Table For Two (Malec AU)

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Summary

Malec!AU

When Magnus Bane; Bar owner and life-long bachelor is thrown a curveball, he quickly needs to find a way to adjust his lifestyle.

Little does he know that the series of events that follows soon leads him down a path to find everything his life has been missing.

Alec Lightwood; Part-time student and the best barista in town has finally started to make his own way in the big city.

A want and need to better himself soon pushes him in a new direction, showing him that when you stop looking for something, you find everything you've ever wanted.
"God, Damn it!" Magnus muttered under his breath as he stumbled over an open empty box that was left in the middle of the hallway of his New York apartment building.

"Great, another new neighbour" he rolled his eyes as he kicked the box aside and continued down the hall to the elevator, passing by several stacks of boxes. He was tired and irritable after a long night.

Three new tenants had moved into the building over the last month, one of which was a couple who loved to have loud parties, one couple who liked to have obnoxiously loud sex and one family with what seemed like 50 kids who liked to scream day and night.

It had been a long night at the bar that he owned and all he wanted was to get home, take off the suede blazer and tuck into his McDonalds breakfast sandwich and watch a movie before he got some sleep.

Magnus rubbed at his temple as he stepped into the elevator at the end of the hall, turning around and watching the doors come together in front of him.

He scrolled through emails on his phone as the elevator rose to the 3rd floor.

He stepped out when the elevator came to a stop and the doors opened, still staring down at his phone through his tired eyes as he walked up to his front door, turned the key and walked into his apartment, throwing his keys in the bowl and hanging his bag on the coat stand by the door.

Falling onto the old battered couch in the living room came as naturally as breathing, he'd done it a thousand times and would probably do it a thousand times more.

He unwrapped the sandwich and got it down in half a dozen bites, sighing as he stared at the story playing out in front of him on his flat screen TV that he was paying no real attention to.

The same old shit, different day. Life was starting to get a little stagnant for Magnus Bane; longtime bachelor and the owner of the coolest bar in town. His days consisted of working at his bar, doing the books, lugging cases of beer around and working through the night every Saturday.

Magnus didn't have a family, his parent's passed away in a car accident when he was 19 and he had no siblings. He did have an Aunt who lived in Connecticut but he hadn't seen or heard from her since he was 10 years old.

But he was lucky enough to have 2 very close friends who he considered to be more like family; Caterina his best friend of 15 years and lawyer, they'd been inseparable since 6th grade, she and Magnus knew everything there was to know about each other.

And Raphael, a young man who worked at Magnus' bar; Pandemonium. Raphael had shown up at the bar one night 3 years ago, heartbroken and alone after being kicked out by his Queerphobic family, nothing but 40 bucks in his wallet and the clothes on his back. Magnus had been kind enough to allow him to stay on the couch in his office and give him a job to help him get on his feet in the big city. These were his people, they were all the family he'd ever needed.

Magnus stripped down to his boxers and fell face first into his unmade bed. His eyes pecked open for a second when he could smell something weird; an old sweaty sock draped across the pillow beside him. He picked it up in a pinch and flung it onto the floor with all the other dirty laundry.
"I really need to hire a maid" Magnus muttered to himself as he closed his eyes, the side of his face squashed against the pillow.

Magnus awoke several hours later to a knocking on his apartment door.

He snorted himself awake as he sat up, eyebrows wound into an inquisitive frown and holding himself up with his palms against the sheets, staring towards the sound of the knocking at the door.

His eyes were red and dusted with sleep and his hair a mess. He threw on his black silk bathrobe, tying it loosely around the waist as he muttered to himself about never getting a minutes peace on a Sunday. He yawned as he walked towards the door, rubbing his eyes with the heel of his hand.

"Alright, alright, I'm coming" he called as the knocking continued.

He opened the door, confronted with an exasperated-looking woman with her hair in a tight bun and a binder of paperwork that she held in her arm against her chest.

There was a small child stood to her right, a rainbow coloured backpack across her back, a stuffed animal in her arms and a worried look on her face.

"Can I help you?" Magnus asked, a little annoyed at having been woken up on his only day off, wondering if the woman had knocked on the wrong door.

"Good afternoon Sir. Mr Magnus Bane?" the suited woman asked, looking down at her paperwork.

"Yes, that's me," Magnus said, frowning. He kept glancing between the woman and the little girl, wondering what the hell was going on.

"Mr Bane, my name is Helen, I work with The Department Of Family Services. We've sent you several letters and tried to get in touch with you multiple times over the last couple of weeks"

"The department of what? I'm sorry, I don't... I don't understand, why have you been trying to contact me?" Magnus asked, more confused as he tried to blink away the rest of the sleep from his eyes, this woman obviously meant business and looked like she had been dragged into work on her day off and wasn't too happy about it.

"The Department Of Family Services, Sir. This is Madzie" She said, gesturing to the young girl to her side.

"I'm sorry to tell you that your Aunt recently passed away and it was in her last will and testament that she wanted Madzie to remain with family. As her last living relative, her wish was for Madzie to stay with you. Of course, this is always preferable for us rather than placing the child in foster care" Helen explained, pulling Madzie's little pink suitcase over and all but shoving it into Magnus' arms.

"I'm sorry, Hold on, What?!" Magnus stuttered, "She..." he started and then stopped, looking down at the little girl, her big brown eyes looking hopeful.

"I... I have no idea how to look after a child. You can't just leave her here with me" Magnus tried to tell her as she handed him the paperwork.

"We will be here to support you of course and will make regular visits to check on Madzie, but for now we don't have any other option. Okay, Madzie, be good and we'll be by to check on you soon honey, okay?" Helen smiled at the little girl before she hurried away from the door and towards the elevator.
"Wait! You can't just leave her here!" Magnus stepped out into the hallway, the pink suitcase still wrapped in his arms as he called after the woman.

He was certainly awake now. He looked down at the quiet little girl again, now stood in the doorway behind him, clutching the stuffed animal as she shuffled nervously on the spot.

Magnus sighed.

"Hey" he eventually said to Madzie. She didn't respond, just continued to look scared and out of place against the messy backdrop of his living room.

"Alright come in," Magnus said, pointing her towards the couch to sit down. He put her suitcase by the door after he closed it and the stack of paperwork he had clutched in his hand, he put on top of the waist-high bookshelf just to the side of the door.

Magnus took a few minutes to pace and think about what had just happened.

"Okay... okay..." he said, out loud, but really just talking to himself, trying to get his thoughts straight.

He picked up the top page of the paperwork, looking for a phone number he could call, frowning as he picked up the landline phone and dialled.

"You've reached The Department Of Family Services..." the recorded message reeled off while Magnus rolled his eyes and tapped his foot anxiously.

After having to listen to a list of options, Magnus started pressing buttons, listening to message after message of 'press this, press that'.

After a frustratingly long time, he finally got through to a real person.

"Hello. Yes, my name is Magnus Bane and I need to speak to someone about... about a child that's been left with me. Yes I'll hold" he rolled his eyes

After 20 minutes of being told that no one was available and to call back tomorrow, Magnus eventually got frustrated and hung up, heaving a massive sigh.

He felt bad as he looked at the quiet little girl sat on the couch, still clutching the straps of her backpack.

"You okay?" he asked as he raked one hand through his hair, pushing it back from his forehead. A stupid question, but he couldn't think of what else to say.

Madzie stayed silent, unsure of what to say. Of course, she wasn't okay, her mother had died and now even this stranger didn't seem to want her.

"It's alright. You can stay here tonight and I'll call them back in the morning, don't worry" Magnus said, sitting himself down across from her, he felt bad for overreacting, she was obviously a sensitive child and was still grieving.

"Look I'm just... I'm not..." Magnus tried to explain, talking with his hands. "You should be with someone who knows how to look after you. I can barely look after myself" he said with a little laugh at the end, trying to get any kind of reaction out of the little one.

"I'll call them tomorrow, don't worry, we'll get this sorted out" he finished.
He thought for a moment, still feeling awkward in the silence, he didn't really have any experience with kids at all.

"Are you hungry? I think I have some pizza around here somewhere" he said, moving to the little kitchenette and opening up the fridge.

Half a day old pizza, some bottled water, a jar of pickles and a few beers were all he had to offer.

He heated up a slice in the microwave and pulled a bottle of water from the fridge, setting it down in front of Madzie on the coffee table.

"I'll be back in a second, okay? You be okay by yourself for a minute?" he asked.

Madzie nodded, the first response he'd gotten out of her in the last half hour.

"Okay," he said, picking up his cell and heading out to the hallway.
"Come on, Cat, Pick up, pick up!" he begged, tapping his foot again as the phone just rang and rang.

'You've reached Caterina Loss, I can't come to the ph....' was all Magnus heard before he hung up.

"Damn it!" he muttered.

He headed back into his apartment to find Madzie, taking a small bite of her pizza before pushing the plate aside. He smiled a cautious little smile at her.

"Okay. There's a guest bedroom through there" Magnus pointed to the door on the far left of the living room.

"The uh, Bathroom's through there" he continued, pointing in a different direction.

"Just um... I don't know, make yourself at home, I guess" he finished.

Madzie stood up, still not saying a word and pulled her suitcase into the bedroom that Magnus had pointed out.

Magnus slumped down onto the couch, rubbing his face with both hands. What had just happened? How could anyone think that he was suited to looking after a little girl when he worked all hours days and nights, lived off of take-out and could barely clean his own apartment or at least cook?

He felt awful for the way he had reacted, this little girl was his last remaining family after all. He walked over to the open doorway of the bedroom to find Madzie hanging her coat on the back of the little wooden chair in the corner of the room and pushing her little suitcase and backpack underneath the bed before climbing on top of it to sit on the edge with her little stuffed bear.

"How about we go get some real food?" he asked.

Madzie looked up, a small smile forming on her lips, making Magnus smile tentatively back at her. She hopped down from the bed, pulling her coat on to her shoulders again and clutching the little bear in her hand.

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"You know usually when someone offers to help you move, they actually help you move" Alec informed Jace who was sat on the couch, one of the only decent pieces of furniture Alec owned, sucking down on a beer and watching the game that was playing on the TV in the corner.
"I needed a break, oh come on, those boxes aren't even heavy, we both know they're all clothes" Jace replied, defending his laziness, pointing with his beer bottle.

Alec put down the 2 boxes in his arms and headed back out to the hallway to collect the last few, frowning when he saw the empty box he'd left outside the door a couple of hours ago was now halfway down the hall, on its side. He shrugged it off.

He pushed the last few boxes in through the front door and closed it behind him, sighing in satisfaction at finally having all his stuff together in his brand new apartment.

He put his hands on his hips, looking around the room at his space. Finally, he was out from under his Mum and stepdad's roof, he had a space of his own and was working towards finding his way in the world.

Alec worked full time at a coffee shop and took night classes 2 evenings a week at NYU studying archaeology. It had taken him 2 years of saving to finally have enough money to get out there on his own.

Unlike Magnus, Alec had a very close family unit; His sister Izzy, who was only about 18 months younger than him. He and Izzy were very close, she was the best kind of little sister anyone could ask for.

Jace; his best friend, but more like a brother. He'd known Jace since the first grade and they'd been inseparable ever since.

His Mum, Maryse and Stepdad, Luke were super supportive and loving. And his 10-year-old little brother, Max, who he adored and loved spending time with.

Izzy came walking out of the bedroom with several broken down boxes under her arm.
"Damn it, Alec, you've got more clothes than I have" she sighed as she flopped down onto the couch next to Jace, taking the beer from him to steal a sip.

Alec stood over in the little kitchen area, unpacking more boxes, wanting to get everything just how he wanted it as soon as possible. Not that he knew how he was going to feed himself with this cute little kitchen, he could make toast, maybe boil an egg but that was about the extent of his cooking skills.

He pulled 3 cokes from the fridge, the only thing he had in there besides some ketchup and spray cheese, opened them up and brought them over to the couch, falling down on it with a sigh and handing the drinks to Izzy and Jace.

"This place is awesome man" Jace admitted, looking around.

They'd gotten a lot done. Truth be told, Alec didn't have a lot of stuff yet, but the minimalist look was okay with him. Most of his stuff was unpacked the day before when he officially moved in, the rest of the boxes were what his step-dad had dropped off that morning.

"Okay, I've gotta get to work" Jace sighed after a few minutes, before chugging the rest of his coke and making himself get up from the couch.

"Thanks for the help buddy," Alec said, fist-bumping Jace.

"No problem. I'll see you at the JJ's tonight, you're working right?" Jace asked, pointing in Alec's direction as he adjusted the collar on his leather jacket on and headed for the door.
"I'll be there" Alec smiled a tight-lipped smile.

"I better get going too" Izzy sighed after another few minutes, not wanting to go to work, she'd much rather spend the afternoon with her brother, but she'd been late twice this week and didn't want to get in trouble again.

"Thanks, Iz, you coming by the shop later?" Alec asked.

"Yeah, I get off at 4 so I'll come by," Izzy said, wrapping her scarf around her neck before pulling on her jacket.

"Later big bro," Izzy said, blowing him a kiss and heading out the door.

Alec carried on watching the basketball game while he sipped his coke.

After another hour or so he realised he wasn't really paying attention. Alec wasn't used to spending much time alone, he always had friends and family around him. He looked around the room, taking in his surroundings, hoping inspiration would strike.

"This is weird" he muttered to himself after a few minutes. Too tired to do any more unpacking and feeling the hunger pangs start to kick in, he decided he would go out to find some food. Too late for breakfast, early lunch maybe?

He shut off the TV, grabbed his jacket and scarf, stuffed his wallet, phone and keys into his jeans pockets and headed out the door.

Alec braced against the cold fall winds of New York City as he made his way out of the front door of the building, walking a few blocks and turning a few corners. He had a motorbike parked in the underground garage of the apartment building but he loved the feeling of the fresh air on his skin. It was only a 10-minute walk before he came across a pancake house, or maybe it was a donut shop, either way, it sounded perfect.

Pancakes. That sounded good right now. With a strong cup of coffee.

He made his way inside, the warmth coming from the kitchen warming the whole place. It was only a small place, just a couple of people enjoying their food sat at tables around him.

He sat at a table by the window, he liked people watching, he loved to visit central park sometimes and just watch the crowds of people, wondering about their lives, about their days, making up stories for them in his head.

He ordered a black coffee and a short stack with a side of bacon and tipped the waitress generously. As someone who worked in a similar type of job, he knew how ungrateful people could sometimes be, so he always left a good tip.

After finishing off the whole plate, the waitress stopped by his table to refill his coffee mug, on the house, of course, she winked at him with a bright smile before she moved on to the next table. Alec smiled back, gratefully.

He leaned back on the bench seat of his booth, gazing out the window at the passers-by. The pancake place was situated right by an intersection so he could see up and down several streets, not to mention dozens of people passing by and crossing the street.

He saw two women stood just left of a store doorway across the street, taking a smoke break from work, shivering against the cold harsh winds of the streets. An Aunt and Niece he decided, very
close because there were only a few years between them, they were working double shifts 6 days a week to afford their shared apartment and save up to get themselves a one-way ticket to Hollywood.

Next was an older gentleman in a long beige trench coat, suited and booted and walking with a briefcase in one hand and his cell phone up to his ear in the other hand. He looked flustered; like he was late for a meeting or something. Alec decided that he worked in advertising, had his own corner office and a 6 figure salary and on the weekends, off came the suit and he was an active father of 2 sets of twins, 3 boys and a girl, who he just adored and would do anything for.

An adoring smile crept over his face when he looked across the way to see an older couple, perhaps in their late 70s, sat on a park style bench, wrapped in warm coats, hats and gloves as they enjoyed their cups of hot steaming coffee and still looked as in love now as they were when they first met almost 60 years ago. Alec deduced that they had 3 children, their son was a successful lawyer, a good man, always doing charity work and spent the weekends fishing and camping with his own 2 sons. And then 2 daughters, one a stay at home Mum to four children of her own. The other, a single mother of one, owned her own business selling homemade soaps, oils, that kind of thing.

'How romantic', Alec thought, to be in love for so long and to be able to leave a legacy behind in 3 wonderful children and 7 beautiful grandchildren.

His eyes moved on to the next person and the next when suddenly he noticed a beautiful young man crossing the street with a little girl, maybe his daughter, Alec assumed. The young man had golden skin, dark spiked hair that looked thick and luscious, styled into a messy sort of Mohawk, black skinny jeans and an elegant looking, long deep red coat with matching knitted scarf.

'Now there's a guy I wouldn't mind getting to know' Alec thought silently to himself, smirking a little as he sipped his coffee.
Chapter 2 - Lean On Me

Magnus sat Madzie up on one of the bar stools at Pandemonium, which was closed for inventory.

"Hey boss" Raphael greeted Magnus as he came out of the storeroom carrying 2 cases of beer.

He looked confused when he saw the quiet little girl sitting on the bar stool.

"Hey" Magnus greeted him. Raphael could see that Magnus was deep in thought.

"Who's this?" Raphael asked, smiling at the little one, who shyly smiled back a little as he leaned on the bar.

"Oh, sorry, this is Madzie. Madzie this is Raphael"

"Hi," she said, quietly, making Magnus turn his head, this was the first he'd heard her speak at all.

"Madzie's my cousin, she's uh... she's gonna be staying with me for a little while," Magnus said, looking around a little stressed, but trying to hide it.

"Is Steve working today?" Magnus asked, referring to the guy that worked in the kitchen.

"No, he left about an hour ago" Raphael answered, frowning at Magnus' unusually stressed out demeanour, "Little one need some food?" he finished, knowing that Magnus could barely put together a salad.

"Would you mind?" Magnus asked Raphael, gratefully.

"No problem" Raphael laughed a little. "Gimmie a second" he added before pushing through the swinging door behind the bar to the kitchen.

Magnus leaned on the bar with his elbows, smiling a cautious little smile again at Madzie, hoping she would warm up to him too eventually, he didn't like that she seemed too nervous to talk to him, it made him feel bad for her.

A few minutes of silence passed before Raphael came walking back out of the kitchen with a crustless turkey sandwich and a can of grape soda, placing it down in front of Madzie, who thanked him so quietly it was barely audible.

Raphael smiled at the sweet little girl, he was good with kids.

Once Madzie started to eat her food, Magnus pulled Raphael aside and explained everything to him, needing someone to confide in. Usually, he would go to Cat with a problem like this, not that a problem like this had ever come up before, but he'd tried half a dozen times now to call her, with no answer, he assumed she must be in a meeting.

Raphael looked sympathetic, for both Magnus and Madzie, he knew what it was like to be thrust out into the big wide world with no one to count on. He thought for a moment, glancing between the two of them.

"What is it?" Magnus asked when he saw the sad, knowing expression on his friends' face.

"I don't know man, I mean...." Raphael started and then paused looking between Magnus and Madzie, "Why don't you think you can do this? She needs a family, you can't let somebody else
take her away, you're all she has left. You'd be a great father... You've always been a great one to me"

Magnus looked at his friend through sad eyes, he didn't know what to say. He turned to look at Madzie, who was playing with her stuffed bear on the bar.

"I don't know man," he said as he turned back, worry and a little fear in his eyes, his tough exterior starting to soften.

"I can barely look after myself, how am I supposed to look after a six-year-old girl? he asked as he ran his hand through his hair, sitting himself down on one of the leather stools at a table.

"You've got me & Cat, we'll help" Raphael tried to reassure him as he sat on the seat in front of Magnus, "You know, I just hate seeing you alone, she could be good for you man, really good. Think about it, just don't do anything hasty yet. Give it a while... you might surprise yourself" he finished, patting Magnus' shoulder.

Magnus thought for a while, glancing over to Madzie every now and then, she looked a lot like his aunt, as far as he could remember anyway.

"If I do this..." Magnus started.

"I can handle this place for a couple of days while you get her settled" Raphael finished, almost reading Magnus' mind, making him smile a little tight-lipped side smile.

"Alright," Magnus said, rubbing his face with the palms of his hands, "I better go to the store, I don't really have anything to eat at home. What do kids like?" he asked, frowning and completely clueless.

"I'll swing by and drop off some food later" Raphael chuckled, "Go to that little convenience store down the street from your place. Just grab some fruit, some milk, maybe some kids shampoo, stuff like that" he explained.

Magnus nodded, making mental notes.

The phone out the back started ringing, which Raphael got up to go and answer. Probably another private party booking, Pandemonium was an average sized bar but was wildly popular because of the good food and reasonable drinks prices, not to mention the pool table and jukebox, so they were always taking bookings and hosting private parties.

Magnus stood and walked over to Madzie, she'd finished her sandwich and was sipping at the can of soda that looked too big for her little hands.

She smiled a little smile, happier now that she'd had something good to eat, plus Raphael had helped relax her, she liked him.

Magnus crouched in front of her, the softest expression he could pull on to his face, "You sure wanna come stay with me, Kiddo?" Magnus asked with a sweet little smile.

Madzie nodded with a cautious little smile, making Magnus smile grow wider. She was already having an effect on him, breaking through that hard exterior.

"Okay," he said softly, patting her shoulder. "You mind if we stay here for a little while, I got a little work to do and then we'll head to the store okay?"
"Okay," she said with a little nod.

A few hours later;

"You like these ones?" Magnus asked, hopeful, as he held up the can of Spaghetti-O's to show Madzie, who nodded in response.

He dropped a couple of cans into the basket that was slung over his other arm, which contained some bread, milk, bananas, some bubble bath, a few canned goods, some juice and a box of cereal.

"You think we need anything else?" he asked the little one, who just gave a little shrug.

"Okay... okay," he said, nodding, as he checked through the basket before walking over to the cashier, who kindly bagged the goods for him once he'd rung them up.

"That'll be $14.89 Sir," the handsome guy behind the counter said.

'He's cute' Magnus thought to himself for a second as he handed over a $20 bill, his lips curling a little in the corners. He was going to stop and talk to him before he remembered the quiet little one stood to his side was probably getting tired and should get her home. He had a lot to do over the next few days to try and get her settled and he would need to set his own wants and needs aside for a little while.

The cute guy smiled, he obviously thought Magnus was cute.

Magnus smiled a little apologetically, "Come on Sweetpea" he said to Madzie, who's little Bambi eyes looked up at him with adoration before she walked beside him to the glass exit door.

He held the brown paper grocery bag against himself as they approached the edge of the crosswalk.

Just as Magnus went to take a step forward, he felt a tugging on his long suede coat. He looked down at Madzie, who was holding up her open hand silently waiting for Magnus to take it.

Magnus' heart swelled in his chest. He took her tiny hand in his and crossed the street, he walked slowly so as not to tire her little legs and she didn't seem to want to let go of his hand, so Magnus didn't try to let go either.

As they approached their apartment building, Magnus noticed a tall, dark and handsome guy walking out the front door, wearing a beanie and a leather jacket and turning to walk in the opposite direction from them, it was dark but Magnus had seen enough to know that this guy was hot.

Once upstairs and out of the cold wind, Magnus sat Madzie on the couch, with some cartoons playing on the TV. A few minutes later there was a knock on the door. Raphael and Cat.

Raphael had obviously brought Cat up to speed on everything on the way over as she looked speechless when Magnus opened the door and made eye contact with her.

"I know," he said, nodding as he stepped aside to let them in.

Raphael handed Magnus a half a dozen little silver trays with meals he'd thrown together while he was working at the bar, a lasagne, chicken pot pie and a few casseroles. Magnus was grateful of course, 1 arm hugging his friend, but he knew he couldn't rely on Raphael to do this for him
indefinitely, he'd have to learn how to cook for himself at some point.

Cat sat down next to Madzie on the couch, introducing herself. Madzie warmed to her immediately, introducing her to her stuffed bear, Iris.

"I'll put one of these in the oven then," Magnus said as Raphael sat down on the other side of Madzie. Magnus made his way into the kitchen with the trays.

"Um, Raph... how does this thing work?" he called across the counter that separated the kitchen from the living room as he frowned, examining all the switches and buttons on the front of the oven.

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Over at Java Jones coffee shop, Alec was inundated with customers, mostly locals who had come for the 2 for one special and to watch the show.

Simon, Izzy's boyfriend of 6 years, played at Java Jones every Sunday and Wednesday night, mostly acoustic, but every now and then he changed it up a little. He always helped to draw in the crowds, not that JJs needed it; Alec was the best barista in New York, he could whip up a latte or a flat white in the time it took most of the other baristas to find the cups.

Except for Maia, she'd been working there almost as long as Alec had, he liked working the late shifts with Maia, she knew what she was doing and could always hold her own is anybody got out of hand.

Izzy sat over in one of the big leather armchairs, at the side of the big, glass panelled corner coffee shop, legs curled up at her side and steaming latte held between her hands, shoes on the floor in front of her, just like she was at home. She spent most evenings there, as did Jace and Simon.

"Okay, 2 black americanos, 1 frappuccino, 1 green tea and 4 biscotti's," Alec said as he set down the tray of drinks in front of the waiting gentleman at the counter. "Who's next?" he called. The place was packed, drink orders coming in thick and fast, but the hustle and bustle only made the atmosphere better, Alec liked it that way.

Simon began his set and the crowds stopped to listen, letting Alec and Maia breathe a sigh of relief as they took the opportunity to casually bus some tables and load the dishwasher while they listened.

"So how did your date go last week?" Maia teased Alec as they stood behind the counter, drying mugs and glasses with dish towels.

Alec smirked as he leaned back against the counter, wringing the little white towel around the inside of the mug in his hand, knowing that she was going to ask at some point.

"Well.." he started with a little chuckle and a quick wide-eyed expression, "We didn't end up going to the restaurant" he explained.

"Oooh la la" Maia teased with a smile.

"Because when we got there he asked if we could go somewhere else"
Maia raised both eyebrows, an impressed look on her face.

"It's not what you think" Alec chuckled, that big wide beautiful smile across his face.

"Sure it's not," Maia said as she picked up another glass to dry.

"He asked if we could go somewhere else because his mother in law goes to that restaurant" Alec informed her, knowing that her jaw was about to hit the floor, which it did.

Her expression set him off in a fit of laughter.

She was lost for words, but Alec's laughter set her off in a fit of shocked laughter herself.

"It's cool, he wasn't really my type anyway," Alec said as he finished laughing, just leaving that big beautiful grin on his face again.

He pulled cup after cup from the dishwasher shelf, drying them and hanging them from the display hooks and loading the cabinet back up with fresh ones as he and Maia continued to pass the time.

He glanced at the clock, only another hour to go.

"I'm just gonna take a quick break" Alec whispered after a little while, taking off his green apron and setting it on the countertop before he ducked outside for a breath of fresh air.

He leant up against the wall to the side of the front door, smiling goodbye to a few of the regular customers who were heading home and pulled his phone from his pocket, checking the local news and social media.

Truth be told, he just needed a minute to himself. Although the story he had told Maia was hilarious, a little part of it stung deep down in his heart. Alec Lightwood was hot, young, smart and a confident flirt, but he was always unlucky in love. It had been a while since he'd been in a serious relationship, a few dates and one night stands were all he'd had to go on in the last couple of years.

His last boyfriend had been just after high-school, but Jesse had left town to go to college in Michigan and the relationship just hadn't been strong enough to handle the distance, but they'd remained friends and kept in touch from time to time.

'Just be patient' his mother had always told him, 'the right guy will come along when you least expect it' she would wink when Alec got down about being on his own. Which he always appreciated, but he didn't know if he really believed it.

'Stop feeling so sorry for yourself Alec' he smiled to himself before he took a deep breath and headed back inside, donning his green apron again.

He and Maia cleaned up after the crowds made their way out the door before tucking into a couple of the leftover sandwiches for dinner and then Alec got the broom out to sweep the floor while Maia cashed up the register.

"Go home Alec, you look beat," Maia said after a little while when she noticed Alec yawning. "I'll lock up.

"Thanks, Maia" Alec replied, tossing her the keys and shutting the broom back away in the closet.

He hung his apron on the coat rack behind the counter and put on his thick, cuddly black zip-up sweater with a thin leather jacket over the top and beanie and walked the 6 blocks back to his new apartment. It was convenient living this close to work now, he hated having to get on his bike
when he was tired and drive back to his parents' place before.

The cold air and the bright city streetlights awoke Alec's mind. He walked with his hands tucked into his jacket pockets and braced against the wind.

He pondered looking online for a hookup tonight, now that he had his own place and could have some privacy, but then thought again when he remembered that he was meeting Jace at the gym at 7 am and should probably get some sleep.

'Maybe tomorrow night' he thought to himself with a little side smirk.

Once he got inside, Alec pulled off his beanie and threw it and his jacket over a hook on the coat rack by the door before going to the fridge and pulling out a beer and popping the top.

He stood with his butt leaned against the edge of the sink and sighed as he looked around the dimly lit apartment, unsure what to do with himself.

He considered for a second that maybe he should have got a 2-bed apartment so he could have a roommate to talk to, but then he liked the idea of having his very own space more.

He finished his beer while unpacking a couple of living room boxes and had a hockey game playing on the TV in the corner, not that he was paying that much attention.

He brushed his teeth, peeled off his black T-shirt and jeans, kicked off his boots and fell into bed.
Chapter 3 - You're Not Alone

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

2 weeks later;

Magnus' apartment was almost unrecognisable, tidy with some new child-friendly furniture, some drapes on the living room window and a semi-functional kitchen, stocked with some fresh food.

"Madzie, come on we're gonna be late" Magnus called from the living room where he was flitting around like a nervous wreck.

He'd managed to get her enrolled in school and today was her first day. Madzie was excited and taking her time in getting dressed.

She came out from the newly pink decorated bedroom with blue jeans, pink sneakers, a pink unicorn T-shirt and pale blue hoodie on, unicorn backpack in her hand and an eager smile on her face.

Magnus chuckled, thinking her big smile was adorable. He held up her coat by the shoulders for her to slip her arms in to and wrapped a little scarf around her neck.

"Come on, we gotta go" Magnus tried to hurry the little one along as he stuffed a sandwich and an apple into her backpack. He locked the door and they ran down to the elevator to get downstairs and hail a cab.

Magnus would be heading to the bar as soon as he'd dropped her off to get updated on how things were going and finally get back to the work that he pretended he hated, but really he loved and then would pick Madzie up and head back home to meet with Ms Blackthorn, who would be coming over to pay a routine visit and find out how things were going.

When Magnus finally got to Pandemonium, he slumped down in his office chair with a sigh of relief. He expected to find the place in a mess, the books all over the place and the storeroom in a shambles. But Raphael had done an amazing job of looking after the place.

Magnus spent most of the day going through the books and the order logs, thanking Raphael for a job well done and finally getting back to feeling like himself again.

"So how's it been going?" Raphael asked while the two of them were lugging crates of spirits through the bar area.

"Pretty good actually. She loves her new bedroom" Magnus smiled, making Raphael smile too.

"She get off to school okay?" he asked.

"Yeah, she was so excited this morning," he said, pulling his phone from his pocket to check it. Part of him was expecting a phone call saying that there was some sort of emergency. It had only been two weeks but he'd grown so attached to her that it was strange to suddenly be without her, even if it was just for a few hours.

"She's fine," Raphael said, reading Magnus' mind.
Magnus smiled a tight-lipped smile, tucking his phone back in his pocket and loading the shelves with more bottles.

"The family services woman is coming over tonight," Magnus said after a few minutes of silence.

He was hiding it well but Raphael could tell that he was nervous.

"Yeah?" Raphael asked, trying to be casual as he continued to unload cases of booze. "What's that for, just like a checkup?"

"Yeah, something like that" Magnus said, looking down at the bottles in his hands, frowning, his mind elsewhere.

"You'll be fine" Raphael reassured him, "Your place looks unrecognisable, you've gotten her settled in school, she seems happy"

Magnus knew he was right, but it didn't make him any less nervous.

"Little tyke has really grown on me, you know" he admitted with a little smile, making Raphael smile too.

They set aside the empty crates and headed back to the storeroom to get more.

"Getting up at 6:30 is going to take some getting used to" Magnus admitted, referring to getting up to take Madzie to school every day, as he rubbed at his eyes.

He hadn't had time to do his make up this morning, so he did look a little strange to anyone that knew him. Magnus' make up was always on point, black eyeliner with a little sparkle, a little concealer under the eyes and a shimmering powder that gave his whole face just a touch of sparkle.

A few hours later;

Magnus' was uncharacteristically nervous as he buzzed around his apartment, picking up laundry and toys.

"How can one little person have so much stuff?" he muttered under his breath, throwing one hand up in the air as he tried to keep hold of the armful of stuffed animals.

He looked around the apartment, trying to quickly find somewhere to put all the toys after he heard a knock at the door. He threw them into Madzie's bedroom, quickly closing the door afterwards.

Madzie was sitting on the couch, watching cartoons, he checked on her as he walked past, she seemed fine. He looked down, checking himself over before answering the door with a tentative little smile.

"Ms Blackthorn, Hi, please come in" he gestured, opening the door.

Helen smiled, a little taken back as she stepped into the apartment, glancing around as she took slow steps.

"Mr Bane," she said, still a little surprised, but trying not to show it "Nice to see you again. Hi Madzie" she waved to the little one sitting on the couch.

"Hi" Madzie smiled as she turned to greet Ms Blackthorn, waving with her hand that had the
remote control in it.

"Can I get you anything? Coffee, water?" Magnus asked, showing Helen to a seat on the other end of the couch, sitting in the armchair to her right.

"No, no, I'm fine, thank you. So how have things been going?" she asked. She could see that they were obviously going well, but she had to ask.

"Yeah, things are good. Took a few days but we're pretty settled. Madzie's enrolled in school, she seems to like it, right Madzie?" he asked.

"Mmhmm" Madzie hummed with a little nod as she glanced away from the TV for a second.

"We've re-decorated as you can see," Magnus said, proudly.

"I have to say, Mr Bane, I'm quite surprised. When Madzie and I arrived at your door, I wasn't sure you were up to the task, but I have to admit, looking around, it seems like the 2 of you are making great strides. You make a great team" she smiled, looking between the 2 of them.

"Yeah, we do" Magnus chuckled, looking down at his clasped hands, "I guess I was just a little surprised, you know. It's a big responsibility, but I think we're making it work" he said, proudly.

"And you're happy here Madzie" Helen asked with a smile.

"Uh-huh," Madzie nodded again with a smile back, making Magnus' heart swell with pride.

"I'm hungry," she said, looking at Magnus.

"Oh, okay. Sorry, one sec" Magnus said to Helen as he stood and walked over to the little kitchen. He pulled a Chinese take-out container from the fridge, pouring a little Orange Chicken & Rice onto a plate and heating it up in the microwave.

Helen had stood up and was having a look around and noticed when Magnus opened up the fridge that there was a lot of take-out containers and pizza boxes.

"Go wash up Sweetpea" Magnus called over the counter to Madzie who jumped down from the couch and headed off to the bathroom to wash her hands.

"You seem to have a lot of take-out in your refrigerator" Helen tried to say casually, not wanting to offend, but a little concerned.

Magnus' gaze snapped up, worried.

"Yeah, I uh, I'm not... the greatest cook," he said, playing it down, he could barely cook at all if he was being honest. "I make sure she gets her fruits and veggies too" he explained.

"No judgement at all" Helen smiled, "But I do have something that might help," she said, sitting back down on the couch and reaching into her bag, pulling out a binder.

Magnus pulled Madzie's dinner from the microwave and sat her at the table with the plate of food and a glass of milk. He stepped back over to the armchair, watching Helen rifle through the stack of paperwork.

"Sorry, I can't remember where I... Oh, there it is! Sorry, it's been a long day" she laughed a little. She handed Magnus the pamphlet.
"Basic cooking skills" he read the front out loud.

"It's right down the street, 2 evenings a week" she explained, pointing out the details as Magnus opened it up, glancing it over. "And Family Services can fund a few months of lessons for you. It's a service that we offer a lot of new or single parents, foster parents" she said optimistically.

"This is great, thank you," Magnus said gratefully, looking over the details. I'm sure my friends wouldn't mind babysitting a couple of nights a week, It's definitely something I'd like to learn" he nodded, giving her a thankful look.

Helen smiled, happy that she hadn't offended him.

"Well I better get going, everything seems great here. We'll need you to come down to the office later in the week to sign off all the paperwork and we'll still pay a little visit every couple of months, but I have to say I can see that Madzie is very happy here. Congratulations" Helen smiled "/...you're a parent," she said as she squared her long strapped bag up on her shoulder and extending her hand to shake Magnus'.

"Thank you" Magnus smiled, graciously. shaking her hand and showing her out.

"I'll see you both soon," Helen said, "Bye Madzie" giving the little one a waved, who waved back in response, her mouth full of food.

After Magnus closed the door, he smiled a huge smile, giving Madzie 2 thumbs up, who returned the gesture, making him smile as he walked over and placed a little kiss on the top of her head before walking to the kitchen and warming himself up some food too.

Alec yawned as he approached his apartment building, searching his pockets for the door key.

It had been a pretty busy shift at work, but that wasn't why he was tired; Jace had been dragging him to the gym early in the morning at least 3 times a week lately and he was exhausted. He had an assignment to do for class but he planned on getting an early night tonight.

He swung open the buildings' front door and walked up the hallway to his apartment door, looking down at the keys in his hand, sorting them out to single out the one he needed.

Next thing he knew, he bumped into a tired looking woman, carrying a big bundle of papers and binders that were, within seconds, all over the floor outside of his front door.

"Oh my gosh, I'm so sorry" Alec apologised, holding up his hands, "Here, let me help you" Alec panicked, crouching down to gather up the papers for her.

"Oh, it's okay," Helen said, brushing her hair out of her face, before crouching to pick the papers up too. "Sorry, I wasn't paying any attention" she laughed a little laugh.

"There you go," Alec said, as he stood, smiling a heart-breaking beautiful smile as he handed her the stack of papers.

"Thank you" she smiled back before carrying on.

"Have a good night" Alec said before going to unlock the door.

"You too," she said over her shoulder as she headed for the front door.
Alec turned the key and headed inside, dropping his key in the little bowl by the door and shrugging his jacket off of his shoulders.

He frowned, inquisitively, tilting his head as he looked down and saw the blue and red pamphlet on the floor by the door. He realised after a second that it must belong to the woman he'd just bumped into.

He opened the door back up, looking down the hallway, but she was long gone.

He closed the door again, looking over the pamphlet in his hands, turning it over to read it. "Basic cooking skills, huh?" Alec widened his eyes for a second, pouting his lips to the side. "I could use a class like that" he chuckled to himself before seriously thinking it over for a second.

He grabbed a magnet off of the fridge and stuck the pamphlet on the front of it before opening the freezer drawer at the bottom and grabbing a couple of frozen hot pockets and putting them into the toaster.

He grabbed a Gatorade from the fridge and sipped while he scrolled through emails on his phone while he waited for the toaster to pop his food up before putting the little hot pockets on to a plate and sinking down onto the couch with his feet up, laptop across his lap as he typed away at his assignment that was due on Thursday.

Alec's phone rang in his pocket, hid slipped it out and checked the screen; Jace.

"Hey loser, I'm coming over" Jace greeted Alec before he had a chance to say hello, making Alec both roll his eyes and laugh under his breath a little.

"Good afternoon Alec, How are you, Alec? Good day at work Alec?" Alec mocked with a smile.

"Shut up" Jace laughed. "I'm like 2 blocks away, so if you've got a half naked guy there, tell him to put his pants on and come back later"

"Ah damn it.. and Jeremy and I were just about to get in the shower" Alec joked as he closed his laptop and set it aside.

Jace just laughed, "Be there in 5 Buddy"

"Alright, bye" Alec replied, hanging up and tucking his phone back in his pocket.

He took his plate to the kitchen, stacking it alongside the other dirty dishes by the sink. Alec winced as he looked at the stack, thinking he should probably do those at some point.

'Don't let the dishes build up. Vacuum every day' he could hear his mothers words ringing in his head.

Alec threw a clean dish towel over his shoulder and rolled up his shirt sleeves, running some hot water in the sink and adding a generous dollop of dish soap under the running faucet.

He let the game play on the TV in the background while he scrubbed away at the dishes, drying his hands on the dish towel to answer the door when Jace knocked.

"Hey sunshine" Jace greeted a tired looking Alec who just fake grinned at him before laughing and slinging the towel back over his shoulder.

Jace made himself at home on the couch after helping himself to a drink from the fridge and
putting his feet up on the coffee table.

Alec just rolled his eyes and finished washing the dishes.

"You wanna come out tonight? There's this bar down the street, 'Pandemonium' I think it's called, I got an invite from that girl, Clary, that's been coming to the gym lately, she's a bartender there" Jace said with a grin.

Jace was a personal trainer at the gym and he'd been asking out the beautiful red-head for months and she'd always resisted, thinking Jace was too cocky, but she'd warmed up to him over the last few weeks.

"She said she can get us in no problem. Who knows, she might have a friend for you" Jace winked with a grin.

"Yeah, sure, why not" Alec sighed as he flopped down onto the couch beside his best friend.

"You wearing that?" Jace asked.

Alec frowned, looking himself over.

Jace just raised his eyebrows, silently roasting his best friend.

"Fiiiiiiine" he Alec sighed, ending with a laugh.

He stood up and walked over to his bedroom, changing into a pair of black skinny jeans and biker boots with a dark blue, V-neck cashmere sweater, white T-shirt underneath, just showing around the collar.

Alec glanced himself over in the mirror, fingering at his hair to set it in place and checking his perfect snowy skin from all angles. He popped a breath mint and sprayed on a little cologne.

"Come on heart-breaker" Alec joked walking behind the couch and picking up the remote to shut the TV off and headed to the door, grabbing his black leather jacket an beanie from the coat hook and picking up his phone, keys and wallet.

Jace jumped up from the couch, giving Alec a friendly slap on the back as he approached him, bouncing on his feet to the point of almost jumping onto Alec's back.

Alec locked the door and the 2 of them headed down the hallway to the double glass doors, bracing against the cold wind when they stepped outside.

Two hours later;
Alec was sat at the bar, sipping at a beer and bored out of his mind. He glanced over to his left to see Jace, shamelessly flirting with Clary, who he'd met briefly for about 5 minutes.

Alec rolled his eyes with a little smile, shaking his head when Jace gave him a thumbs up before putting his hand in the small of Clary's back as they walked out the front door together.

"At least one of us is getting laid tonight" Alec thought to himself before chugging the rest of his beer and going to get up off the stool to leave.

"Leaving so soon?" he heard a sweet sounding voice behind him.
Inquisitive, he turned around to see a handsome, blonde, British man with a dark green suede jacket and blue jeans with a mesmerizing flirtatious smile, sitting in the bar stool next to him, swirling the little glass of whiskey in his hand.

"Maybe," Alec said back, his eyes soft, looking the hot guy up and down, impressed as he sat up, showing his figure-hugging white T-shirt.

"Shame" the blonde man replied, his eyes flirtatious with suggestion.

"Maybe I'm not" Alec replied with a wide smile as he sat his butt back down on the bar stool. "Depends..." he started. "You gonna buy me a drink?" Alec asked.

The guy smiled, raising his hand to the bartender, asking for 2 more drinks.

"Sebastian," he said, extending his arm to shake Alec's hand.

"Alec" Alec replied, shaking his hand, softly letting go, mingling their fingers together for a little while.

They talked for a little while, flirting more than talking really.

Alec accepted the whiskey glass, sipping tentatively; he wasn't as used to drinking the hard stuff, he was more of a beer and occasionally white wine kind of guy.

"So what brings a handsome young man like you to drink alone in a place like this?" Sebastian asked, adjusting his position to face Alec a little more.

"Well, I wasn't alone," Alec said, almost laughing.

"Oh," Sebastian said, worried that he might have offended him.

"My friend just ditched me for a girl" Alec finished with a smile. "What brings you here?" he asked.

"Just in town for a couple of days on business and got bored of looking at the four walls of my hotel room... which is just around the corner by the way," Sebastian said with a smirk, making Alec look up from his drink with a smile of understanding. It was obvious that this guy wasn't shy at all.

"Well then..." Alec started, before sinking the rest of his drink and putting on his jacket, "Why don't we take this party back there?" he finished as he turned to walk towards the door.

Sebastian smiled before sinking his drink and tucking a $20 bill under the glass on the bar and following Alec out the door.

He took Alec's hand as they walked around the block.

Alec and Sebastian chuckled as they made their way down the hallway, their bodies tingling with anticipation. A no-strings hook-up was exactly what they both needed right now.

Sebastian unlocked the door with his key card and turned back to be greeted with Alec's lips crashing into his, hot, messy and desperate.

Sebastian kicked the door closed behind them with his heel and ripped his suede jacket off of his shoulders. Alec had already removed his jacket and beanie, throwing them on the floor and kicking his boots off as Sebastian cupped his jaw with both hands, their tongues wrestling for dominance inside their adjoined mouths.
Sebastian pulled Alec's sweater and T-shirt off all in one go, revealing his pale chest, peppered with little black hairs before delving in to nip kisses into the nape of his neck.

"Fuck!" Alec moaned, throwing his head back as he reached down to unbutton Sebastian's jeans.

Sebastian pulled back too, throwing his hand over his head to grab his T-shirt by the back of the neck, pulling it off over his head with one hand.

He threw his shirt aside and let his hands find their way to the button of Alec's jeans, fumbling as the two of them carried on kissing; wet, deep, hot and desperate.

Sebastian kicked off his shoes, before spinning to push Alec on to the giant bed, falling with him and running kisses down his neck once again, nipping and sucking at his nipples when he passed them.

'Finally' Alec thought to himself, it had been a while since he'd gotten any action this hot.

He let Sebastian explore and ravage his body, quivering with pleasure at the sensations that Sebastian sent shooting through him. He smirked as Sebastian pulled his legs free from his jeans.

The next morning;

Alec awoke, naked on his stomach, on top of the blue and white hotel bedspread, his hair a mess and his eyes dusted with sleep.

He glanced around, taking a moment to remember where he was. He smirked in satisfaction when he saw the gorgeous naked man sleeping next to him.

Alec stood carefully, walking naked to the bathroom to clean up before quietly coming back out and dressing back in his clothes from last night.

He looked around, finding a pen and a cocktail napkin by the mini-bar and wrote a quick note.

"Last night was great. Give me a call if you're ever in town again. Alec xo" and his cell phone number underneath. He left the napkin on the nightstand.

He pulled on his hat and threw his jacket over his arm before sneaking silently out the door. He made his way down the hallway, handing a $10 to the concierge and asking if he could have a strong cup of English Tea brought up to room 108 in an hour.

Alec stepped out into the cold morning winds to walk home, smirking the whole way.

Chapter End Notes

Do not @ me for the Alec/Sebastian hook up; Malec are not together yet.

Also, Sebastian in this is Sebastian Verlac (Will Tudor), not Johnathan Morgenstern.
"Would you mind?" Magnus asked Cat over the phone, "it would just be Sunday and Monday evenings for a couple of hours"

"Of course I don't mind, I might not be able to do every Sunday though, you might wanna ask Raphael if he could from time to time. You want me to come over there, or...?" Cat asked.

"Yeah it'd be easier, it's only a couple of blocks away from my apartment so it'd be simpler than bringing the little one all the way across town" Magnus said as he held the phone to his ear, shuffling around his apartment, picking up toys and crayons for the third time today.

"And yeah, I'll ask Raphael if he would mind once in a while. I gotta promote that boy you know" he nodded and laughed as he frowned while he examined the scruffy teddy bear with it's ear hanging off. "But you can do tonight, right?" he asked.

"Yeah, I've gotta swing by the office but then I'll come over" Cat replied.

"Cool, I'll see you soon. Love you" Magnus said.

"Love you too hot stuff" Cat replied before they both hung up.

"Madzie, Come pick up your crayons" Magnus called through the apartment as he stepped on yet another one, snapping it in half.

Madzie came walking out from her bedroom, smiling a little apologetic smile before picking up her crayons, trying to squeeze them all back in the box.

"Thank you," he said, trying not to smile as she took the box back to her bedroom.

He sat down at the table, opening up his accounts book and getting to work on Pandemonium's expenses.

Magnus tried to focus on the numbers, but couldn't stop thinking about these cooking classes. He tapped his pen on the top of the open book in front of him, wondering if he was going to be the most clueless person there.

About a half hour had passed of Magnus just staring off into space.

"Magnus" he heard a little voice say, snapping him out of his daze.

"Sweetpea" Magnus said, taking notice of the little one stood to his side, looking up at him with her big soulful eyes. "You okay?" he asked.

"Can I have some paper?" Madzie asked, dancing her fingers together, a little nervously.

"Of course," he said, taking a few sheets out of his notebook and laying it on the table in front of the seat opposite him.

Her smile beamed from ear to ear as she pulled a little box of crayons from her pocket and climbed up into the wooden chair and started to draw.
Magnus smiled adoringly as he watched the little one, lost in her own little world. He'd noticed how much she loved to draw, it was the only time he saw a real genuine smile on her face.

This little girl had been through a lot in her short life; her father had passed away when she was just a few months old and now, at just 6 years old, her mother was gone too.

She'd spent a little while just bouncing around the foster care system while Magnus; her last living relative was tracked down and Magnus felt awful for that, wishing that he'd been able to be there for her right from the start.

He had no idea what kind of effect she was going to have on him when he first met her, but it hadn't taken long for them both to realise that they were meant to be together.

"What you drawing?" Magnus asked softly after a while of watching her, his chin rested on his hand that was steadied on the table by his elbow.

Madzie turned the paper around, showing the stick figures she'd been drawing, one little, one about twice the height with trees and rainbows all around them.

"Is that your mama?" Magnus asked, a little sadly, but with a little smile, not wanting to upset her as he pointed to the larger of the two figures.

Madzie just nodded before turning the paper back around to add colours to their dresses.

"I miss my mama too sometimes," he told her. Madzie looked up, a knowing look on in her eyes before looking back down and continuing to colour her picture.

It was soothing to her to know that there was someone that understood her.

Magnus knew he didn't need to say any more, he just smiled a little tight-lipped smile as he watched her go back to work.

He hoped one day that she would tell him all about her mother, he remembered little things, but not a lot. But it needed to be at her own pace, when she was ready to talk, she would talk.

Magnus looked back down at his books, able now to concentrate on his work.

Two hours later;

Magnus rubbed his temples as he sat up straight, a headache threatening his brain as he crunched the numbers; Pandemonium was definitely bringing in the bucks these days.

Madzie jumped a little, snapped out of her daze too as there was a knock at the door.

Magnus stood to answer the door, patting the little one on the shoulder as he passed by her.

"Hey, guys" Cat beamed as she walked in, Starbucks coffees in one hand, Disney DVDs in the other.

"You are the best," Magnus said thankfully, kissing Cat's cheek as he accepted the coffee cup.

They sat on the couch and talked for a while as they left Madzie to her drawings, which were now spread all over the dining table and even a couple of the floor.
"It's just supposed to teach me some basics so that little one and I can eat a little better. As you know, I'm not exactly the greatest cook" Magnus raised his eyebrows as he took a sip of his coffee.

"Yeah... I remember" Cat chuckled before sipping her coffee too, referring to the time Magnus had almost set fire to the kitchen while trying to make a TV dinner.

"I called and spoke to the class director earlier today, Mr Porowski, he said there are only 9 other people in the class so at least I won't embarrass myself in front of dozens of other people," Magnus said, with fake optimism. Deep down he was a little nervous.

"Do you need to take anything with you?" Cat asked.

"No, they actually provide everything we need for the first couple of classes," Magnus said happily; he was also terrible at shopping.

"So this place is just around the corner?" Cat asked.

"It's about 4 blocks away, so it's walkable" Magnus replied. "Actually, I better go get ready," he said, checking his watch and putting his paper cup down on the coffee table.

Magnus made his way to his bedroom, while Cat went and sat at the little table with Madzie.

Magnus pulled some clothes from his newly organised closet, holding up his choices and nodding in satisfaction.

He'd gone with a simple pair of black skinny jeans, smart black brogues ankle boots and a 3/4 sleeve fitted black knit shirt with a deep V-neck and a long thin silver chain necklace with a little feather charm.

He sat at his little vanity table to apply his glittering eye-liner and quickly style his hair. He thought for a second before removing his rings, realising that they would probably inhibit him trying to cook.

He threw on his long deep red coat and tucked his phone, keys and wallet into the pockets and checked himself over one last time in the mirror.

"Too much?" Magnus asked, walking out into the living area, with his hand open, palms up.

"Never" Cat winked with a smile.

"Okay" Magnus said, shuffling nervously, "there's some food in the fridge, and Madzie needs to be in bed by 8" he told Cat who just nodded slowly with a little smile, finding it adorable that Magnus was a little nervous; she didn't often see him like this, he was generally a confident guy.

She caught Magnus' eye, not saying a word, she just carried on smiling. Magnus sighed, breaking into a smile himself before chuckling and shaking off the nerves.

"I'll see you later. Thank you again for this" Magnus said as he kissed Cat on the cheek.

"Bye Sweet Pea, have fun with Aunt Cat" he said as he moved around to the other side of the table and placed a little kiss on top of Madzie's head.

"Bye," Madzie said slowly and quietly as she carried on drawing, her crayons wearing down to half the size.

Magnus made his way down the hallway, to the elevator, straightening up his coat as he walked.
When he got down to the ground floor, the elevator bell sounded and the doors opened to the long hallway leading down to the front door. He tucked his hands into his pockets and made his way out the door and turned to his right to head down the street.

Magnus jumped out of his skin when a loud motorbike zipped past him, a tall muscular looking form straddling the seat and heading in the same direction he was.

"It sounds really cool, I called and spoke to the director earlier and booked a few classes. It's great because it's just a couple of hours each week and I can work it around work and school and I still get some of the weekends to myself. But you know me" Alec chuckled down the phone to his sister, "I like keeping busy" he finished.

He was sat at his little 2 seated, make-shift dining table, typing away on his laptop, trying to finish his assignment before he had to get ready to leave.

"At least you'll be able to feed yourself instead of Mum bringing over casseroles all the time" Izzy laughed, "You might even meet somebody" she softly teased with a smile.

"At a cooking class?" Alec scoffed with a chuckle, "It'll be all new Mums & straight clueless Dads" he finished with a laugh as he held the phone to his ear with his shoulder.

Izzy laughed, knowing he was probably right. "I gotta go bro, gotta get to work. Have fun tonight!" she almost sang down the phone to Alec.

"Bye," Alec laughed as he rolled his eyes and Izzy's constant chirpiness.

He set his phone down on the table and finished the last few paragraphs of his essay on Ancient Egyptian Culture before emailing it to his professor.

He sat back, sighing in satisfaction; he'd been working on this assignment for almost a week now and was relieved to finally get it done and out of the way.

He got up and grabbed a soda from the fridge before pottering around his apartment, tidying and straightening things up.

He picked up a T-shirt that was thrown over the back of the couch and tossed it into the laundry hamper. It made him think. 'What do I wear to a cooking class?' he said to himself.

He frowned for a minute, deep in thought, before chugging a few gulps of his soda and setting the can on the coffee table before strolling to his bedroom.

Alec opened the double doors to his huge closet and pouted as he glanced up and down the rail of neatly hung shirts and jeans.

He pulled a couple of things out and held several pieces up against himself as he looked in the mirror.

Eventually, he settled on some black, lightly frayed skinny jeans, a dark grey T-shirt with some sort of big logo or band name on it that he knew hung really nicely on his broad shoulders and a pair of biker boots with matching jacket.

He threw the items on the bed along with some socks and clean boxer shorts and headed to the bathroom to take a quick shower.
'Maybe there will be someone hot there. The director sounded cute on the phone' Alec chuckled to himself as he scrubbed the conditioner from his hair.

He ran the bar of peppermint soap over his body, washing the day away and rinsed the bubbles off before stepping out on to the fluffy bathroom mat before wrapping a towel around his waist, scrubbing his dark hair dry with another as he walked back into his bedroom and picking up his clean clothes to get dressed.

A little later he was dressed, styled and smelling like apple blossom and fresh mint. He emerged from his bedroom, pulling his thick leather biker jacket over his shoulders and zipping up his wallet, phone and house keys into the jacket pocket and picked up his bike keys and helmet from the table by the door.

At the NYC Cooking School.

Magnus arrived at a little corner building that looked like a small office space from the outside. He peeked in through the double glass doors and saw a sign saying 'Basic Cooking Skills Class, 3rd Floor'

"This must be the place," he said quietly to himself. He looked around to see if there was anyone else there but he couldn't see another soul down on the first-floor hallway.

He made his way inside and followed the hall down to a large staircase and elevator, making his way up to the third floor.

The door on his left had a sign on it, welcoming the new students.

He stepped inside and caught sight of this tall, gorgeous man with dark hair, a beautiful milky complexion and a smile that could light up New York City talking to who he assumed was the class director, Mr Porowski.

Magnus was mesmerized for a moment, looking the beautiful man up and down before gulping and then gathering himself after the guy stepped away and over to one of the workbenches that circled the small room.

"Hi, Mr Porowski? Magnus Bane, we spoke on the phone" Magnus introduced himself, shaking the teachers' hand.

"Ah yes, Hi" he smiled back, "Call me Antoni," he said. "Please, just hang up your coat over there by the door and pick a workstation"

"Thanks" Magnus smiled, turning to head towards the coat rack by the door.

Alec looked up from his workbench, where he was inspecting the various utensils and ingredients and glanced around the room at the other people.

His drifting eyes came to a stand-still when he noticed this beautiful, well poised and stylish man, almost gothic looking, hanging his long dark red coat on the rack next to his jacket.

Alec's eyes widened as he admired the mans glowing complexion and smooth dark hair and then he realised that he'd seen this guy before, he just couldn't put his finger on it.
Why did this guy look so familiar? Had they hooked up before? Had Alec dragged this guy down an alley outside a club before for a steamy make-out session and forgotten about it? That certainly sounded like something Alec might have done. Was that why he looked so familiar but he couldn't remember his name? Had he even asked for one?

'Crap' Alec thought to himself, 'Do I know his name? Does he remember me?' the thoughts flooded his brain in a mild state of panic.

"Hi," Magnus said with a heartbreakingly beautiful little smile as he stood behind the workstation next to Alec; the only spot left.

"Magnus Bane" he finished, extending his hand to shake Alec's.

'Thank God!' Alec thought to himself before schooling his expression and smiling, extending his hand in return.

"Alec Lightwood" he replied, a smile forming at the corner of his lips as Magnus' hand slotted together with his own.
Chapter 5 - Secret Smiles

"Okay guys", Antoni said as he stood behind the bench at the front of the class, single clapping his hands together and then placing his palms down on the surface, the 5 paired up benches facing him to follow along.

"As most of you know, my name is Antoni, I'm going to be your director over the next few months. How about we start here on this side of the room and go around and introduce ourselves so we can all get to know each other a little better" he said, gesturing to his side.

Each person took it in turns to introduce themselves and let the group know a little about them and why they were there, which put both Alec and Magnus at ease when they realised that a lot of these people were in similar situations to them and seemed just as nervous and clueless. There were some other single parents, some college students, some bachelors.

When it came to Magnus' turn, he took a breath, glanced around the room and smiled, stepping forward to put both his hands on the workbench in front of him.

"Okay, well, Hi everybody" he greeted the room, "My name is Magnus, I own a bar downtown, I'm... well, I guess you could say I'm a single father," he said, grinning.

"Madzie is actually my little cousin and, well I won't, uh, I won't go into too many details, but she's in my care now and I'm pretty much her Dad. Really, I just wanna do the best I can by her, so I'm here to learn a little and better myself for her" Magnus finished with a sweet smile and a little nod.

A little applause filled the room before all eyes moved to the next person; Alec.

"Oh me next?" Alec smiled, "Uhh, Okay, I'm Alec," he said, putting his palms to his chest.

"I've just moved out from my parents' house and into my own place. I'm working full time as a barista and I take evening classes a couple of nights a week at NYU, I'm studying archaeology and ancient civilisations. And yeah, I just wanted to come along and see if I could learn a little something because I love pizza, but honestly, there's only so many times a week I can order out" Alec laughed, making the rest of the room chuckle too.

Eyes moved around to each person left in the room, one by one as they introduced themselves until it got back to Antoni.

"Alright, great! So we're gonna start off real simple today with making some fresh pasta, so just under your benches you'll find a little tray of ingredients; some flour, some eggs and some sea salt, for each of you" he started, reaching under the counter to get his own tray.

"As you can see, each pair has a sink and behind you there's a small fridge and some kitchen aids and utensils" Antoni continued, talking with his hands to the group as he pointed everything out.

"So you can work together with your bench buddies and try to follow along and help each other out" Antoni explained as he pulled over a little set of kitchen scales to begin weighing out the flour.

He began the recipe, waiting in between each step as he looked around the room to make sure that everyone was following along.

Magnus pushed up his sleeves to the elbow and started to pour out the flour into the cup on the scales, glancing around the room as he softly shook the jar of flour, making sure that he was doing
the same thing as everyone else.

"Does that look right?" Magnus asked Alec who crouched down to stare at the scales screen.

"Looks good to me," Alec said.

"Wait, what is he doing? What do we do next?" Magnus said, glancing up to Antoni's bench.

"Okay, so we pour it out onto the counter...?" Alec said, picking up the scales dish and slowly pouring it out into a little mound.

"Okay then next, we make a well in the middle of the flour mountain we've made," Antoni said to the room.

Alec and Magnus both looked up with a little frown as they watched Antoni. Both of them edged their hands towards the pile of flour as they kept on watching, trying to get the gist and then pulled their hands back as their fingers brushed each others', laughing a little at the mistake.

"Go ahead" Magnus gestured with a smile and a little chuckle.

Alec smiled as he followed along, carefully making a little space in the middle of the mound.

Antoni waited for a moment, checking around the room to make sure everyone was up to the same step.

"Okay, next we get our eggs," he said, picking one up and displaying it to the room.

"So we crack it right into the middle here" he finished, cracking the egg into the well.

Alec picked up an egg, offering it to Magnus, who softly cracked it and followed along.

10 minutes later, as if by magic, they had a ball of soft dough.

"Okay, so we're gonna wrap our dough in some plastic wrap and chill it in the fridge for a moment while we prepare our ingredients for a little sauce" Antoni explained as he picked up the dough ball and wrapped it up.

Alec wrapped the dough in the plastic wrap and turned to put it in the refrigerator.

He high fived Magnus as he turned back to the bench.

"We make a good team," Alec said with a bright smile.

"Heck yeah, we do" Magnus agreed, high fiving in return, proud of their efforts. He spun on the spot back to facing the bench with a big smile.

A half-hour later;

"Then we just add the black pepper," Magnus said, thinking out loud as he picked up a little pinch of pepper and sprinkled it into the pan of sauce as Alec stirred.

"Smells great," Alec said, a little surprised as he ran the spoon around the edge of the pan.

"Are we done? Are we ready?" Alec asked. He glanced around at the other pairs on people again;
they were definitely all doing the same thing.

Alec and Magnus threw their heads back in laughter as Alec almost dropped their little pan of tomato sauce all over the floor but managed to catch the handle before it slipped.

"I've got the pasta, I've got it" Magnus laughed as he pulled the long, cooked and drained strands of pasta on to the plate awkwardly with a fork.

Alec brought the pan over and slowly poured a little sauce on top, checking around the room to make sure everyone else was doing the same thing; still, they were on track.

They stepped back, proud of their dish, beaming from ear to ear as they as they stood proudly, waiting for the other pairs to finish plating theirs up.

"Oh, we forgot the cheese" Alec panicked, turning to grab it from the fridge and grating a little over the top, making Magnus throw his head back in laughter again.

"You guys all done?" Antoni said as he walked over to their bench.

He'd been going around the room slowly for the last 10 minutes or so, checking on each pair as they prepared their dishes.

"Oh this looks pretty good" he smiled as he looked down at the plate. "Can I try?" he asked, looking up with an optimistic little smile.

"Please" Alec gestured to the plate.

Antoni took a bite, thinking as he chewed. His smile stretched from ear to ear.

"This is great!" he said, taking another bite.

Alec and Magnus beamed, proud of their work. Magnus kept thinking to himself that he could definitely make this at home and the great thing was that he could get Madzie involved too.

"It's so good you guys" Antoni nodded, still chewing a little as he covered his mouth a bit to speak while he took a little step back from the workbench.

"Really good" he echoed slowly, letting his eyes travel up and down Alec's body and winking with a little smirk before he turned to walk to the next table.

Magnus' eyes widened with amusement at the brazen flirting and he sniggered into his shoulder as he turned away, not wanting to look like he was being a bitch.

Alec cocked his head with a smirk, feeling sexy and confident with a quick raise of his eyebrows as he turned away to grab a fork for himself, offering one to Magnus too.

They dug their forks in, each getting a bite and tasting their hard work, nodding in delighted agreement. Their sparkling eyes met and they admired each others' beautiful complexions for a moment.

"Not bad at all," Alec said, picking up a napkin to dab the corners of his mouth.

"Turns out we're not as bad as we thought" Magnus chuckled as he did the same. "Madzie's gonna love this" he finished with another proud smile.

"So how old is the little one?" Alec asked as he took another bite.
"She's 6," Magnus said, making Alec smile.

"I have a little brother that's 7, we should get them together for a play-date some time" Alec suggested.

'Is he flirting?' Magnus thought to himself for a second before brushing the thought aside. He'd already told himself a few times, he needed to stop thinking like that, he needed to focus on Madzie, she was what mattered.

"Yeah, that sounds good, we'll have to set that up some time" he smiled in response, not really sure that they ever would, but the sweet conversation with this cute guy wasn't the worst way to be passing the time.

"Okay, great job everybody. I'm really impressed" Antoni said as he single clapped his hands and took a few steps back to stand back behind his own workstation.

"So as you can see it's really easy to put together something really tasty and simple in just under an hour. And it's great for feeding a family, or if you have guests over. Next week we'll go over some different sauce recipes and side dishes for pasta. And if you bring along some Tupperware, you can take them all home for your friends and families to try too" Antoni explained, talking with his hands again and finishing with a beautiful toothy smile.

"There's some little take-out containers under your benches that you can use to take your food home with you. Feel free to help yourselves to coffee and stay and mingle for a little while and there are some feedback forms on the table by the door" he added

The class participants all tidied away their things and loaded the dishwashers between them before scooping their food into the take-out containers.

"Here," Alec said with a sweet smile as he handed the container to Magnus.

"You don't wanna take some home?" Magnus asked as he accepted the full container.

"No it's okay, take it home for the little lady" Alec added as Magnus wrapped his jacket around his shoulders.

"You gonna come to the next class tomorrow?" Alec asked, quietly hopeful as he tucked his hands into his pockets, rocking just a tiny bit on the balls of his feet.

"Yeah sure, it's been a lot of fun" Magnus smiled, taking his scarf down from the hook.

He popped the collar up to brace against the cold.

"You guys both coming back tomorrow?" Antoni asked as he approached, putting a hand on their shoulders

They both smiled and nodded in unison.

"It's been a lot of fun, I've learned a lot, thank you," Magnus said to Antoni.

"Well I better, uh... I better get going" Magnus said, not really wanting to leave, he'd really enjoyed himself for the first time in a while.

"I guess I'll see you tomorrow" he smiled sweetly before picking up the container again and silently thanking Alec for it before turning to leave slowly, taking a quick glance back over his
shoulder as he walked out the door.

Alec watched Magnus, looking up and down his form as he walked towards the edge of the room.

'Hot and sweet' Alec thought to himself with a quick raise of his eyebrows, mulling over the thought of a hook-up with this hot single dad.

'Don't do it Lightwood' he chuckled to himself quietly, 'You're here to learn'.

"Coffee?" Antoni said, offering Alec the white mug.

Alec accepted the mug with a smile.

"Really great work today" Antoni praised. "I thought you said you had zero cooking skills"

"I didn't think I did but I guess I must just be a natural" Alec laughed, flirting back just a little, tipping his mug before taking a sip.

"Actually I'd love to stay and hang out for a little while but I have work early in the morning, so I, uh, I better get going," Alec said a little sadly, handing back his half-empty mug.

"Oh sure. I'll see you tomorrow" Antoni said as he gave a charming smile and turned to talk to some of the other people still left.

Alec couldn't lie, he had totally considered hanging out for a while and flirting with this cute guy too, but he knew what a nightmare it was to get to work on time when he'd been up late into the night and he was enjoying this class so far and didn't want to give it up just because he'd hooked up with the teacher.

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"I'm home" Magnus went to call out as he opened the door, but was shushed by Cat as she came walking out of Madzie's bedroom, trying to silently click the door shut.

"Shhh, I've just got her settled" Cat explained at a whisper, "She had a nightmare and it woke her up and then she got really upset when she realised you weren't here"

"What?" Magnus said, worry colouring his tone as he pulled his coat and scarf off.

"She's okay, she's asleep now" Cat reassured him with her palms up to stop him softly as he went to check on her.

"I promised her, you'll be here in the morning when she wakes up and she's fine" she finished.

Magnus still looked worried, but accepted that Cat was right, he shouldn't disturb her again. He glanced from Cat to Madzie's bedroom door a couple of times.

"Come on," Cat said, guiding Magnus to the living room. "Take a load off, Relax"

He slumped his shoulders and walked, turning slightly to head into the kitchen.

"What's that?" Cat asked as she sat elegantly on the couch, resting her arm on the back as she sat slightly sideways with her knees pulled up.

She was referring to the little white take-out container in Magnus' hand.
"Please don't tell me it went so bad that you stopped to get take out on the way home" Cat smiled.

"No, no" he chuckled in response while he placed the box in the fridge before pulling out a half bottle of crisp white wine and grabbing 2 glasses.

"It actually went really well. We made spaghetti" Magnus explained proudly, glancing over his shoulder as he set the glasses down on the counter top.

He poured 2 glasses and carried them over to the couch, handing one to Cat and kicking off his boots as he sat down facing her.

"Maybe I shouldn't leave her anymore. I know she gets a little restless at night" Magnus said, still a little worried, chewing on his lip as he considered it.

"No, honey, she's fine. It'll just take some getting used to. You gotta remember that you're doing this for her" Cat said, patting his knee. "She's a tough kid, she'll adjust in time"

"She's already had to do that so much," Magnus said, feeling guilty.

"Just have a talk with her in the morning before school. She'll totally understand" Cat suggested softly.

"Yeah I guess so" Magnus said, still thinking it over.

"So tell me about the class, how was it?" Cat said with a big smile, changing the subject to try and stop Magnus from worrying.

"It was good actually, I learned a lot. Turns out that it's not actually as tricky as I thought it was. Especially with a little help" Magnus finished with a little side smirk.

"A little help?" Cat asked teasingly "Do tell" she added with a big smile.

"Just this guy that I was kinda partnered up with," Magnus said with a little sparkle in his eye.

"Cute?" Cat asked, her smile widening.

"Hot!" Magnus said, with another smirk and a quick raise of his eyebrows. There was no denying Alec's sex appeal.

Caterina chuckled. "You get his name? Number?" she asked, hopeful.

She loved the thought of Magnus finding someone, he'd been alone for most of his life.

A couple of short relationships and one night stands were less than he deserved; he deserved someone who thought the world of him because somewhere underneath that moody workaholic was a sweet, kind and loving man, that was a wonderful friend and was shaping up to be a great dad too.

"Alec," he said, still smiling but more casual as he rested his elbow on the back of the couch and his cheek against his fist.

"Doesn't matter, I don't need to be thinking about hot guys right now" Magnus shrugged, standing up to head back to the kitchen to grab the rest of the bottle of wine.

"Besides, I don't even know if he's single" Magnus shrugged a little again.
"But you don't know if he's not" she replied with a little pointed of her finger, "Oh come on, don't tell me you can't see yourself settling down with some handsome fella, just you, him and the little lady, maybe even a couple more little ones in time" Cat said.

Magnus put on a pouty little smile, "I don't know, maybe" he shrugged. "But not just yet. I've got a ways to go before I'm ready for that. I'm far too young and pretty to be tied down" he joked with a little chuckle.

Cat just smiled as Magnus poured the last half a glass. She gulped down the last of her drink before she checked her watch.

"I better get going," she said, setting her wine glass down.

Cat stood to put on her coat and grabbed her bag from beside the door.

"I'll see you later sweetie," she said as she kissed Magnus' cheek.

"I'll see you later, thanks again," Magnus said as he opened the door and returned the kiss.

Cat smiled as she waved goodbye and headed down the hallway to the staircase.

Magnus gulped down the last of his wine before meandering back to the living area and picking up Cat's wine glass and putting them both in the sink with the empty green glass bottle.

Magnus sighed as he turned around and leaned back against the counter, thinking over what a day it had been. Taxes and crayons, followed by food and maybe a little flirting, then wine and Dad-Panic.

He thought about what Cat had said about settling down with a handsome guy and having more kids running around, about being happy and loved. It was definitely something he wanted, even if he wouldn't totally admit it to himself.

"I need to go to bed" he whispered to himself after being lost in deep thought for a little while. He stood forward and swiped the thoughts from his mind that Cat had planted seeds of.

He brushed his teeth, stripped down to his black boxers and just fell face first into bed.
Alec rolled out of bed with a huff; he hated having to get up at 6 am to go and open up and every time he had to, he thanked God that he only had to do it once or twice a week.

He zombie walked to the shower, washing away any sleep with the warm water crashing over him and then dressed in his blue jeans, ankle boots and dark blue button up, yawning as he quickly checked himself over in the mirror for long enough to brush his teeth, quickly finger his hair into some sort of style and spray on a little cologne.

He yawned again as he made his way to the door to grab his bag and jacket from the coat hooks and made his way out the door, locking up behind him.

He'd thought it probably wasn't a good idea to get on his bike when he was this tired, so he decided to walk and let the cold New York morning air wake him up.

20 minutes later as he approached the coffee shop storefront he saw Maia waiting out in the cold to be let in, she hadn't thought to bring her spare set of keys with her because Alec was always there first.

"Sorry, sorry" Alec almost laughed as he approached, keys at the ready to get the door open.

"God it's freezing out here" Maia shivered, pulling her hoodie tighter around her and then running into the warm building as soon as Alec got the door unlocked.

Alec flicked on a couple of the lights, shook off his bike jacket and donned his regular dark green apron.

Maia followed behind him after she was satisfied that she was thawed out and started to help Alec set up.

Alec yawned into the back of his hand again as he started to remove the white mugs from the dishwasher.

"Late night last night?" Maia said with a wiggle of her eyebrows as she polished some of the display glasses with a clean dish towel.

"Not what you think" Alec smirked, his eyes still a little tired as he glanced over to her.

Maia placed the tall glass up on the shelf and turned back to pick up another.

"I'm taking a cooking class a couple of evenings a week and yeah I was just up a while last thinking" Alec explained, trailing off a little at the end.

"Oh, yeah?" Maia asked.

"Nothing Important" Alec smiled a tight-lipped smile.

Alec got the milk dispenser filled and switched everything on that needed to be before wandering over to the double glass doors to turn the sign around to display 'Open'.

"Another day, another dollar" he sighed as he walked back over to the counter.

Customers wanting their morning take-out coffee on their way to work began pouring in,
inundating Alec & Maia with drinks orders.

Alec went to work, whipping up Cappuccinos, Lattes and Espressos like he was made for it. Steaming milk and grinding coffee beans all at the same time as Maia worked the cash register and called out drink order after drink order.

Most of the morning went on the same way until the mid-morning lull which gave them both the chance to bus tables and clean up a little just as a couple of their colleagues arrived to help out for the lunchtime rush.

"I'm gonna take my break," Alec said, taking off his apron and heading across the street to the sandwich truck parked on the corner to get some early lunch.

"Turkey and Swiss on rye?" he asked the vendor, handing him the cash and stood back for a second, lazily scrolling on his phone while it was put together.

He glanced across the street, his eyes widening with a little happiness when he caught sight of Magnus, walking with his hands tucked into his pockets, bracing his shoulders against the cold wind.

Alec thought about calling his name and waving hello, but they didn't really know each other that well and he'd see him tonight anyway.

He wasn't sure why the thought even crossed his mind in all honesty.

He brushed the thought aside, accepting the sandwich that was handed to him and heading back into the coffee shop to take his break indoors where it was warm.

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"Madzie. Wake up honey, time for school" Magnus said through the slightly ajar door to Madzie's room.

Madzie got herself out of bed and made her way to the bathroom to wash up.

'So grown up' Magnus thought to himself as the yawning little girl walked past him to the bathroom.

Magnus, already dressed and sipping his coffee, made his way to Madzie's room and picked her out some clothes which he left folded on the end of her bed for her.

He knew that if he left it to her, she'd be in an over the top princess dress or a mermaid onesie in seconds.

Magnus made her a sandwich for lunch, he was getting the gist of that now and he wrapped it in some wax paper and put it in her unicorn lunchbox with an apple and a juice box.

He scrolled through emails on his phone, made a call to Pandemonium to check on things and took few minutes to apply his make-up.

Magnus checked his watch as he took another sip of his coffee.

"Madzie? Sweet Pea, are you ready?" Magnus called as he re-entered the living area.

Madzie came walking casually out of her bedroom, dragging her backpack behind her and rubbing her eye with the other hand.
"Can we have a talk before you go to school today honey?"

Madzie looked worried, but she sat down next to Magnus on the couch, looking forlorn.

A few seconds of silence passed while Magnus tried to figure out how to word what he wanted to say before Madzie piped up before he could speak.

"Am I going back to the other place?" Madzie asked, her big, sweet eyes looking up and Magnus.

Magnus felt his heart break, he had to hold back the tears from his eyes and choke down the lump in his throat that formed in an instant. He knew in that moment that he never wanted to hear those words again and promised himself that he would never let her feel like that again.

"Sweetheart, No!" he managed to softly say, so much sadness colouring his tone, he could barely get the words out.

Magnus sat back on the sofa a little and pulled little Madzie up to sit on his lap, she just looked innocent and curious.

"I just wanted to talk to you about these classes I'm taking and why" Magnus explained, trying not to let Madzie's question ring again and again in his mind.

She just looked at him with her big soulful eyes, letting him explain what he meant.

Magnus explained to her why he was taking these classes, what it meant for the two of them and why sometimes Cat would be with her or sometimes Raphael.

Madzie seemed to accept this better than he thought she would, nodding along as he spoke.

"You get it right?" Magnus asked with a smile and a tiny little shoulder nudge.

"Uh huh," she nodded with a little smile.

"Is there anything you wanna ask me?" Magnus said, optimistic, always hopeful that he could get Madzie to open up, but he wasn't expecting what came out of her mouth.

"So you do wanna be my new Daddy forever?" she asked, sweet and hopeful.

Magnus couldn't hold it back any longer, the tears that were threatening before started to fall, running down his still face as he smiled a tight-lipped smile.

"Forever" he managed to choke out, proudly past that throat lump.

He kissed her forehead, holding her in a hug for a moment, which she reciprocated, making Magnus' heart warm.

"Come on, let's get you to school," he said, shuffling forward and lifting Madzie up to then set her down on her feet.

He watched her with adoration as she sat down on the rug to pull on her little sneakers. He still couldn't comprehend how this little girl had come into his life and stolen his heart so quickly.

He'd never known that she was exactly what was missing from his life and ultimately, exactly what he needed.

"Let's go Papa," she said, bouncing up to her feet.
Magnus' smile could light up the night sky. He took her tiny little hand and they walked down to the elevator together.

A few hours later;

"You sure you don't mind? I can get Clary to work Mondays so you don't have to do both" Magnus asked and explained as he and Raphael went about setting up the bar area, taking chairs down from tables and setting out beer coasters and cocktail menus.

"Yeah it's cool, I don't mind. You know how much I love the little lady" Raphael explained.

"It would just be great if I could get her in a routine, you know? That way at least she always knows where she stands until she's properly settled. So Cat will watch her on Sunday nights, you can sit with her on Monday nights and I can get Clary and Steven alternating the weekends so that I can spend time at home with her then and you my friend are getting a promotion and a pay rise" Magnus chuckled at the end as he thought out loud.

"Really?" Raphael asked, a little surprised but very grateful.

"Absolutely. Man, look, I really appreciate what you've done for me these last few weeks. You're here 5, sometimes 6 full days a week and you've helped and are still helping me with the little one immensely. You deserve it, buddy! Plus with the bucks this place is pulling in these days, I think it's about time we had a 'Bar Manager'" Magnus finished with a smile and wink.

Raphael couldn't wipe the smile from his face, he was so proud of himself. He didn't do any extra work to suck up to the boss, he just did it because the boss was his best friend and he always felt he owed him a lot, even though Magnus always tried to assure him otherwise.

"And your first job as Bar Manager..." Magnus started, glancing up at a hopeful, ready and willing looking Raphael, "Is to get me a beer" he finished with a chuckle.

'Funny' said the look that Raphael aimed at Magnus, along with the little cardboard coaster that just missed him, making them both laugh.

Raphael walked behind the bar and cracked open 2 bottles, bringing them around and handing one to Magnus who sat casually, slouched back on one of the bar stools at the edge of one of the tall tables.

Raphael hopped up into the stool opposite Magnus and took a sip of his own beer.

"Penny for your thoughts boss?" he asked, wondering why Magnus seemed a little quiet and distracted all of a sudden, just swirling the beer bottle in his hand.

"Nothing," Magnus said, looking up with a little smile, "Just... thinking" he added before taking a sip of his own beer.

"What's his name?" Raphael smirked, knowingly.

Magnus' eyes looked over, a little smirk finding his lips too.

"It's not like that" he smiled, looking down at his beer again.

"Magnus I know you, probably better than you know yourself. You only get lost in thought like
that when there's a guy involved" Raphael said, pointing his beer bottle in Magnus' direction.

Magnus raised his eyebrows, short and sharp with a little smile in silent agreement.

"Just something Cat said the other day. About finding a guy, settling down, just us and Madzie and maybe 1 or 2 more little ones. I never really thought that that life was for me, but now, I don't know..." he trailed off a little, "Now, I just can't get the idea out of my head" he smiled fondly off into the distance, swirling the glass bottle in his hand again.

"And he'll be a lucky guy" Raphael assured him, "But come on man, you're not in a rush, you're not even 30 yet and look at you, businessman, dad, chef extraordinaire" he gently teased at the end, making Magnus chuckle.

"You've got time. And he's out there, all you can do is be open to it when it comes along and let yourself open up to someone, don't put those walls up that I know you always do" Raphael finished.

Magnus was flattered and not at all surprised that Raphael knew that about him.

He glanced up at his friend, who was more like a little brother or a grown son and returned that sweet smile that Raph had on his face.

"There was this one hot guy there" he admitted with a grin as he stood, placing the green beer bottle on the table and getting back to work behind the bar, cleaning the beer taps and wiping down the black marble counter.

"Oh yeah?" Raphael said with a smile and a twinkle in his eye.

"Yeah but I'm not sure he's the settling down type; seems kind of a player to me. But still.... Hot!" Magnus admitted with a smirk.

"He says he has a little brother about Madzie's age. Wants to set up a play-date for the two of them sometime" Magnus said.

"Go for it. It'd be good for her if nothing else. And you never know, this hot, hot guy might surprise you" Raphael said, trying his best to get Magnus to push himself out of his comfort zone.

"Yeah maybe. I'll see how things go" Magnus said casually with a little shrug.

"Crap, I gotta run" Magnus said a few minutes later after checking his watch. Madzie would need picking up from school in 20 minutes and he had an informal meeting with her teacher to talk about her progress before they came home.

"You're definitely sure you don't mind coming over tonight?" he asked again as he pulled on his coat and scarf.

"I'll be there" Raphael smiled as he continued to stack clean glasses into the cabinet behind the bar.

Magnus leaned into Raphael on his way past, planting a kiss on his friends' cheek.

"Love you" he called as he headed out the door.

"Love you too" Raphael called out with a little chuckle as he continued polishing wine glasses.

'Who needs a man when you have friends like mine?' Magnus thought to himself as he walked down the block.
Alec glanced in the mirrored door of the microwave on his way past it, adjusting his collar and checking his face from a few angles, unsure after a second as to why he was doing it.

"Is everyone here?" Antoni called out to the room.

"I think there's still 1 or 2 missing," Alec said, scanning the room for the same faces that he'd seen the night before.

"Okay, we'll give it 5 minutes," Antoni said, checking his watch. "Everybody get washed up and make sure your workstations are ready" he finished with a smile.

2 minutes later, Magnus came walking in, apologising profusely for being a little late, not that he technically was, and taking off his coat and scarf to hang on the hook.

"Okay guys, a quick announcement" Antoni started as he stood behind his bench, "Unfortunately, due to some budget cutbacks, we're going to be taking these classes down to just 1 night a week, so from next week on, we'll only be meeting on Mondays" he explained to the room, all of whom looked a little taken aback and upset by this news, including Magnus who had spent all day making sure he had a routine sorted for Madzie.

Magnus sighed but resigned himself to the fact that there was nothing he could do. He supposed it made spending more time with Madzie easier; he would only need a babysitter one night a week instead of two.

He looked up and saw that he had unknowingly stood next to Alec again, who caught his eye and gave him a little smile. Magnus smiled back, happy to see a familiar face again.

The lesson continued exactly as it had done the day before, with Antoni demonstrating all the steps and everyone following along. This time though, each person was making their own pasta sauce.

Magnus was following along well, chopping basil and 3 different kinds of mushrooms, all of which he'd never heard of before and he made Alec laugh with the look he gave them as he held them up to inspect them before chopping.

"Okay so we're gonna pop half a can of crushed tomatoes into our pots and then we add in a teaspoon of the dried oregano, make sure to keep the heat on medium-low" Antoni instructed as he held up each of the ingredients as he put the sauce together.

"So how'd the little one like the spaghetti?" Alec asked as he stirred his sauce delicately with a wooden spoon.

"Oh we actually had it for dinner tonight before I left," Magnus said with a little chuckle, "she loved it" he added proudly as he stirred his own saucepan.

"Great" Alec smiled sweetly. "So you wanna take the kids down to the park on 4th tomorrow? I have the day off so..." Alec started, not shy at all.

'Oh' Magnus thought to himself, 'he was serious'

"Uhm..." Magnus managed to stutter.

"Or not?" Alec chuckled.
"No, sorry" Magnus started with a little apologetic laugh, "That sounds great, it'd be nice to get Madzie hanging out with kids her own age, instead of, well... kids my age" he chuckled.

Alec laughed, "Great. Max is coming over to visit tomorrow after school and we're going out for ice cream, so we could meet you down at the park at maybe 3:30?" he suggested.

"Yeah, sounds great" Magnus smiled, letting his eyes linger for a moment while Alec went back to work on his ingredients.

'Don't do it, Bane. You can just be friends with a guy without wanting to get into his pants' he reminded himself with a shake of his head, brushing away those thoughts.

After their sauces were made, Antoni suggested that everyone go around the room and try each others work, so everyone obliged, sampling all the different sauces with clean spoons.

"This is great, really tasty" Antoni nodded, licking his lips as he tried Magnus' efforts.

"Mr Lightwood," Antoni said as he approached Alec's side of the bench, picking up a spoon.

Magnus' brow furrowed a little, a tiny curl at the corner of his lips as he thought to himself 'Did these 2 leave together after I left last night?... Probably' he chuckled to himself, not letting himself admit that he was a little jealous.

The flirting going on was almost making things awkward, so Magnus very obviously cleared his throat as he stepped up to the bench, not looking at either of them, but making his point none the less as he began to pour his sauce into his Tupperware container to take home.

As the class finished up, Magnus made his way to the coat rack, picking up his red coat and scarf and wrapping them around him, it was freezing out tonight, so he was glad he'd remembered the scarf.

"So I'll, uh, I'll see you tomorrow?" Alec asked, trying to be casual, but deep down, a little nervous.

"Yeah, we'll be there," Magnus said with a smile.

They bid each other goodbye and separately made their way home, unaware that they were headed to the same building.
Chapter 7 - Howdy, Neighbour

Magnus had had a very standard and boring day, routine really, and had almost forgotten for a moment that he was meeting Alexander and his little brother at the park later today, but when he remembered, he found himself smiling secretly off into the distance.

"You okay in there?" Cat asked.

It was 2:45 pm, almost time to go get Madzie from school and Magnus was busy gathering up toys for the thousandth time this week and checking himself in the mirror by the front door, while Cat sat casually on his couch, sipping her coffee.

"I'm good. Just gotta pick the little lady up in a second and then we're going to the park" Magnus replied with a sweet smile as he carried armfuls of stuffed animals over to Madzie's toy box and dropped them on the top.

"You seem... distracted is all" Cat replied, confused, her brow slightly furrowed as she watched her best friend flit around.

"Me? No, I'm... I'm good" he said, reassuringly, but fooling no one.

"Okay," she waved her hand with a smirk and continued to sip from her coffee mug, letting it be but obviously not convinced.

"I gotta get going, the Subway is a nightmare this time of day. We're still on for lunch later in the week though right?" Magnus asked as he pulled on his suede boots.

"Yeah absolutely, I'll swing by the bar, maybe Friday" Cat said as she put her empty mug by the sink and wrapped her long coat around her shoulders.

She leaned down to where Magnus was sat in the armchair, lacing up his boots and kissed him goodbye.

"Bye sweetie," she said as she made her way out the door.

"Later Kit-Cat" he called behind her with a little smile.

He'd been calling her that since middle school and she pretended to hate it, but deep down she thought it was adorable.

Magnus just chuckled to himself as he finished lacing his boots. He sat his palms on his knees and took a breath before getting up to put on his coat and head down to the subway station to go pick up Madzie.

--

"Hey, guess where we're going?" Magnus said to Madzie as they walked down the school path and back to the train station.

"Where?" She asked excitedly.

"We, are going to the park! My friend Alec is bringing his little brother for you to play with" Magnus smiled down at the little one who held his hand and almost skipped with joy.
"Sound like fun?" Magnus asked.
"Yeah!" She smiled a big bright smile, the biggest smile that Magnus had seen from her since they'd met.

"Who's Alec?" Madzie asked after a minute or so.

"Alec? He's um,... He's a friend. I met him at that class where I'm learning to cook" Magnus explained.

Madzie took Magnus' hand as they crossed the street and made their way down the steps of the subway station, which was heaving with commuters as always.

--

Magnus held on to Madzie's hand as they wandered through the gate into the park and looked around, trying to be casual, to see if he could spot Alec. He couldn't.

He checked his watch; 3:23 pm. He found himself wondering all sorts of things; Was Alec the kind of person who turned up early, or late? Was Alec the kind of guy who would forget about the plans they'd made? Was Magnus going to be left standing around like an idiot while Madzie wondered why he'd lied to her?

'Oh my God, Bane, pull it together. This isn't like you' he muttered to himself with a roll of his eyes.

They walked over to the playground and Madzie handed her backpack and water bottle to Magnus, who sat down on a bench, while she ran across to the swings and hoped on. He watched her with an adoring smile as she swung back and forth.

She let go of one of the chains for a second to wave to Magnus, who waved back with a grin before calling out "two hands"

A few minutes later, Alec sat down beside Magnus, who smiled sweetly when he turned his head to make eye contact with him.

"Hi," he said slightly coy.

"Hey," Alec said with a heartbreaking smile as he rested his foot upon his other knee and laid his arm back across the back of the bench.

Alec was dressed in dark blue jeans, biker boots, a plain white T and a black leather jacket.

"This is Max," Alec said as he helped Max shrug his backpack from his shoulders.

"Hey, Max" Magnus smiled.

"Hi" the little one smiled back.

"So where's Madzie?" Alec asked as he placed Max's backpack between his feet.

"Oh, she's right there on the swings" Magnus pointed out.

"ZiZi" Max called as he ran towards her and Magnus frowned as the 2 little ones embraced in a hug.

"Looks like they already know each other" Alec chuckled.
"Yeah, I guess so" Magnus smiled, so happy to see that Madzie had made a friend. Happier still that that friend had a super hot big brother.

They watched the little ones play and laugh for a while and let the slightly awkward silence pass before Alec broke the ice.

"So tell me, what does Magnus Bane usually do on a day like today," Alec asked as he linked the fingers of both his hands together, while his elbow still rested on the back of the bench.

"Well, I uh, I own a bar just around the corner from here, so before Madzie came along, I spent most of my time there. So now it's kind of 50/50. I have a bar manager who helps me out with work and my best friend Cat helps me out with the little one" Magnus explained.

"Busy Dad then?" Alec asked, genuinely interested.

"Yeah pretty much" He nodded with a little smile. He was busy but was loving his life right now.

"How about you Alexander?" he asked.

"Well, I just moved out of my parents' place, finally got my own apartment, I, uh, I work at Java Jones, the coffee shop on 5th. I study Archaeology a couple of nights a week over at NYU and obviously I'm taking a cooking class too" finished with a sweet little chuckle.

"Can we get Ice Cream now?" Max begged as he and Madzie almost fell into Alec's lap as they ran back over.

Alec laughed as he propped them both back up.

"Sure we can. Madzie you better ask your Daddy first" he whispered.

"Can I?" she asked sweetly, giving Magnus her best puppy-dog eyes.

"Of course you can Sweet-Pea" he replied.

"You want some Coffee?" Alec asked as he stood, taking both the kids' hands and walking over to the snack truck.

"Sure" Magnus smiled "Black, 1 sugar. You want some help?" Magnus asked.

"It's cool, I got it" Alec smiled back over his shoulder.

Magnus watched the 3 of them walk over to the truck and Alec got them each an ice cream cone and smiled as he watched them tuck in while Alec waited for the 2 coffees to be made.

Alec paid and walked back over to the bench where Max and Madzie sat between them and he handed Magnus the blue take-out coffee cup.

"Thank you," Magnus said, smiling as he accepted.

Max and Madzie finished their ice cream in record time and took off running back over to the playground.

"So..." Alec asked, laying his arm casually back over the back of the bench and turning his body slightly to face Magnus.

"Is it just you and Madzie, or...?" he finished.
Magnus was a little taken aback as he stared at Alec, wide-eyed, for just a second.

"Yes. Uh, yeah, it's just the 2 of us" he smiled, "Not a lot of time for, you know, extracurricular activities" he chuckled.

"Well if you can find a sitter, I'm having a housewarming party at the weekend if you wanna come by? I invited a couple of other people from our cooking class too" Alec said, before taking a sip of his hot coffee, "And feel free to bring a friend or two, the more the merrier" he smiled a heartbreakingly beautiful smile.

"That sounds great. I can't remember the last time I took a night off and had a drink" Magnus replied.

"Awesome" Alec beamed, "Give me your number and I'll text you the details" he added, pulling his phone from the pocket of his black leather jacket.

They exchanged numbers and continued to talk for what seemed like hours, while simultaneously keeping an eye on the kids. They laughed about past culinary disaster stories, talked about their jobs, their friends and just little stories from life in general.

Magnus checked his watch and sighed a little sadly.

"We better get going, I've gotta get Madzie some dinner, plus she has homework, so.." he said reluctantly.

"Yeah I better get Max back to my Mums" Alec added, checking the time on his phone.

The two of them stood and looked a little awkward for a second.

"Max we gotta go buddy" Alec called over to the playground.

Max and Madzie came running back and talked between themselves for a second.

"So I'll see you on Saturday" Magnus smiled, not knowing whether he should shake Alec's hand, give him a hug, or quite what.

"Sounds good," Alec said before confidently leaning forward, placing his hand on Magnus' shoulder and kissing his cheek.

Magnus smiled, flirtatiously, if a little coyly, and held up a hand with a slight wave as Alec picked Max up and headed off towards the park gate.

"Is he your boyfriend?" Madzie said as she tilted his head back to look up at Magnus, who had his hands on her little shoulders.

"No honey" Magnus chuckled before he picked up her backpack from the bench and put it back onto her shoulders.

"He's just a friend" Magnus explained as he gazed after Alec, not intentionally looking at him like the angel that he thought he was, but gazing none the less.

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Friday:

Magnus, dressed in black, ripped skinny jeans and a long sleeve black V neck T-shirt, rolled up to
the elbows, was sitting on a bar stool at Pandemonium, going through invoices and receipts on his work laptop. Not really paying attention, but then he'd done this a thousand times; he could probably do it in his sleep at this point.

He glanced over at his phone when it vibrated and lit up on the mahogany wood bar beside him and tore his eyes away from the laptop screen for a moment to read the text.

"Hey, it's Alec. Don't forget about the party tomorrow, Bring a friend and a bottle, the address is...."

Magnus was startled by the sound of the front door opening and his best friend, Cat, walking in. He locked his phone and set it back on the bar.

"Hey, handsome" Cat chimed as she sat on the stool beside him.

"Hey, Kit-Kat" Magnus replied. "Let me just finish up this weeks' takings and we can go," he said quickly as he typed like a demon, really wanting to get out of work and just take the afternoon to himself.

"No problem," Cat said, pulling her phone from her bag to pretend like she was checking emails, where in actual fact she was scrolling through social media.

"Hey, you'll never guess who's back in town for a few days," Magnus said, making small talk while he finished up his work.

"Who?" Cat asked casually, just as Raphael and Lorenzo came walking through the door that led to the kitchen, laughing and joking about some memory of the last time Lorenzo was in town.

"Lorenzo Rey, as I live and breathe," Cat said with a smile as she stood to embrace her old friend in a hug.

"Caterina" he replied fondly while returning the hug.

The 4 of them chatted for a moment, making small talk while Magnus closed and put away his laptop.

"Let's just stay here for lunch" Cat suggested as Magnus headed for his coat. "I'll order in some Pizza" she smiled, holding up her phone.

Magnus had been looking forward to escaping reality a little today, but he had to admit, that Pizza with his friends sounded pretty good.

"Double pepperoni" Raphael called from behind the bar where he was cleaning the beer taps.

"And onions" Lorenzo added as he pulled down 2 more stools from the bar for them all to sit together.

Cat called and ordered and sat back at the bar after shrugging off her coat.

"So which one of you guys wants to be my best friend and babysit the little one for me tomorrow night? I've been invited to a party by an insanely hot guy" Magnus asked and gritted his teeth into a pleading smile as he glanced around at his friends.

"Sorry boss, I gotta man this place tomorrow night. You know the drill" Raphael said.

"Of course" Magnus nodded and turned his gaze to Lorenzo.
"Oh no way. I'm not spending one of my few days here in the city babysitting, I'm coming with you" he comically protested. "This guy's hot you say?..." he added before sipping his cocktail that Raphael had placed on the bar.

"I'll do it" Cat said with a side smile and a little sigh as Magnus' eyes reached her next.

"You are an angel, Caterina Loss!" Magnus said fondly as he took her hand and kissed the back of it.

"It's cool, I have work to do from home anyway. I can do it after Madzie is in bed" she added.

The 4 of them spent their afternoon sharing stories and reminiscing about times passed. Magnus and Cat had known Lorenzo since college and Raphael had met him a few years back when he was passing through town on another one of his crazy adventures again. He usually stopped by every 6 months or so, never one for settling down, he was always on the move, but always had time for old friends.

--

The next day, Caterina and Lorenzo arrived together at Magnus' apartment and Madzie embraced Cat in a hug when she saw her walk in, asking her who the man with the ponytail was as Cat picked her up.

"This is Lorenzo, honey, he's a friend of mine and your Papa's" she explained as she walked Madzie over to the couch and they sat together to watch cartoons.

A few moments later, Magnus emerged from his bedroom, dressed in black skinny jeans and a black and dark blue shirt that had a glittering galaxy effect when the light hit it, buttoned to the top, with the long sleeves rolled neatly to the elbow. The shirt was definitely working for him, it drew attention to his broad chest and biceps and complimented his gorgeous skin tone perfectly.

He'd added some temporary blue streaks to his sleek black mohawk and accompanied his outfit with several rings and a long chain necklace.

"Ready?" he asked Lorenzo as he adjusted the strap of his watch.

"Yeah, shall I go downstairs and hail a cab?" he asked, pointing his thumb towards the door.

"Yeah, one sec, let me just find the text with the address on it" Magnus said, pulling his phone from his pocket and opening up his texts.

He scrolled for a moment before pausing to pick up his coat and bottle of whiskey that he'd helped himself to from Pandemonium and leaned over to Madzie to kiss her goodbye.

"Be good sweetie, I'll be home in a couple of hours. Love you" he chimed as he placed a kiss on her forehead.

"Bye Papa" she said sweetly without tearing her eyes from the TV.

Magnus and Lorenzo headed out the front door, stopping for Magnus to adjust the collar of his coat with one hand while opening up the text from Alec with his other.

"Wait, this can't be right..." Magnus frowned, reading the message back over again.

"What is it?" Lorenzo asked, not really paying attention as he looked at his own phone, scrolling
through messages and Instagram.

"Oh my God" Magnus almost whispered to himself. "He's my new neighbour?" he frowned.

Magnus' mind raced at a million miles an hour. How had they never crossed paths? It had been weeks!

"Who's your what now?" Lorenzo asked, tilting his face to the side slightly but still looking down at his phone.

"Nothing. Erm... no need for a cab, it's not far" Magnus said, slightly nervous, but he couldn't figure out why.

"Cool," Lorenzo said and walked beside Magnus as they headed for the elevator at the end of the hall.

When they got to the ground floor, Magnus stepped out of the elevator, removed his coat and walked down the hall, checking the door number on his way past until he got to the right one.

'This must be the one' he thought. He could hear the music and voices coming from inside.

He knocked, a little tentatively to start with, then slightly harder when he realised that his little knock wouldn't be heard.

"Wait, what?" Lorenzo said as he slid his phone back into his pocket. "You weren't kidding" he added with a slight chuckle and stepped over to his friends' side.

"Hey!" Alec greeted Magnus and his long-haired friend with a big smile as he swung the door open, green beer bottle in one hand. It was clear that he'd had a few already, not drunk... tipsy maybe?

"Hey" Magnus smiled with a little chuckle, not ready for the happiness that suddenly hit him at actually seeing Alec again. He was dressed in black, ripped skinny jeans and a comfortable looking long sleeve grey cashmere cardigan over a white V-neck T-shirt, that plunged deep enough to see a defined chest that was peppered with a little bit of dark hair.

'Cute!' Magnus thought. 'Cuddly even...' he let his mind wander for a moment.

"Come on in" Alec said, stepping aside.

"Hey. Alec Lightwood" he said to Lorenzo, extending his arm for a handshake.

"Lorenzo Rey" he replied with a charming smile as he shook Alec's hand before suddenly getting distracted by a hot guy on the other side of the room.

"Can I take your coats?" Alec asked politely before taking them to hang on the coat rack.

"As it turns out, we didn't need them" Magnus chuckled, which had Alec looking puzzled; there was a definite chill in the air outside.

"I, uh... I live up on the 3rd floor" Magnus smiled, pointing up to the ceiling.

"Oh! No way" Alec smiled in return as he hung Magnus coat on the peg.

By this point, Lorenzo had taken it upon himself to meander across the room and casually introduce himself to the hot guy.
"Drink?" Alec asked Magnus, holding up his beer in question.

"Oh I brought a bottle," Magnus said, holding up the top shelf whiskey by the neck of the bottle.

"Rocks?" Alec asked, walking towards the kitchen and gesturing for Magnus to follow him. Magnus already was of course.

"Sure," Magnus said sweetly.
Alec pulled a glass from the kitchen cabinet and held it under the ice machine on the fridge-freezer, catching a couple of cubes as they dropped.

He smiled a little flirtatiously at Magnus as he handed it over, while Magnus returned the smile, flirting too but in the back of his mind thinking that Alec was probably just being friendly.

Magnus cracked the bottle open and poured a generous glass.

The music was a decent level without being ear piercing and there was a good turn out. Alec had a lot of friends. A few close, most just acquaintances, classmates and colleagues, but still.

"So neighbours huh?" Alec said, trying to make conversation, leaning against the refrigerator casually.

"I guess so" Magnus smiled before tipping his glass and sipping his drink.

"So..." Magnus started, "You know all these people?" Magnus asked as the two of them looked out into the spacious living area at the gathering of people talking, a few dancing, all drinking.

"Most of them yeah, a few from school, some from work" Alec explained as he turned his head to scan the room.

"Your friend seems to like Andrew" Alec smiled, gesturing in their direction with his beer bottle.

Magnus sniggered a little. "Lorenzo likes everybody" he smiled, raising his eyebrows as he looked at Alec.

"Ah" Alec laughed. There was that heartbreaking smile again.

"Hey, Jace. Jace" Alec called discreetly across the room, trying not to shout over everyone and disturb their conversations. Jace came walking over.

"I want you to meet somebody," Alec said as Jace approached. "This is Magnus, he lives upstairs"

"Hey, how's it going," Jace said, extending his hand to shake Magnus', who reciprocated.

"Nice to meet you" Magnus smiled.

"This is Jace, he's my best friend, but more like a brother" Alec explained.

A few seconds later, a beautiful girl with porcelain skin and sun-red hair was standing beside Jace, linking her arm through his.

"Clary?" Magnus said, surprised to see her.

"Oh hey, boss!" Clary chimed with a big smile.
"Wait, this is the 'cutie' that you met at the gym?" Magnus smiled, making Clary blush a little, but she smiled back, seeing Jace's smirk out of the corner of her eye.

"You two know each other?" Jace asked.

"Yeah, Magnus is my boss" Clary explained.

"Wait..." Alec said after thinking it over for a second. "You're the guy that owns Pandemonium?" he asked, turning to Magnus.

"Guilty," Magnus said, holding his hand palm up and taking another sip of his drink.

"Damn, That's like the coolest, most exclusive bar this side of town" Alec was shocked. In a good way of course.

"Oh well thank you Alexander," Magnus said, just a tiny blush in his golden cheeks at the compliment.

The conversation went of on a tangent at some point, but Magnus was enjoying meeting Alec's friends and getting to know them... and Alec of course.

"Oh this is my little sister Isabelle," Alec said, wrapping his arm around Izzy's shoulder as she approached. She'd been drawn over after seeing her big brother talking to a cute guy on the outskirts of his own party. She was intrigued.

"Izzy, this is Magnus, he lives upstairs" Alec introduced him.

"I see it runs in the family," Magnus said, taking Izzy's delicate hand and kissing the back.

Alec had to think over Magnus' statement for a second before he understood what he'd meant and then smiled secretly and confidently to himself when he got it. He took a slow sip of his beer, trying to hide the smile.

Most of the night was spent meeting various people that Alec knew, but Magnus, although generally a solitary creature, did enjoy meeting new people.

It wasn't until a few hours later that Magnus had realised there were only half a dozen of them left in the room, sitting on the couch and chairs, telling stories and anecdotes, singing to favourite songs that played from the speakers of Alec's old 90s boom-box in the corner of the room.

He suddenly realised that Lorenzo was missing. He pulled his phone from his pocket to call him but saw a text that he hadn't realised he had; he'd been too engrossed in conversation.

'Left with the hot guy! Score! Brunch Tomorrow? x'

Magnus chucked, quickly replied and slid his phone back in his pocket.

It was another half hour before Izzy and Simon, who Magnus had been introduced to at some point; he couldn't remember when exactly, left too, tipsy and giggling.

"We better get going too bud. Great party though!" Jace said, fist bumping his best friend. "Good to meet you Magnus" he smiled with a wave as he and Clary got their coats and made their way out the door.

"You too. See you at work Clary" he called as they headed out the door, Clary blowing goodbye kisses at them both.
Alec sighed with a little smile as he closed the door, satisfied that everyone had had a good time, but then raising a slightly concerned eyebrow when he saw the state of his place; beer bottles, glasses and red plastic cups all over the place.

"Want some help?" Magnus asked as he saw the look on Alec's face.

"No, It's cool, I got it" Alec chuckled, heading to the kitchen to grab a trash bag.

"You better be getting back to the little one," Alec said sweetly.

Magnus internally swooned over Alec's sweet nature. He checked his watch; 23:47 - Damn! Cat was going to kill him!

"Yeah, I guess I better be getting back" Magnus admitted sadly, standing from the couch.

He put his empty glass in the kitchen sink and headed to the coat rack, resisting the urge to put his coat on like he naturally would have and hanging it over his arm instead.

"This was fun" Magnus smiled as Alec walked him to the door.

"I guess I'll, uh, see you in class?" Magnus said.

"Yeah" Alec nodded, "Or, you know, maybe we could meet for coffee one day? You know, if you're free? I make a mean caramel macchiato" he suggested, making Magnus smile.

"Yeah, sound good" Magnus admitted as he stopped in the doorway to the hall.

"Awesome" Alec beamed, "I'll text you?"

"Okay" Magnus replied with a just slightly awkward smile, not sure what else to say.

With that thought, Alec put his hand on Magnus' upper arm, taking just a split second to appreciate the firm muscle beneath his clothes, and kissed his cheek.

Magnus reciprocated of course, just a friendly kiss goodbye.... right?

"Bye" Magnus smiled as he turned and headed for the elevator.

Alec couldn't resist leaning just slightly out the door before closing it to watch Magnus walk.
Chapter 8 - You've Got A Friend In Me

Magnus' weekend consisted of household chores, chasing Madzie round the apartment, pretending to be dinosaurs and taking her shopping for the ingredients he needed for his next class.

"Okay, so chocolate chip cookies," Magnus said as he read the ingredients card that he'd been given at the end of class last week.

Madzie stood to his left, looked up at him with excitement; chocolate chip cookies were her favourite.

Magnus guided Madzie to walk in front of him where he could see her; his 'Dad' instincts were really starting to kick in.

He held the shopping basket on his other arm, handles held at the inside of his elbow and shopping list in his other hand and read out the ingredients to Madzie as they walked up and down the aisles.

"So we need Vanilla Extract," Magnus said, frowning a little. "I thought these were chocolate cookies? What does Vanilla look like?" he muttered to himself as Madzie looked up and down the shelves.

He frowned and glanced up and down the shelves in the baking section, concentrating on trying to find anything that said 'Vanilla' on it.

"I had the same question" Alec whispered cheekily over Magnus' shoulder, making him jump out of his skin for a second before he turned and saw the tall, dark, smiling angel that was his new neighbour, Alec Lightwood.

Magnus put his hand over his heart, that was beating a million miles an hour and gave Alec a look that said 'I'm gonna get you back for that one' and chuckled tentatively.

Alec just smiled and reached over the shelves to pick up a little glass bottle.

"It's this stuff here" he chuckled, handing the bottle to Magnus.

"Awesome" Magnus said, smiling gratefully and reading the bottle label before putting it in the shopping basket.

"Hey Madzie" Alec greeted the little one as she came to stand beside Magnus.

"Hi," she said shyly, instinctively holding on to Magnus' hand.

Magnus and Alec smiled at each other for a second, both trying not to be too obvious, but subtly flirting none the less.

"Everything else you'll need is right here" Alec pointed out, walking over to the shelves stocked with baking ingredients and picking up a bag of sugar.

"Thanks" Magnus smiled ad Alec handed it to him, noticing the little brush of their fingers as the bag changed hands.

He picked up the last thing he needed; flour. And added it to the basket.

"We, um... We better get going" Magnus smiled, a little sadly, putting his hand on Madzie's
shoulder. He wanted to stay and talk to Alec, but he had to remind himself that it was the little one who needed his attention, he didn't have time to think about himself right now.

"Yeah, yeah no problem, So I'll see you in class tomorrow?" Alec asked.

"I'll be there," Magnus said with a smile as he and Madzie walked towards the checkout.

"See ya," Alec said, almost at a whisper as he watched Magnus walk away. He tilted his head as he admired Magnus perfect ass in those well fitted black jeans.

Alec raised one eyebrow and smirked with approval at the way Magnus' hips swayed when he walked.

"So hot!" Alec whispered to himself before tearing his eyes away and focusing back on his grocery shopping.

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The next day;

Magnus loaded his ingredients into a little brown paper bag and meticulously folded the top down in neat lines a couple of times.

"Okay, I gotta go, I'm running late," Magnus said as he raced to pick up his short, dark red leather jacket.

"There's some leftover chicken pot pie in the fridge for dinner and makes sure Madzie brushes her teeth before bed" Magnus instructed Raphael, who was sat at the small dining table, helping Madzie with her homework.

"I know, we're all good" Raphael looked up briefly and smiled, "Go on, get going"

"Thanks, buddy, I owe you," he said as he leaned over to kiss his friends' cheek and then the top of Madzie's head.

"Bye honey, be good for uncle Raph"

Magnus grabbed his keys from the bowl and hurried out the door and down the hall to the elevator. He tapped his foot impatiently as the elevator descended, knowing he was going to have to power walk if he wanted to make it there on time.

There was a 'ping' as the door opened and Magnus strode forwards but slowed his steps down to what felt in his mind like moving in slow motion when he saw a tall, dark hunky figure, dressed in slim fit, leather pants, a crisp white T and leather jacket, holding 2 motorbike helmets waiting for him at the end of the hall.

"Thought maybe you'd like a ride" Alec smirked and winked.

Magnus' mind ran wild for a split second at the not too subtle innuendo and he blinked his wide eyes and dipped his head in a coy little laugh.

He stuttered for a second as he thought and slowly reached out to take the helmet that Alec was offering him.

"I guess I could give it a try," Magnus said, nervously; he'd never been on a bike before.
Alec's smile grew wider as he offered to take Magnus' bag of ingredients and put them in his backpack.

They walked out to the street, where Alec had parked his bike; a sleek, cherry red and jet black Ducati with a passenger seat at the back.

"Wow, that's quite an impressive piece you've got there," Magnus said in awe and then blushed when he realised that he'd just made an innuendo too.

He chanced a glance at Alec, who was smirking again.

"Thanks," Alec said as he slid his helmet on before helping Magnus get his on with minimum damage to his hair.

Alec straddled the bike like a natural and gestured to the seat behind him for Magnus to climb on. Magnus nervously and slightly awkwardly threw his leg over the bike and got his butt comfortable on the seat.

"You'll have to hold on to me," Alec said over his shoulder, glad that the helmet was masking the smirk on his face and the twinkle in his eye.

"Oh," Magnus said, feeling a little stupid for not doing it right away like he'd be able to just ride on the back with nothing to hold on to.

He wrapped his arms around Alec's waist, linking his hands in front of him, pressing his body against Alec's back.

"Be gentle, it's my first time" Magnus laughed a little, relaxing into the flirting a little more easily than he thought he ought to, but he didn't care, it was fun flirting with Alec.

Alec's heart raced, as did his mind, thinking of what Magnus' bare skin would feel like against his back. He brushed the thought off with a little laugh and started up his bike and sped off down the street.

Once in class, Alec and Magnus continued their flirtatious behaviour with shoulder nudges, whispered sexy jokes and flicking flour at each other.

"Why does your dough look stiffer than mine?" Alec asked, confused as he glanced between his ball of cookie dough and Magnus' at the other end of the bench as Magnus wrapped it in plastic wrap.

Magnus smirked off into the distance and licked quickly at his bottom lip, trying to disguise his smile, not able to look Alec in the eye as he blushed.

"I mean, uh..." Alec chuckled.

"I think you just need a little more flour" Magnus smiled as he approached Alec's side.

He got a couple of pinches of flour from the bag and sprinkled them onto the dough, encouraging Alec to mix it in to make it a little firmer.

"That looks better" Magnus beamed at Alec formed the chocolate speckled dough into a ball and wrapped it up.
Magnus flicked the last of the flour he had pinched in his fingers in Alec's direction as he turned back to him from putting his cookie dough in the refrigerator, leaving a streak of white powder across Alec's face.

Alec faked a shocked face which slowly turned to a smirk as his eyes met a giggling Magnus', who stood with his hands clasped in front of his beautiful smile, trying to look innocent like it wasn't him.

"Oh, so it's like that is it?" Alec asked, laughing as he scooped up a little flour in his fingers from the edge of the bench and flicked it back at Magnus, peppering his hair and leaving little white dots around the collar of his black shirt.

"heyyyy" Magnus chuckled, going to pinch up some more flour in his fingers when Alec grabbed his wrists playfully, softly grunting 'no, no, no you don't', they both laughed like little kids.

They gazed at each other for a sweet moment, their faces just inches apart until Magnus became aware that some people were staring and he remembered where they were.

He respectfully pulled away, smiling sweetly and stood back at his bench as Antoni got the rooms attention.

"Okay guys, we're gonna let our cookie dough rest in the fridge for a few minutes, so help yourselves to coffee and then we'll form our cookies and bake them" Antoni smiled, glancing around at his students.

"Coffee?" Alec asked as he swiped the flour dust from his hands.

"Sure" Magnus smiled and turned with a spin of his heels to walk towards the coffee tables.

Alec placed his hand tenderly on Magnus' lower back as he walked behind him, just a little closer than was necessary but it was cute, so Magnus didn't discourage him.

"Hey guys" Antoni smiled as he approached the pair of them as they made small talk and sipped their coffee.

Magnus had to stop himself from rolling his eyes. It wasn't that he didn't like Antoni, he did, but he was always hovering around Alec.

'Wait? Bane, are you jealous?' Magnus' mind raced and he felt a blush rise in his cheeks. 'You're Magnus Bane! You don't get jealous!' he scolded himself, embarrassed by the idea of it.

With that thought, he saw Antoni put his hand on Alec's arm as they shared a joke that Magnus didn't quite hear.

'Oh crap! I'm jealous! Fuck!' he screamed inside his own head.

"He clutched his white coffee mug in his hand, close against his chest as he watched these two hot guys flirt with each other, remembering the days when he would have stepped in between them and started flirting with the cuter one without a second thought.

A few minutes of this passed before Antoni remembered that they were in class and should probably get back to work.

"Okay everyone, so back to your benches and let's get our dough balls out of the fridge," he said with his hands clasped as he walked back towards the teachers counter.
Magnus tried his hardest not to send a look Antoni's way as he meandered back to his own workstation.

He and Alec didn't speak again for a few minutes. Alec had noticed the tension in Magnus' shoulders and couldn't figure out what had happened.

'What did I say?' Alec thought to himself as he pinched off pieces of dough and rolled them into little balls in his floured hands.

'Wait! Oh, no... Crap! He thinks I'm hot for teacher!' Alec thought, his eyes widening. He felt his stomach drop. 'No, no, no, I like this guy, I can't let him think that' Alec said to himself, stealing quick glances in Magnus' direction. 'Say something' he whispered to himself through gritted teeth.

"So you doing anything on Friday?" Alec asked and then wanted to punch himself in the face for the pathetic attempt at conversation.

"Working," Magnus said with a quick polite smile before getting back to his cookie sheet, spreading out the cookie balls evenly.

"Yeah?" Alec said, just scrambling desperately for anything to say, "Need a babysitter for the little one? I'll get Mum to bring Max over" he said.

"No it's fine, she comes to work with me on Fridays. Has her own little desk in my office and everything" he chuckled a little.

'This guy just gets more adorable by the minute' Alec thought to himself.

"Okay, how about you save me a seat at the bar then?" Alec asked, trying not to sound desperate, not that he was, but wanting to get his point across none the less.

"Yeah. Yeah maybe" Magnus smiled again, considering the idea. Maybe he was just being silly, they could be friends, right? That's all he should really be thinking about anyway.

Alec looked a little wounded by the 'maybe'

"I mean, of course. Yeah sure, I'll have a cold beer waiting" Magnus smiled before nudging Alec's shoulder with his own.

"It's a date" Alec smiled back, relaxing.

"No dates" Magnus said, quick and soft.

Alec was a little confused.

"Sorry, I just... I'm just trying to focus on the little lady right now, so um... no dates for a little while. But... friends?" Magnus said, sweet with a hint of apology in his tone, for both Alec and himself.

"No dates? That's cool" Alec shrugged, supportively. He could be a friend, he was a good friend. It would just be hard not to look at Magnus like he was a hot slice of pie that he wanted to devour. 'But hey, friends flirt sometimes, right?' he thought with a little cock of his eyebrow and a smirk.

Magnus was dying inside. Turning down this tall, hot, interesting guy was one of the hardest things he'd ever done. But it was the right thing to do..., right?
The next day;

"Hi, sweetie!" Maryse greeted her son as she walked in the front door, stopping to kiss her baby boy on the cheek.

"Hey Mum, hey Luke" Alec greeted them.

"S'up Player?" his stepdad, Luke said as he fist-bumped Alec's hand.

Luke always made Alec laugh, ever since he was a little kid, he'd always liked him. Alec's dad had moved to LA when he and Izzy were in high school while Max was just a baby. But Luke had been a family friend for a while and after Robert left, he and Maryse had grown close; they were married before Max's first birthday.

"Not that I'm not happy to see you but what are you guys doing here?" Alec asked as he slipped around the open counter into the kitchen to get them both a drink.

"We're just on our way into town to watch a Broadway show and thought we'd stop in. Seeing as I haven't even seen your new place yet" Maryse explained as she looked around.

"Yeah sorry about that" Alec said as he walked out from the kitchen holding 3 wine glasses and a bottle, "I just wanted to get the place perfect before I had you guys over" he added as he sat down on the couch beside Maryse, while Luke made himself comfortable in the armchair.

"Aw honey, that's sweet. Truthfully, I just missed seeing my baby" Maryse said as she cupped her chin with her fingers.

"Mum!" Alec pleaded with a chuckle.

"So how are you, sweetie? Are you getting enough sleep? Are you seeing anyone new?" Maryse asked, not holding back at all.

"I'm good, school's going good, work is fine and yes I'm getting enough sleep" Alec laughed. Her concern was sweet.

"So who's this guy that Isabelle tells me you've been taking cooking classes with?" Maryse asked with no shame.

Alec choked on his mouthful of crisp white wine.

"Damn it, can she not keep anything to herself?" Alec laughed when he'd swiped the drips of wine from his lips.

"Tell us about him," Maryse said with a bright encouraging smile.

"It's nothing. His name's Magnus, he lives upstairs with his little cousin that he's adopting and we're just friends" Alec explained to his slightly disappointed looking mother.

"You should invite the 2 of them over for Thanksgiving at our place. The more the merrier" Maryse said.

"I'm not really sur..." Alec started and then saw the 'I'm not taking no for an answer' look that his Mum was giving him.

"Okay, okay, I'll ask" he smiled with a slight roll of his eyes.
They chatted for another half hour about small things, nothing important really, just catching up on life, before Maryse and Luke had to go, or they'd miss the opening act.

They bid their goodbyes and Alec spent the rest of the evening finishing his course assignments on his laptop while watching a documentary on the history channel.

Every now and then he found himself daydreaming about the fun that he and Magnus had had in class yesterday and he found himself smiling and before he could stop it, he was picturing it all in his mind; he and Magnus holding hands, having dinner, seeing a movie, playing with Madzie and tucking her in to bed, cooking together and falling asleep next to each other.

The idea was beautiful and made him smile for a brief moment before he remembered what Magnus had said.

"Friends" he whispered to himself a little sadly.

Alec sighed with a tight-lipped smile as he pulled his feet down from the coffee table and close his laptop. He certainly didn't hate the idea of being friends with Magnus, he was a lot of fun, they got along like they'd known each other for years.

Alec shut off the TV and thought for a moment before taking his phone from his pocket and scrolling through his contacts.

He needed a little stress relief; he needed a hook-up.

"Hey Paul, it's Alec. How are you?" Alec said as his 'friend' answered the phone.

"Oh yeah? No man, it's cool, I'm happy for you" he smiled as Paul explained that he was now in a serious relationship. "Take care buddy, I'll see you later," he said with a smile before hanging up.

Alec scrolled a little more before pressing the call button again.

"Joey, hey, it's Alec" he chimed.

Unfortunately, Joey was out of town, so no luck there.

Alec thought for a moment while tapping his phone against his pouted lips. He smirked and scrolled once more through his phone contacts.

"Heyyy Zeke, it's Alec" he almost sang down the phone.

"You busy tonight? Wanna come over?" Alec asked, "No, no, I've got my own place now"

Zeke was around 30 minutes later and ripping Alec's shirt off like a caveman.

Alec didn't realise how badly he needed a hot, dirty, sweaty fuck until he and Zeke were between the sheets, going at it like a pair of horny rabbits. One thing was for sure, Alec knew exactly how to distract himself from his feelings.

--

The next day for Magnus was pretty routine; he took Madzie to school, went to work and spent the whole day prepping the bar for a big party booking for Wednesday night, then picked Madzie up, cooked some chicken and baked potatoes for dinner and they watched 'The Lion King' for the 50th time while they ate the cookies that Magnus had made the night before for dessert.
"So how's school going honey? Make any new friends?" Magnus asked the little one who was leaning against his side. He wrapped his arm around her; she was getting sleepy, which he knew meant she needed a cuddle.

"Yep" she said, "My best friend is called Beth" she explained.

"Aww that's great" Magnus smiled. He was so happy she was making friends and so proud of how well she was adjusting to her new life in New York.

"Did you make friends at your school?" Madzie asked, making Magnus chuckle. She referred to Magnus' cooking classes as his 'Food School'

"Yeah, they're all great. Do you remember Alec? I met him there" Magnus explained.

"He's a nice friend," Madzie said sleepily as she yawned a little, snuggling up to her Papa.

Magnus smiled and let her fall asleep against his side as he watched the rest of the movie. When it was over, he carried her carefully to her room and tucked her into bed with her little pink unicorn.

As he walked back out into the living room, he pulled his phone from his pocket and thought about texting Alec, but it was getting a little late, so he thought again.

Instead, he opened up his laptop and started looking into new design ideas for Pandemonium. He'd been thinking for a while about redecorating but wasn't sure which direction to head in. So he went to google to get some ideas.

He was finding some good stuff, but to be honest, wasn't really paying attention, it was just a distraction. All he kept wondering about was if he'd hurt Alec's feelings the day before or if he was just overthinking things and that Alec was just being a friend the whole time.

He closed his laptop and shuffled off to bed, falling into it fully clothed without even brushing his teeth.
Chapter 9 - For The First Time

Friday;
"Magnus come on, you say this guy is hot, sweet, funny... he sounds like a nice guy, why don't you wanna take it any further?" Raphael asked as he and Magnus got to work on prepping the bar for the usual busy Friday night crowd.

Magnus, who was getting the cash register ready didn't look up from what he was doing as he answered.

"That's just the thing. He is a nice guy. I don't wanna get into anything with him and then screw it all up when things start to get serious. I've got a daughter to focus on now, it's not about just me anymore" he explained as he counted the dollar bills in the drawer.

"You're scared," Raphael said, almost grunting as he lugged a crate of beer up onto the bar and started to load the green glass bottles into the fridge.

"I don't know... maybe" Magnus admitted with a slight shrug as he finished up what he was doing, without looking up and closed the drawer softly.

"I don't know, I just feel like I have two choices here, either I go all-in with this guy and give this 'grown-up relationship' thing a try, or I get a new friend that I really get along with and care about. And yeah I know it's the safer option to stay friends, but I just don't know if I'm in the right place emotionally right now" Magnus explained as he leaned back on the other side of the bar, crossing his arms in front of his body like he was building a shield.

"Ohh I see, so Cat and I aren't enough for you anymore?" Raphael smirked, shooting a wink in Magnus' direction.

"No" Magnus chuckled, "No, it's not that. It's just nice to broaden your horizons sometimes, you know? And hey, you'd like Alec" Magnus said as he walked around the bar and started to take down the stools and set them along the bar and around the tables.

"How about a friend with benefits?" Raphael smirked suggestively.

Magnus laughed.

"Oh I'd be lying if I said I hadn't thought about that," he said as he considered the potential once again, smirking slightly as he pictured wrapping his legs around Alec's waist and throwing his head back as Alec devoured the skin at the nape of his neck.

He shuddered with a little satisfaction.

Raphael just chuckled as he started loading the second crate of beer into the fridge.

"Just kiss the guy. You'll know what to do then. If you don't feel anything then it's still early enough in your friendship to let it blow over. But trust me, you don't wanna end up in the friend zone and then realise that you're head over heels in love later on" Raphael advised.

Magnus rolled his eyes with a grin. It was good advice really. Not that he would admit that to him just yet.

He pulled his phone from his pocket and decided to text Alec.
"Hey, got your seat saved and a beer on ice for you ;) x"

Alec texted back almost instantly;

"Thanks, cutie. See you tonight x"

Magnus blushed a little, smiling as he held his phone to his chest for a second after reading the text.

--

Alec snorted himself awake pretty late in the day, but it was his day off so he wasn't in any rush. He shuffled to the kitchen in just his form-fitting short black boxer briefs, rubbing at his sleepy eyes with the heel of his hand and then running his fingers through his messy hair.

Zeke had left early that morning, helping himself to a cup of coffee Alec had noticed as he saw the washed white coffee mug by the sink. He'd also left a clean mug by the coffee pot with a note, held down by the edge of the mug.

"Last night was great. Next time you wanna take your mind off another guy, just give me a call. Z x"

Alec smirked and moved the note aside to pour himself a cup of coffee. But as he smiled, somewhere deep down in his gut he felt a twinge, he felt dirty, he felt like he was diminishing his self worth one one-night-stand at a time.

He leant his butt back against the counter as he crossed his arm over his torso and held onto his steaming coffee mug and sipped tentatively.

"I need to stop doing this" Alec thought to himself as he stared off into space, feeling guilty and on the edge of some pretty deep emotions.

His lips curled in the corner as he started thinking about what his mother had suggested, about inviting Magnus to Thanksgiving. He mulled the thought over, thinking maybe he could test the waters with Magnus by asking him and Madzie to come along. Maybe. It could go horribly wrong too. He wasn't sure what to do.

He went over it the idea in his head, imagining sitting with his family and friends, opposite Magnus, stealing glances at him over the dinner table, sharing stories and anecdotes, spending time getting to know him over a drink or two.

Plus it would make his Mum and Sister so happy to see him settled into an adult relationship, happy with someone who was so sweet, kind and handsome. He knew that they would never say it to his face, but they were worried about him, they worried about him not thinking enough of himself to spend more than one night with the same person, never making that real connection that comes with getting to know someone, knowing their quirks and the hopes, their fears and their aspirations.

With that thought, his phone beeped on the counter beside him.

"1 Text from Magnus"

He smiled as he swiped his phone to unlock it and open the message.
"Hey, got your seat saved and a beer on ice for you ;) x"

Alec grinned, thinking maybe this was a sign, shoving him in the right direction.

'You know what you need to do Alec' he said to himself.

He set his coffee mug down, texting back immediately;

"Thanks, cutie. See you tonight x"

He smiled confidently as he sipped at his coffee again.

---

"Who's next please?" Magnus called out to the crowds of people squashed around the bar, waiting to get their drinks.

"I'll take a cold beer and the bartenders phone number" Alec flirted as he leant his forearms on the bar, leaning forward to catch Magnus' eye.

"Heyyy" Magnus said with a sweet, genuinely happy smile as he glanced between Alec's gorgeous face and the drawer of the cash register as he counted out changed for the previous customer. He closed the drawer and handed the other guy his change before turning around to the fridge and grabbing a cold bottle, twisting off the top and placing it on the beer mat in front of the barstool with a 'reserved' sign on it.

"Thanks" Alec smiled, slightly louder to be heard over the music.

Magnus touched the back of Alec's hand sweetly and said he would be back in a second.

Alec watched Magnus work like he was born for it; he was damn good at his job, a lot like Alec was. He was impressed by his confidence and how he sashayed around quickly, filling drink orders and mixing up cocktails like a pro.

After a few minutes, the initial crowd around the bar died down and Magnus excused himself while Raphael and Clary continued to serve any remaining customers and cleaned down the bar area.

He wrung his hands on the dishtowel that was usually slung over his shoulder as he walked towards the end of the bar where Alec was seated.

"Hey, sorry about that," Magnus said as approached, crossing his forearms and resting them on the bar as he leaned against it.

"No problem" Alec smiled before taking another sip of his beer.

"So how's it going?" Alec asked, feeling a little awkward after saying it like it was a lame thing to ask.

"Good, yeah. How's school going?" Magnus asked with a smile before taking a quick sip from his whiskey glass.

"Yeah it's good, a lot of papers and projects to finish before Christmas break but it's good," Alec said, happy that he hadn't let the conversation down before it really started.

"I took a few classes in archaeology in college if you're ever looking for a study buddy?" Magnus
suggested with a little grin. He was attempting to flirt a little, but being cautious with his approach; he liked spending time with Alec, he didn't want to scare him off.

"Yeah, that sounds great. Actually I have a project that I'm working on right now about European archaeology. Maybe tomorrow I could bring Max over for a play-date with Madzie and see if you could help me finish up my paper" Alec suggested, not shy at all, he wanted Magnus to know that he wanted to spend time with him.

Magnus looked a little taken back, but he certainly didn't hate the idea.

"Or not, I mean if you and the little lady are busy?" Alec tried to say before Magnus felt too pressured.

"No, no we're not busy" Magnus smiled, "Come on over around 6, I'll make a little dinner" he offered.

Alec decided not to ask Magnus just yet about thanksgiving. He didn't want to dive in headfirst. And if he didn't manage to build up the courage to ask, he would just tell his mother that Magnus already had plans.

The conversation was casual and a little flirty with smiles and a few light brushes of the back of their hands, or their fingertips. But their evening was a little chaotic, it was hard to be spending time together while Magnus worked. And boy did he work. Alec had underestimated just how busy Pandemonium could be on a Friday night but he knew the feeling all too well. It was like looking at the Monday morning rush at Java Jones, only Magnus' customers were a little more chaotic and 'merry' to say the least.

Alec took a sip of his beer as Magnus returned to the busy bar area again to help with the swarm of drunken, loud customers. As he lowered his bottle he saw a guy, a muscular, blonde, cocky looking guy, lean over the bar and slap Magnus on the ass as he leaned over to get a beer from the low fridge.

Magnus, not un-used to the unwanted and sometimes unwelcome attention from drunken guys and girls, stood up straight and rolled his eyes, turned and handed the guy his beer, gave him a 'don't touch me again' look and took the $10 bill from his hand, ringing him up and dropping the change back in his hand.

The guy, who was a regular, leered at Magnus with a filthy smirk.

"Oh come on beautiful, don't be a tease," he said, a little creepy.

He'd been coming in every Friday night for months now and every time, he would say or do something that he must have considered flirting and he obviously thought that he was gods gift because even after turning him down several times, he still thought Magnus wanted him. In his mind, all he had to do was wear Magnus down.

Alec could see the embarrassment and just a twinge of rage on Magnus' face as he turned away from the guy and Alec could feel his blood boiling; how dare someone touch him so aggressively without his permission.

Alec stood, picked up his beer bottle and made his way around the bar area, walking past the guy and through the swing door to behind the bar like he owned the place. He put his arm around Magnus' shoulder.

"Hey baby, sorry I'm late, how's it all going?" Alec asked before kissing Magnus' cheek and
making 'Don't fuck with me' eye contact with the creepy guy.

The guy stood slowly, looking like he was ready to knock Alec out.

It took Magnus a second to realise what Alec was doing, but when it dawned on him, he beamed on the inside; loving that Alec was the kind of guy that would do something like that.

He took the opportunity and ran with it, turning towards Alec, placing his hand on Alec's abs and standing just ever so slightly on the tips of his toes to plant a little kiss on Alec's mouth, which Alec reciprocated with a slight pout of his lips.

"Hi honey, how was work?" he asked, acting casual but chancing a quick glance at the creepy guy to see him rolling his eyes and shaking his head in what looked like disgust; like he couldn't believe that Magnus would be with this guy and not him.

Once the guy was gone, sadly not out of the bar, but at least, not in sight anymore, Magnus looked at Alec with so much thanks in his eyes but Alec still looked concerned as Magnus continued to work, taking orders and ringing up sales, he could tell he was a little shaken.

"Thank you Alexander," Magnus said, gratefully.

"No problem. Are you okay?" Alec asked with a slight frown as he leaned towards Magnus as he worked, trying to hear him over the din of the crowds.

"I'm okay" Magnus reassured him, with a little smile as he handed the next customer her vodka-tonic with lime.

"That guy is in here a lot. I'd kick him out, but I'd rather take his money" Magnus said with a little chuckle.

Alec smiled, brushing hand quickly and comfortingly over Magnus' shoulder.

"Seeing as I'm back here, do you want some help?" Alec asked, putting his open beer on the little counter space behind him and shrugging out of his black jacket.

"Uh yeah sure," Magnus said, in awe of how sweet Alec was being.

"Have you ever bartended before?" he asked as Alec turned back around and faced the crowd of people huddling around the bar.

"Not in a bar no, but I'm a barista, how different can it be?" he said, an equal amount of nervous and confident.

"Who's next?" Alec called.

Obviously he had to ask Magnus a few questions; where some things were, measurements for mixed drinks and of course prices. He was good with the register; they had a similar one at JJs, so it was easy enough to pick up after a few transactions.

After a while, the crowd died down again they were able to breathe, sighing in relief and leaning their butts back against the back counter as Clary wiped down the bar with a rag and cleaned around the beer taps and Raphael loaded glasses into the dishwasher under the bar.

Alec looked around happily at the crowd, proud of his efforts.

Magnus could see this. He smiled, admiring Alec's smile and pride.
"Come on" Magnus said, tilting his head towards the door behind the bar that led through to the office and storage room.

Alec picked up his green beer bottle, not that it had much left in it and followed Magnus down the short hallway to the office.

The din of the music and the people died down once the bar door closed behind them and Magnus grabbed a whiskey bottle and 2 glasses from the shelf in his office before sitting on the edge of his desk and handing a glass to Alec.

"Thanks," Alec said, accepting the glass and holding it still for Magnus to pour in a generous serving of whiskey.

Magnus then poured his own glass and set the bottle down on the desk, just beside him to his left. Alec turned and sat his butt down on the desk just to the right of Magnus, clinking their glasses in cheers before taking a sip. Magnus certainly had a taste for strong whiskey; Alec winced at the burn that ran down his throat.

"Thank you again for what you did," Magnus said, leaning just ever so slightly into Alec for a second.

"No problem" Alec smiled. "I guess you must get that a lot" he added.

Magnus tilted his head with a slight frown in question.

"Guys hitting on you all the time" Alec explained as he sipped again.

"Sometimes" Magnus shrugged, just a tiny twinge of embarrassment, shown by the pink blush in his cheeks. "But that guy has been trying his luck for months. Hopefully, he'll back off now"

Magnus smiled, making eye contact with Alec.

An intense, yet soft, look lingered between the 2 of them for a few seconds, but it seemed longer.

"And that kiss" Alec smiled, bright and beautiful "I wasn't expecting that"

Magnus sipped his drink, licking his bottom lip a little as he lowered the glass. His teeth grazed his lip softly as he thought about kissing Alec again. Only this time it would be for no one else's benefit other than himself. A real kiss. A little tongue maybe.

Alec's flirty smile softened as he admired Magnus' features; his deep brown eyes, rimmed with sleek black eyeliner, his soft, golden complexion and those sweet, beautiful, totally kissable lips.

"Well" Magnus smiled, a little coy as he lost eye contact for just a second as he glanced down as his glass, "Can't blame a guy for taking his opportunity," he said, looking back up into Alec's beautiful eyes.

Alec turned, placing his glass down on the desk behind him before reaching over to softly take Magnus' glass from his hand and put it beside his own.

Magnus watched Alec's hand move the glass, but it was like everything was moving in slow motion.

Alec's eyes moved from Magnus' eyes to his lips and then back again a couple of times before his caressed Magnus' cheek with his hand and leaned in to kiss him.
Magnus' heart was beating a million miles an hour as both of Alec's lips closed around his bottom one. He took a small sharp breath in through his nose and reciprocated with ease, letting the kiss got for another second or two before he brushed softly at the soft, wet part of Alec's bottom lip with his tongue.

Alec's heart raced too as he realised that the attraction was mutual. His thumb ran over Magnus' cheekbone tenderly and he felt Magnus' hand on the side of his neck, fingering the ends of his hair as their kiss deepened, their tongues gliding against one another.

It was a perfect first kiss. Not rushed or so intense that it was fumbling, but soft and beautiful in that breathless kind of way.

Magnus felt like the decision to kiss Alec back was one of the best he had ever made. Why had he been over-thinking things? Why not just throw caution to the wind sooner and taken a chance because boy, oh boy, this guy was a good kisser. But more importantly than that, he knew that Alec was a good guy, with a good heart and good values.

He shuffled a little closer, letting Alec pull him into him by his hip, his slacks gliding along the desk.

Alec's head was swimming. This was a different kind of kiss to anything he had ever experienced. It was so soft and tender and Magnus' lips so sweet and damp that he could imagine sinking his tongue deeper into his mouth, but didn't want to push his luck too far, too fast.

Magnus pulled back after a few more seconds, running his hand up Alec's wrist and lacing their fingers together, looking a little coy and lost for words. It wasn't like him to be shy around anyone, this was a whole new feeling. He liked it.

"I'm sorry, was that... was that okay?" Alec asked softly, a little nervous, tilting his head to watch Magnus. But he knew in the back of his mind that Magnus wouldn't have kissed him back if it wasn't.

"Yeah," Magnus said quickly, "That was just uh... a little unexpected" he smiled.

Alec leaned forward and nipped a couple more sweet little kisses into Magnus' lips. He was fighting the urge to stand and lead Magnus over the beaten up old couch in the corner and continue what they started, but, again, he didn't want to go all-in too fast.

"Boss can we have a hand with the..." Raphael started as he pushed the ajar door fully open and walked in. He stopped in his tracks just as he'd seen Magnus' head tilt back when Alec had started to run soft butterfly kisses along his jaw.

"Oh God, never mind, my bad," he said quickly, turning and leaving, pulling the door fully shut behind him.

Alec and Magnus froze for a second before bursting into a mildly embarrassed chuckle against each other's cheeks.

"I'll uh, I'll be back in a second" Magnus said apologetically as he stood and walked towards the door, hoping to god that it wasn't a huge problem so that he could get back to his office and continue his date with Alec.

Was it a date? He hadn't realised it until now. Had it started as one? He hadn't thought of it that was at the time but he supposed that it was. He hoped that their first date, even their first kiss would be somewhere a little more romantic than his dusty office.
"Hey, what's up?" Magnus asked as he opened the door that led to the bar area.

Raphael looked like he was still blushing from what he'd walked in on.

"It's uh, it's just getting a little crazy out here, can you give us a hand for a second?" Raphael asked, smirking at his boss, "if we can pull you away that is?" he added cheekily.

"Shut up" Magnus chuckled at a slight whisper as he helped mix drinks while Raph and Clary continued to take drink orders.

Back in Magnus' office, Alec walked around a little, passing time, glancing around and pacing as he finished his drink and poured another, topping up Magnus' glass too. He sat down on the couch and noticed a little framed picture of Magnus & Madzie sat on the bookshelf beside him. It was sweet. He knew Magnus had only had Madzie with him for a few months now, but he thought it was so sweet how well they'd bonded and how amazing a dad he was to her given that he'd pretty much been a bachelor most of his life.

He liked Magnus more than he had admitted to himself. He worried that maybe he should have taken him somewhere for a nice date before kissing him for the first time. To a nice restaurant or a picnic, even just for coffee. He really didn't have as much as experience at being romantic as he thought Magnus deserved and that made him nervous.

He thought for a moment and wondered if Magnus would be finishing any time soon and maybe he could take him on a romantic late-night walk through the city.

He decided to head back out to the bar and see if there was anything he could do to help Magnus finish early.

Just as he came through the door, he walked straight into Magnus, who was just on his way back to the office.

"Hey," Alec said sweetly, a smile instantly finding its way to his lips.

"Hey, I was just coming back. What's it is? Are you leaving?" Magnus said, casually resting his hand on Alec's hip, appreciating the soft silky feel of his cashmere sweater.

"I just wanted to see what time you get off tonight," Alec asked.

"I mean things should die down in about a half-hour, I can probably leave these guys to it after that" Magnus explained, tilting his head towards Clary and Raphael. "Why?" he asked.

"Just thought maybe I could walk you home. It's on the way for me anyway" Alec joked with a smile and a fake eye-roll.

Magnus laughed a little. "Yeah, that sounds good, I'll finish up what I need to out here and meet you out front in a few minutes?" Magnus suggested.

"Sure," Alec said, leaning in to kiss Magnus' cheek before he grabbed his jacket from the coat rack and headed out front where he could get some cool refreshing air. He regretted not bringing a scarf though, there was a bitter chill in the air.

Alec scrolled through social media on his phone and checked messages, killing time.

He decided to post a status update for the first time in a while; "Best night out in months - Feeling Happy" he smiled a genuine smile as he posted the update and within a few seconds was getting comments on it from friends and family.
He decided not to read them just yet. It would mostly be questions from Isabelle and his mother. And Jace asking why he didn't invite him.

Alec turned and checked his reflection in the window of the bar, setting his hair in the perfect place and adjusting his collar, as a last thought, he reached into his pocket and popped a mint for a bit of fresh breath. He caught sight through the window of Magnus grabbing his coat and scarf from the rack and head towards the door.

"Ready to go?" Magnus asked Alec as he came through the door.

"Ready to go," Alec said with a little shiver.

"Are you okay Alexander? You look flushed" Magnus said with concern. He stepped forward and took Alec's hand. "Alec, you're freezing!" he said, shocked that he had suggested walking home. "Let's get a cab. You could come over and we could talk? I make a mean hot chocolate" Magnus suggested sweetly.

Alec chuckled, "Yeah that sounds good", his bottom lip shivering a little.

Magnus hailed down a cab and held the door open for Alec to slide along the bench seat in the back.

It wasn't a long ride back to their building and they sat in comfortable silence on the ride there, Magnus holding Alec's freezing hand in his own to warm him up, he even took off his scarf and wrapped it around Alec's broad shoulders.

"Wait? Where's the little lady tonight?" Alec asked as he and Magnus made their way to the elevator to head up to the 3rd floor.

"My friend Cat is babysitting tonight. Her and Raphael have been a god-send since Madzie came to live with me, they're amazing" Magnus explained.

"That's so sweet. I wish my friends were actually that helpful" Alec chuckled.

Magnus laughed.

"They're more like family really" he explained, "My parents aren't with us anymore and I don't have any biological siblings, so they're more like a big sister and a little brother to me" he smiled nostalgically.

Magnus unlocked the front door and came in to find Cat on the couch, reading a magazine, obviously Madzie was tucked up in bed.

"Hey beautiful" he greeted her as he took off his coat and hung it on the coat rack by the door and dropped his keys in the bowl.

"Hey handsome" she replied before looking up from her magazine, which she closed a second later and then looked up to see both her friend and a beautiful man stood right behind him.

"Everything okay? Is Madzie asleep?" he asked.

"Yeah, she's in bed. She's had a bath, homework all done and we even had time for a story" she smiled, proud of her amazing babysitting skills "Hi, I'm Caterina," she said to Alec with a casual little wave.
"Oh, I'm sorry this is Alexander" Magnus explained.

"Just 'Alec' is fine" Alec said as he extended his hand to Cat, who took it and, like a gentleman, he placed a little kiss on the back of her hand before taking off Magnus' scarf and his own jacket, turning to hang them on the rack too.

Cat looked a Magnus with a wide-eyed look while Alec's back was turned that just said 'I approve'

"Well I'll leave you guys to it," Cat said, grabbing her own jacket and wanting to make herself scarce.

"Thanks, Kit-Cat, I'll see you Sunday?" Magnus asked, leaning in to kiss her cheek.

"No problem sweetie. Yeah, call me in the morning" she finished with a wink and headed out the door.

Magnus turned back to see Alec standing in the middle of the living room, hands a little nervously stuffed into his jeans pockets.

"So..." he started. "Hot Chocolate?" he offered.

"Sounds like heaven" Alec sighed, watching Magnus walk over to the kitchenette.

Magnus grabbed one of his new small saucepans and poured in some milk, heating it gently on the stovetop and breaking in some milk chocolate. He stopped stirring long enough to grab a couple of white mugs from the cabinet and set them on the counter.

They made small talk for a minute while Magnus finished up their drinks and poured them into the mugs.

"Thanks," Alec said, accepting the steaming mug and savouring the hot feeling in his hands.

They headed to the living room and sat down on the couch, cosy and comfortable as they faced each other.

"So do you think maybe we should talk?" Alec said

"Maybe tomorrow," Magnus said with a flirtatious smile before he set his mug down on the coffee table.

Alec frowned a little, tilting his head in question but he got the hint when Magnus shuffled a little closer to him.

Alec took the green light and set his mug down before diving back into the kiss that they'd started earlier, starting where he'd left off, with his lips on Magnus' neck.

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