I don’t feel like this, really. Not when Alec is with me.”

“Precisely. You don’t actually feel like this. You’re nervous. Which is perfectly normal, mate. You’ve simply been well-conditioned in fight or flight. Fight for you has historically meant a significant amount of pain, loss, and trauma. So you chose flight instead. It’s only natural.”

“Psycho-babble bullshit.”

“Accurate psycho-babble bullshit, mind. If you wanted sympathy, you should have called someone who likes you less.”

“I shouldn’t be doubting anything at all. Alec is wonderful. Everything is going perfectly well. I love him. I love his family. Nothing is really going to change. I don’t understand--”

“Magnus, you’d be a miserable barmy arse if you didn’t have doubts! That’s how it works! People who are in denial about being happy, don’t try to question if it’s the wrong decision. Of course you have doubts because you have so much to lose now if something goes wrong. But you and Alec are solid, you’re stronger together, and you’ll get over your doubts together. I promise.”

Magnus exhaled sharply through his nose.
“6 o’clock tomorrow?”

“Wouldn’t miss it.”

Magnus hung up the phone, dumped the rest of his drink, and wandered back into their bedroom. Alec was buried under the blankets, all but cocooned in them, looking stupid and adorable. It was almost too much. A lot about this entire week of situations was almost too much. Predictably, Alec stirred only a moment after he came in.

“There he’s,” he slurred. Alec patted the bed. “Need m’heater.”

“I feel...so loved right now,” Magnus sighed, even as he pulled off his shirt to join him. Alec whined, pulling his arms out from the covers to grab for him. Magnus twisted a little out of his grasp, just to fuck with him. Alec wasn’t having, of course, and lunged to try and pin him down to the mattress. They grappled a little until Alec caved and let Magnus curl himself over him, kissing at his face.

“Dis-ruptive ,” Alec grumbled as they settled. Magnus laughed, nuzzling annoyingly into his face and neck. Alec’s response was to wrap his arms tightly around Magnus’ middle and haul him into a position he preferred, using him like a body pillow. Shock. “Feel better?” he asked quietly. Magnus hummed and nodded, but didn’t bother verbally responding.

He always felt better closer to Alec.
Family politics and nonsensical traditions were two of the very many reasons people disliked weddings. And because two men were getting married, there was all the more contention. People presumed that they would need to follow the typical script and were concerned about the choreography of the whole ceremony. Very obviously, Alec had not considered any of these things. For example: who would walk down the aisle? Who would be waiting at the altar? Was someone going to give one of the grooms away? Would one of them have a bouquet? Most of these questions were inane and had the grooms in question scowling and begging the gods for patience they had never possessed. Thankfully, it was Maryse who fielded those things and handled them beautifully.

“They both have to walk down the aisle, you idiot. And no one’s holding bouquets because Madzie’s allergic. And they both will have two people giving them away. Yes, I said both. What do you mean that’s not how you do it? How many times have you been married?”

To say the least: it was nice.
Maryse had them walking in from the sides instead of down the aisle so that it would be at the same time instead of one after the other. Cat and Ragnor were walking Magnus, and Maryse and Robert were walking Alec. Alec thought all of the pomp and circumstance was a little ridiculous, Magnus could tell, but he kept it to himself and went where he was told when he was told. Magnus found it entertaining.

They’d spent the whole day apart because Clary insisted on it. Since she was so, so pregnant, everyone was catering to her whims. Magnus liked the drama of it. When they actually got to the Palm House at the Botanic Gardens, they were supposed to be getting dressed in separate rooms. Of course, they were just across the hall and everything was a little chaotic, so they kept catching glimpses of each other through the door. Alec kept mouthing “help me” due to the fact that his mother was recounting every stage of the ceremony and Jace was lecturing him about marriage while Izzy dressed him. Max was probably the least helpful, as he was already tipsy and was asking Jace specific questions about the various points in his lecture.

Magnus’ room, shockingly, was much more sedate. Cat and Ragnor swapped teasing stories about the early months of his relationship with Alec while Madzie spun around in his dress enough to make everyone dizzy. Clary was getting a pedicure, hands on her oversized belly and blissed out. Raphael was stressed, but that was only because Raphael liked to stick to his schedules and this was absolutely not his schedule. Lydia, who had been asked to be on Magnus’ side, was simultaneously mocking Raphael and helping Magnus get ready. Ever the multi-tasker.

Magnus was wearing a martini-fit burgundy and gold jacquard jacket from Dolce and Gabbana with skinny fit black slacks. He had his hair spiked up, lids painted gold, and had on black, heeled loafers with lacquered gold floral prints on them. All in all, it was relatively sedate look, but glittery enough to appease his need for the bold and dramatic. He and Alec had kept their attire a secret from each other, since it was the only thing they really had any control over.

In a moment of confusion when the planner came in and they brought snacks for the wedding party, Magnus excused himself to use the restroom. There was still an hour before the ceremony, so he decided to make use of the restroom further down the hall. Just to get some air. He had too much energy and nowhere to put it, and he’d been surrounded by people all day. Usually, that wasn’t an issue, but maybe he was picking up on some of Alec’s quirks? Magnus shook off the thought.

Speaking of Alec, that was precisely who he ran into on his way to the bathroom. He was sitting in a little alcove which overlooked the pond, looking like he was trying to relax for a moment. They locked eyes on each other instantly, and for a flash of a second, Magnus felt like it had been weeks since he’d seen Alec instead of a handful of hours. He was so distracted by that sensation that he hardly noticed what Alec was wearing.

“Magnus--you look--” He couldn’t even finish the sentence apparently, and Magnus could see the
way he swallowed hard and inhaled deeply. So that was when Magnus registered Alec’s wedding tuxedo. It was definitely more traditional-looking, with a gold vest and tie, but his jacket and pants were white. It looked *good*. Magnus took a breath to settle himself, tried to shake off the weird onslaught of feeling.

“Max give you a hard time about wearing white to your wedding?”

That did it. Alec scowled. Hard. Making Magnus laugh and slide into the seat next to him.

“I have had a lifetime of practice ignoring Max.” Magnus just hummed and leaned into him, feeling calmer when Alec slid an arm around his shoulders. He felt the press of lips against his temple. “Doing okay?”

Magnus nodded. “Just needed a break. Everyone’s great, but…”

“But,” Alec agreed.

They sat quietly there together for a few moments, not talking about much of anything. Evidently, Max was driving everyone crazy, pretending like he was going to sabotage the ceremony. Maryse was ignoring it for the most part, but Izzy was not because Max had played a few too many pranks at her wedding. Thankfully, Simon had Micah who was kept out of the line of fire of his mother’s sibling-directed wrath. Alec thought Micah deserved a few more years of peace before he had to witness that side of his own mother.

They were rudely interrupted by a hawk-like screech from the hall. Magnus startled a little, forcing a protective reaction from Alec, who automatically put an arm around his front. Magnus had never been one to play damsel for any reason, but he found it much easier to submit to with Alec. And after all, it was just Izzy sent to find them.

“I should have *known* you two would go rogue! I told Mom to lock you inside so you didn’t ruin the surprise, but *nooo*, no one ever listens to Izzy! Cause that would be *crazy*!" she shrieked. She turned and shouted, “I found them!” down the hall. It was answered with loud grumbles, and a few “you’ve got to be kidding me’s.” Magnus chuckled into the crook of Alec’s arm, trying not to let Izzy see. Evidently, Alec didn’t care.

“Iz, you’re being a psycho--”
“I don’t care!” she snapped back emphatically. She went to grab up Magnus’ hand and jerk him into standing. “You two are going to behave for once, even if that means I have to drug you and carry you down the aisle myself!”

Magnus couldn’t help the cackle which slipped out. He tried to cover it, he did, but it just didn’t work when he caught sight of Alec’s expression, which was now a mix of exasperation and bewilderment. Magnus felt the urge to swing back and kiss him, but Izzy wasn’t stopping any time soon.

So he winked instead. “Meet you at the altar, angel!”

“Izzy, you had better not drug my fiance!”
Magnus waited in the wing opposite Alec for his cue to start walking. Lydia, Clary, and Raphael were standing in front of him, fussing with each other’s hair and straightening clothing. Raphael submitted to it and blandly offered his attentions to the over-excited women next to him. A fond smile crept over Magnus’ lips as he watched them. He’d never been one to think about his own wedding day (though he certainly had come up with some creative ideas for others), but he couldn’t fathom a better situation. Cat came over and started to pin a black dahlia to his lapel.

“You do know these things are bad luck,” Cat teased. He flashed exasperated eyes in her direction.

“No, they’re not. They’re misunderstood.”

“Like you?”

Magnus pulled his lips in. “Alec understands me just fine,” he answered quietly. Cat did smile at that.

“Which is probably why there’s black dahlias all over a winter wedding planned in a few months.”

“Probably.”

She moved to fix a stray bit of his hair. “You’ve done well, Magnus. I can’t imagine a better person for you. I honestly never thought--” She cut herself off. “I was perfectly prepared to be the whole of your family for the rest of my life, but I am ecstatic and grateful that I don’t have to be.” She put her hands to his cheeks in a gesture so maternal Magnus nearly flinched. “I don’t think I’ll ever be able to tell you how proud I am of you. How happy I am.”

Instead of answering, Magnus knocked his forehead to hers, and rested there for a moment. That’s when the music started to play.

“That’s my cue!” Lydia squeaked. She darted out to go meet Max at the altar they’d set up. The crowd laughed when they high-fived as they walked by each other. Izzy and Clary did a pretty
intense hair flip. And Jace all but tackled Raphael in a hug, and the hall erupted in laughter.

When Magnus and Alec came in, Maryse and Robert and Cat and Ragnor flanking them, it felt a little more intense, a little more surreal. Magnus couldn’t even really hear the music because he was so focused on Alec walking toward him. He’d literally just seen him in that tux, but the full get up, standing upright, within context, was a just this side of too much to handle. Tears were already stinging his eyes.

Alec definitely noticed. Magnus could see Alec noticing, and they were both smiling like idiots. Magnus had to resist the impulse to skip over the rest of the way and kiss him stupid. It was supposed to be a ceremony, damn it. When they met in the middle, Maryse and Robert hugged and kissed Alec before doing the same to Magnus, while Cat and Ragnor hugged and kissed him before doing the same to Alec. The four of them walked back to their seats arm in arm, tears already streaking their cheeks.

Magnus hardly noticed; he reached for Alec’s hands, swaying in a little too close. Alec flashed his eyes at him warningly but vastly amused. Magnus didn’t give a shit. It was his wedding, so he’d be ridiculous if he wanted. Alec didn’t seem to be in any hurry to stop him anyway. They were married by an officiant provided by the venue. She was pretty and peppy and had Alec rolling his eyes a little, so Magnus loved it exponentially.

Then came time for their vows.

There hadn’t been much discussion about vows, surprisingly. Magnus lashed out at anyone who bothered Alec about it, so the topic had quickly been shut down. Obviously, they wrote their own. Alec went first just out of sheer preference and anxiety.

He cleared his throat, and Magnus tried not to giggle when Alec pulled an exasperated face at him.

“Magnus...everything I thought I knew about myself changed when I met you. And te quiero no solo por como eres, sino por como soy yo cuando estoy contigo. Because of you...” That tear slipped and Magnus had to wipe it away as his heart throbbed. Alec just shook his head helplessly.

“You did more than just save me from some random woman at a bar,” Magnus chuckled at that, squeezing his hands, “and I promise I’m going to spend the rest of my life showing you how grateful I am that you did.” There were awws and sniffles from their audience. Magnus valiantly tried to ignore it because if he saw their faces, he would cry. No joke, just break down and cry. So he let out a shaky breath.

“Alexander,” he started with a tinge of sass. Alec let out a very soft snort, still beaming, and
threaded their fingers together, tugging. “I’ve spent...a lot of my life alone. Sometimes by choice, sometimes not. But you--” he sighed, “you swept into my life like a hurricane, upending everything, as Raph can attest.” There were some chuckles at that. “I love you so much more,” he said repeating what they’d said that night he’d agreed to Indonesia. Alec smiled impossibly wider. “I never realized it was possible, but I love you so much more than anything--” It was his turn to clear his throat. “So I promise to hire someone to organize my closet,” everyone laughed through their tears, “and try to stay out of the way of people with guns.”

Alec leaned forward, knocking their foreheads together, “Thank you.” Magnus felt instead of heard himself giggle, and pressed up to kiss him. Maybe, maybe, they got a little carried away. It wasn’t his fault that Alec looked so good in that tux.

“All right,” their officiant chuckled even when they didn’t entirely separate, “obviously we need to move this along.” Their audience laughed. “Alexander Gideon Lightwood, do you take this man to be your husband?” Alec had his arm around Magnus’ waist, their cheeks brushing when he nodded.

“I do.”

“Magnus Bane, do you take this man to be your husband?”

“I do.” They put their rings on each other. Alec hadn’t seen it yet, but he barely looked at it because he was too busy staring at Magnus.

“By the power vested in me by the State of New York, I now pronounce you husbands and partners in life!”

She barely got the words out before Magnus and Alec were kissing again. They’d never had too many qualms about PDA, but there were even less in that moment. Magnus had both hands on Alec’s face as he tangle their tongues, lips sealed together. Alec kept them pressed close, arms tight around the small of his back. There were cheers, whistles, and catcalls from their friends and family, which had them laughing. Very quickly, they were smiling too much to have a proper kiss, so Alec pecked his lips a few times, indulging Magnus for a little while longer until their exit music was too much for them to ignore.

So they tore off down the aisle, arm in arm into the reception area where dinner was already being set up for them. Their guests were being taken to another room for cocktails and hors-d’oeuvres so Magnus and Alec could have a moment for themselves while their wedding party, minus Clary, did shots. Magnus and Alec did the requisite shot with them, and immediately started making out.
“It’s not even been five minutes, you animals!” Raphael complained.

“Dude, they’re newlyweds. It’s like... their only job is to bone,” Max said a little too nonchalantly. Every other person faked gagged and groaned at Max’s disgusting interpretation, but Magnus and Alec continued to ignore them in favor of kissing.

“You look so good in that suit,” Alec muttered against his lips, maneuvering them over to a bench away from their annoying loved ones.

“You rip it, I kill you,” Magnus shot back, very seriously. It would not have been Alec’s first victim in his quest to get Magnus naked. But his husband just laughed and peppered kisses to his cheek and neck. Magnus pushed into his grip, enjoying the attention while he had it.

“Whatever you say, husband,” Alec said against his cheek.

“You’re going to do that all night, aren’t you?”

“Yes, husband.”

“No one believes me when I tell them that you’re the sap.”

“You cried first,” Alec accused. Magnus gasped, feigning indignance, only for Alec to mockingly mimic his expression, and it devolved into a bickering session interrupted with sound, lingering kisses.

All too soon, they were summoned to take formal pictures. Cat swooped in to touch up Magnus’ makeup while the photographer, a friend of Magnus’, fixed Alec’s hair. They went through all of the variations with the couple, wedding party, and immediate family. Then they were quickly being lined up to make a grand entrance to their own party. The whole thing was elaborate and more traditional than Alec would have preferred. They announced the wedding party, and the happy couple entered soon after, while people stood along their entry route and blew bubbles from cheap toy bubble guns. They got everyone seated and it was time to get the toasts rolling while the food was being served. Robert was the one to thank everyone for coming.
“Everyone here knows how much it means to me and my family that you all were able to make it out tonight for our boys. Alec is my son, but Magnus has become so interwoven into the fabric of our lives that it feels only natural for it to be official. So I’ll make the first toast tonight. To Magnus, Alec, and all the people who love you, cheers!” Everyone lifted their glasses and clinked them together. But Robert dipped back to the microphone. “Also, I apologize in advance for anything my children may say. They have been drinking. Without further ado: the best men.”

Jace stood up first and had a whole host of embarrassing stories about his encounters with the happy couple over the past few years which had people rolling in their seats.

“What it boils down to is this: my best friend and wife set up my brother with her good friend, and now my family is bigger than it was. I’m not sure there exists a person in the world who is good enough for my brother, but if anyone gets close, it’s definitely Magnus. Because he’s the only person I know who routinely describes Alec as perfect. Which I find to be greatly disturbing...”

Raphael’s was short but sweet. “Magnus is the brother that I earned in this life, and I couldn’t have asked for a better one. We all know he deserves nothing but the best, and Alec certainly meets those qualifications.”

Izzy and Clary got up to make speeches, too. Izzy went first because Clary wanted to be a little more dramatic. Izzy’s was clear and coherent, heartfelt, and just a little sassy.

“I first heard about Magnus after their second date. Because these two idiots went on two dates in less than twenty-four hours, and have been attached at the hip ever since. But they always fit together so well, we didn’t even question it. I knew Magnus was it for my big brother probably before either of them realized it. Which is precisely why I meddled, got Magnus an invite to family dinner, and sealed the deal. Clary will try to tell you that she’s the one responsible for all of this cuteness, but who was really working the backstage?” She pointed to herself and mouthed me to her very appreciative audience. Clary was not amused and got up in a huff, swiping the microphone away from her.

“My sister-in-law is very confused. She just had a baby, you know, so lack of sleep.” She got laughed at and heckled for that comment. “I didn’t even bother asking either Magnus or Alec if they were interested in a date, I just told them both where to be and what time, and had them convinced that the other had already agreed, so it was useless to argue.” Alec scoffed, but she nodded. “Uh-hmm, they both said no at least three times before I talked them into it. But seriously, look at them. Did I have any other choice? It was destiny, guys, I had to give them to each other. I had to. Now Magnus isn’t just my friend, he’s also my brother-in-law, so I think I win a few times over.” She raised her glass of non-alcoholic wine, “To Alec and Magnus!”

“Alec and Magnus!” their guests chanted. It was immediately followed up by a dozen people
clinking their glasses. Magnus didn’t even bother to hesitate kissing Alec, who was already half turned toward him anyway. He felt that moment when Alec sunk into it; that frenzy of emotions settling into one direction. Magnus swiped a thumb over his cheekbone, smiling up at him.

Chapter End Notes


Alec vest: https://www.tiedrake.net/creamtuxedovestv15.html


Show less
Because it was Magnus, there was a whole host of performers. They had a live band and singer with backups, and a dance troupe to perform for them and their guests. Magnus had donated to the facility where the dancers performed and personally knew the singers and musicians. They performed while the guests ate. It was a four-course meal prepared by several of Mario’s proteges, as Mario and his family were wedding guests.

The entertainment didn’t end there, either. There was a photo booth and a caricaturist Magnus had found in Central Park, several card tables, pool tables, an open bar where anyone could be the bartender, and several aerialists performing opposite the band with a slideshow of Magnus and Alec as a backdrop. There was a kids table with face painting, someone making balloon animals, a magician doing card tricks and little sleight of hands, and a candy bar nearby. People were given place cards in the form of little succulents at the door, and were able to sit wherever they wanted. Everyone also had a commemorative glass water bottle and a packet of flower seeds to take home. In lieu of gifts, they’d asked everyone to donate to Homes for Our Troops, the Fisher House Foundation, the DAV Service Trust, or the NYPD Foundation.

When dinner was winding down, their singer asked Magnus and Alec to come out for their first dance. She was edgy and pretty and Alec remembered really liking her when they met a year back. She’d been busy traveling and making music all over the world. Evidently, a few of her songs were on some cult TV show people liked, so she hadn’t been around much, but she would never have missed the opportunity to pay Magnus back for his kindness in her early years. When the opening bars played, Alec felt his heart skip a beat and he shut his eyes against it.

Magnus took up the position and chuckled. “Thought you might like it.” His eyes were sparkling like crazy in all the weird mood lighting, Alec almost couldn’t take it. “You said make it personal,” Magnus teased.

Alec laughed, “Does everyone else know she wrote this about us?”

He shrugged. “Probably not.”
I can’t help but be wrong in the dark
‘Cause I’m overcome in this war of hearts
I can’t help but want oceans to part
‘Cause I’m overcome in this war of hearts.

Their wedding party came out during the hook, and danced through to the next song. Alec switched over to dance with his mother while Magnus danced with Cat. At the end of the next song, the dancing troupe came back out on the floor and it was opened up to all of the guests. Magnus and Alec immediately went to cut the cake, so that it wasn’t a huge production and people weren’t waiting for it.

While people were enjoying themselves, the photographer pulled Magnus and Alec out onto the verandah for nighttime pictures by the water under low lights. They were a little too tipsy and too giddy to take anything seriously, but the photographer seemed forgiving and his assistants kept cooing over how cute they were. Alec took this as a good sign that the pictures would turn out well enough to meet Magnus’ outrageously high standards.

They would have stayed outside longer, but they had to go in and make rounds, just to ensure they got face time with all of their guests. It was more traditional to split up and meet with their individual guests, but Alec wasn’t letting Magnus go anytime soon, and he seemed just as reluctant to let Alec out of his sight. The whole thing took a lot longer than either of them would have liked, but it was much preferable to the alternative of being separated.

Their reception raged for hours, hitting its stride around 10 o’clock. Babies and little ones were whisked off to cots which had been set up in a side room with paid babysitters by 8:30, so everyone had gotten a little wild. Alec wasn’t sure that there was a time he’d stopped talking, drinking, or dancing between then and midnight, when his mother announced that they were going to bid him and Magnus farewell on the verandah.

Everyone was given sparklers to light up, which they got creative with considering their level of intoxication. And the fireworks display was set to go off as Alec and Magnus walked out. Servers came around with glasses of champagne. They were toasted one last time, and then yes, they got into a rowboat on the pond and were rowed off toward the fireworks. Once they were out of earshot, Alec couldn’t stop laughing at how dramatic it was, which had Magnus covering his face and trying not to snort.

“We’re--hehehehehe--we’re gonna see ‘em tomorrow!” Alec gasped mid-cackle. Magnus swatted at him and contested that it was romantic and memorable, and that the pictures would be stunning.
Alec just shook his head and pulled his husband down against him, fixing his attention on the fireworks as their oarsman paddled them to the other end of the pond. It really was very beautiful, especially over the water, and he could hear their guests still cheering and singing along to the music from the verandah.

“Happy?” Alec murmured against the top of Magnus’ head. Magnus nodded.

“More than.” His arm slid around the outside of Alec’s leg, fingers clenching into his slacks. “You?”

Alec sighed, mind flitting over the hundreds of feelings which had ebbed and flowed throughout the day. His throat clenched tight and his own words seemed horribly inadequate. So he fell back into a routine he and Magnus had started all those months ago, with Alec’s head in his lap and Magnus’ hand in his hair, on quiet days when they turned off their phones and ignored the world outside. Once he started, the words came naturally.

Quienes se amaron como nosotros? Busquemos las antiguas cenizas del corazon quemado y alli que caigan uno por uno nuestros besos hasta que resucite la flor deshabitada.

Amemos el amor que consumio su fruto y descendio a la tierra con rostro y poderio: tu y yo somos la luz que continua, su inquebrantable espiga delicada.

Al amor sepultado por tanto tiempo frio, por nieve y primavera, por olvido y otono, acerquemos la luz de una nueva manzana, de la frescura abierta por una nueva herida, como el amor antiguo que camina en silencio por una eternidad de bocas enterradas.
Magnus rubbed his head against Alec’s chest. “I don’t remember that one.”

“We haven’t read it.”

“Neruda?”

Alec snorted softly. “As if I’d quote anyone else at you.”

“You get me.”

“I should hope so, husband.”

Magnus hummed, twisting around to kiss him softly, teasingly, just open enough to be suggestive, and lingering enough to surpass that suggestiveness.

“I think I like that almost as much as papi.”

Alec smiled back and snaked an arm around his neck to kiss the smirk off his lips.

Chapter End Notes

Yes, I did, in fact, blatantly imply that Magnus Bane and Ruelle are besties and that she wrote War of Hearts about Malec.

Now. Has Alec seen Magnus' tattoo? Follow the link below. https://media.tenor.com/images/8004bda2bbf5b8fa2c6bf0faa4475e04/tenor.gif

Stay tuned for scenes from our next episode...
Chapter 118

Chapter Summary

Tattoo reveal

Chapter Notes

Soo...you guys have asked a lot and have waited very patiently while I got my shit together.
But FYI, while I'm posting the tat reveal, I won't be posting any honeymoon chapters.
It will be MENTIONED in another part.

Cause yes! There's a part 2!
I had a couple threads I wanted to follow. So if there's something you felt was lacking or left unexplored, please let me know! I am always open to suggestions! Without giving too much away: children and Lydia will be major topics this go around.

As always, thanks for sticking around and reading my monster. Ya'll are lovely humans and I appreciate you!

Magnus had avoided tattoos for most of his life for various reasons. He’d never felt the need to have anything permanent to his person. Plenty of people had tried to talk him into it, and he’d even considered it on several occasions, but could never bring himself to take the plunge. So when Jace had first made the suggestion, Magnus was remarkably surprised at how quickly he’d gotten on board with it. He’d only had it for two days, but it felt natural. Maybe he was romanticizing it a little, what with the wedding and all, but he liked to think it was always supposed to be there.

When they got back to their apartment, Alec fed the Chairman while Magnus tried to keep them bodily attached. Right up until the moment Alec spun on his heel and swept Magnus off his feet. Literally. Holding him bridal style. Magnus’ eyes flashed playfully before he pecked Alec’s lips.

“I accept the physicality and reject the symbolism,” Magnus told him seriously.

“Noted.” Alec answered with equal serious as he walked them into the bedroom. He put Magnus on the bed, obviously intending to get on it with him, except that Magnus was getting up onto his knees, facing him. Alec arched a brow, confused. Magnus reached up for him, getting ahold of his face to kiss him thoroughly first. When he broke it off, he slid off his jacket, unbuttoned his shirt, and waited for Alec to take it off. His husband was obviously confused still, but far too one-track minded to voice any protest at this point. So he obliged and helped pull the dress shirt off, tossing
it aside carelessly, and immediately fixed his gaze on Magnus’ face, expectant. That’s not where he wanted Alec’s attention, but Magnus was pleased all the same. Alec went in for another kiss, and Magnus humored him for a few moments. Then he grabbed up Alec’s right hand and put it to his bicep.

Alec’s response was instant. He’d felt the ridges on his skin and was startled by the texture, making Magnus chuckle. They pulled apart, Alec’s eyes wide and confused. He narrowed his brows and circled around to get a better look. Magnus submitted to this, watching every microexpression as they flitted across Alec’s face.

The design itself was simple: Clary had drawn up the Lightwood crest and worked in Magnus’ last name. Over the top, she’d written out a quote Magnus found, which he didn’t translate for her.

لقد كنت شجاعًا في حربك المقدسة

"You have been brave in your holy war"

Alec, mouth slightly agape as he took it in, traced the lettering as if he’d written it out himself. Magnus couldn’t help but be a little in love with how caught off guard he was, how in awe he seemed.

*

Magnus didn’t know the half of it. Alec was so pent up and tired, and tired of being pent up, that he hadn’t been able to focus on much other than getting Magnus naked. An old past time, for sure, but it had certain rhythms which Magnus changed up in favor of revealing his surprise. And Alec was absolutely surprised. It was as if his whole world narrowed to that one thing and he was mesmerized by it. Magnus’ slightly odd behavior the past couple of days certainly made more sense now, not that Alec would have questioned it anyway. Still. He let his fingers drift over the lettering with no small amount of reverence.

“This translation isn’t quite right.”

Magnus smiled, “I took some liberties.”

“With centuries’ old poetry? Of course, you did.”

“Do you like it?”
“Do I--? Do I like that you have my family crest and name tattooed on your arm for everyone to see?” He jerked Magnus into him and kissed him fiercely, as if he believed he could swallow him down and keep him there. The whole day had been physically and mentally grueling, and Alec’s brain was so fried that he was having trouble keeping himself in check in just about every capacity. Not that Magnus was going to mind any of it anyway. He tended to love Alec at his most out of control.

But Magnus was stopping him, pulling away.

“Not tonight,” he said breathlessly.

“Huh?” Alec’s brain short-circuited. Magnus was always up for sex. He didn’t seem tired, not even as he ducked to press kisses to cheek and jaw.

“You’re exhausted,” Magnus muttered. “I can tell.” He pressed a soft kiss to his lips. “Let me take care of you.” Apparently, Alec was really exhausted because he immediately deflated, the air pushed right out of him. Even his bones felt tired and achy. He’d just been so focused on getting to the end of everything that he hadn’t noticed it. Magnus kissed him one more time before telling him he was going to make him tea. Alec sunk into the bed and started taking off his clothes; sex or no, they were damn uncomfortable. Magnus came back quickly with a tray with the tea, grapes, cheese, and massage oil.

“Magnus--”

“Hush.”

“You don’t need to--”

“I absolutely need to. You spent the whole day getting poked, prodded, and interrogated by a herd of people, all for my sake.” Magnus set the tray down on the bed, and clambered on, slinging himself around back of Alec. Then he proceeded to serve them tea and the food he’d brought. Alec hadn’t realized how hungry he was either. Magnus always knew when he needed taking care of; when he’d gone overboard and needed grounding. Then he was urging Alec onto his stomach and lathering his hands up with oil.

This wasn’t something that happened very often. Shoulder rubs, sure, but never full-out massages.
Alec had offered numerous times but refused to let Magnus reciprocate. Ergo, it never happened because Magnus wanted to be able to reciprocate. Alec just wasn’t accustomed to being pampered, shied away from it whenever he could because he really didn’t think he needed it. Magnus had made great strides in that area, but there was still work to be done. According to Magnus, anyway.

“You’re just buttering me up for the party tomorrow,” Alec mumbled into the sheets, letting himself sink into the feeling of Magnus’ warm hands on him. It was the most relaxed he’d felt all day, the most centered.

“Maybe,” Magnus answered quietly. But not in his usual, sassy I’m-cute-so-you-put-up-with-my-shit way. It was much softer, more genuine. Alec was immediately suspicious but said nothing. Sometimes Magnus went full-on gentle. It wasn’t a natural state for him, but something about Alec seemed to bring it out in him. The only other times Alec witnessed it was with Raphael and Madzie. Magnus’ guard was completely down for them; his carefully constructed persona sloughed away in favor of comforting them. Magnus was too good and too caring, and he’d learned a long time ago to hide that away. Alec was honored to witness it even once.

“I see it, you know. How much it wears on you. I know you hate feeling exposed.”

“Magnus--”

“Hush,” he bit back softly, hands digging a little deeper into muscle. Alec let out a grunt, absolutely focused on how good it felt. “You’ve done it all this time, every time, no matter what I ask. You step right into that spotlight with me.”

Alec sighed, “I don’t like you feeling alone.”

“I never feel alone because of you, and I love you so much for everything you do for me. But I promise I won’t break when you take time for yourself. That’s my real promise to you. I’m stronger and better because of you, so you don’t have to hold onto me so tight.” Magnus’ hands swept down Alec’s arms, working his muscles on the way back up.

“What if I want to?”

He felt Magnus’ lips brush against the back of his neck.
“Well,” he whispered, “I won’t be the one to stop you.”

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