These Violent Delights Have Violent Ends

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Summary

11. Romeo and Juliet AU

Since they banished demons out of their world, Downworlders and Shadowhunters don't have a anyone to fight but each other. In the midst of failed negotiations and rising tensions, Alec Lightwood meets Magnus Bane, and everyone meets their fate.

Part One: Where Everything Is Good And Bright And Love Brings Hope, Strength, Light.
Part Two : Where Everything Goes To Hell
Part Three : Where It Shall End

Notes

So, I finally publish the first part of this thing. This AU (from that list http://jadeandonyx.tumblr.com/post/114779420062/fanfiction-prompts, 11. Romeo & Juliet AU) clearly got away from me. It'll be something like 25k long.

WARNING: This is Romeo & Juliet inspired in more way than one. This first part is mostly Angst free, but it won't be the case for the second part. I'm not joking, there will be
death and tears and all that.

If anyone knows it, I think I've been influenced in this by the Bollywood version of the play, Ramleela. This movie is awesome. This was also inspired by the alternate universe of This World Inverted, in the sense that there is no more demons, but unlike the serie, it's quite recent and the Shadowhunters are still there. It's still set in the modern world. The gang is a bit older then in the show, in their twenties.

Thanks to NightChanger for the correction, any mistakes remaining are my own because I couldn't resist changing it AGAIN. I have to post or it will never be over.

Well, enjoy!

Russian translation available [here](#), thanks to bluestbluetardis!
Chapter 1

Jace hissed with an angry tone. Isabelle followed his gaze to the entrance of the room and rolled her eyes.

"They're invited idiot. They're allowed to be here."

"They usually never come."

"They're still invited."

"Don't cause a scene," warned their mother when she passed them. "This is a celebration, and we are the hosts. Be respectful."

"I'll be if they are," muttered Jace.

"You'll be, that's it," answered Maryse, menacing. Jace agreed reluctantly. Isabelle and Alec sighed – his blood ran too hot for his own good.

"Actually," added Maryse with a devious grin she clearly passed on to Isabelle, "go greet them."

"What?" asked Jace, outraged.

"It's an order. Greet our new guests, and I advise you to be careful how you address them."

Jace didn't dare argue with her and followed his siblings, dragging his feet.

The newcomers were a group of Downworlders, and everyone had noticed them. Well, they weren't doing anything to be discreet - there was three warlocks, their demonic marks clearly visible, and two vampires, not any less noticeable amongst the Nephilim. The party was celebrating the one hundred years anniversary of sealing demons out of their world, so they had the right to be here for the role Downworlders had played into it. That didn't mean they were well received. The Lightwood siblings made their way towards them.

"The greeting committee is on its way," commented Magnus, seeing three young Shadowhunters approaching them.

"Greeting or escorting out," muttered Ragnor. "I still don't get what we're doing here."

"We're invited," supplied Magnus.

"That doesn't mean we should have come. We never do."

"We're still invited."

"So much fresh and pure blood. It's exciting," purred Camille at their side. Ragnor cast her a warning look.
"It's not for you."

"Calm down dear. It's a metaphor. Can't I make new friends?"

He didn't dignify that with an answer but glared at Magnus, as if he was responsible for Camille's antics.

"You kind of are," peeped Catarina at his side, always perceptive. "You're the one who invited her."

"What's the deal with this anyway? I thought you were done," asked Ragnor loudly. Camille gritted his teeth.

"I'm right here, goat."

"I really don't care, vulture."

"Stop this," ordered Catarina with a firm tone. "You can fight all you want when we're not surrounded by people who're only waiting for a reason to attack us."

"Good evening, and welcome," said the girl Shadowhunter when she reached them. Her smile was bright and sincere, if a little too exaggerated. "I'm Isabelle Lightwood, and those are my brothers, Alec and Jace. We're hosting this event. I'm glad you could come."

This was probably a lie, but she was putting up a good front. Catarina smiled politely.

"Thank you," she answered mildly. "We hope to enjoy the festivities. It won't be a problem right?"

The blonde one at her side opened his mouth to say something, but his sister elbowed him sharply. He spat an insult.

"Not at all. Please, have fun."

They all doubted they would, but they nodded anyway. Camille turned to Magnus in hope of tempting him with a drink, but his attention was turned toward the third Nephilim who hadn't said anything. They were studying each other carefully. She knew that look on Magnus's face. She felt anger rise inside her.

"I'm going to dance," she declared, before promptly leaving them to get lost in the crowd. Raphael made to follow her, but Catarina stopped him.

"Let her be. She can fend for herself, and she knows we won't help her if she causes trouble."

"I don't like it," he muttered darkly. He had no trust in the head of their clan. No love either. She was dangerous.

"We'll leave you to it then," said Isabelle, and they were gone. Magnus followed the tallest one until the crowd swallowed him too.

"It goes for you too, Magnus," warned Catarina when she caught him staring. "Don't cause any trouble. It's bad enough you dragged us here. The situation between Downworlders and Shadowhunters is tense enough as it is."

"I promise I'll work for peace," he answered with a boyish grin. She rolled her eyes.

"I'm sure you will."
Alec lost his siblings as soon as he could to escape the party. He really didn't like this kind of event. He didn't like crowds, nor loud places and strangers, so really there was nothing for him back there. Fortunately, everyone was in the reception room and the rest of the Institute was fairly empty. Hodge was probably hiding in the library, even more uncomfortable than Alec in this kind of setting, and the youngest ones were already in bed. He figured he would check on Max later – the boy was surely reading in secret instead of sleeping - but for now he sat on the stairs leading to the bedroom floor and let out a long sigh. He could hear the barest echoes of the music and conversation, but it was peaceful here, calm. He let himself relax.

Until he heard footsteps in the corridor.

He was going to shun anyone who was coming to disturb him, pretending it was off limit for guests or something, when he recognized the cat's eyes and handsome face of the warlock from earlier. Words caught in his throat and before he knew it, the man was in front of him. Alec was sitting on the third step of the stairs, the man was towering over him, with a playful smile and curiosity in his eyes.

And he really was handsome.

Which was a terrible thing to think.

"Are you hiding?"

His voice was deep, playful. Alec blinked.

"What?"

"Are you hiding out there? Should I leave you to it?"

Alec had the sentiment the man wouldn't leave, even if he told him to. That's probably why he answered:

"No. You can hide with me."

It was a terrible, terrible thing. But the man smiled and Alec was mesmerized. He promptly forgot about it.

"I'm Magnus Bane," he said, holding a hand to shake. "Alec, that's it? Short for Alexander?"

"Yeah."

"Well, Alexander, it is a pleasure to meet you."

And then, the man brought the hand he still had in his to his lips, and kissed it.

Alec reddened all the way to his hair, and then burst out laughing.

"That was... ridiculous," he managed to say through his embarrassed laugh. "Does that really work on anyone?"

Magnus didn't take offense. He was smiling more openly now.

"Well it depends. It certainly works as a tension breaker."
Alec's laugh subdued at that, but he couldn't stop smiling.

"I guess it does," he admitted. Magnus had beautiful eyes.

"You can sit with me," he added, feeling bold, surprising the other man.

"Aren't you afraid to fraternize with a Downworlder?" he asked, only half joking.

"I was told to be a good host," Alec answered, tone serious. "And you were invited."

He didn't know where this sudden assurance came from, but Magnus didn't have to know that.

"I shall judge your hosting skills then," he declared before sitting next to him on the stairs. Alec chuckled softly.

Magnus hadn't talked like this with a stranger in a very long time.

He hardly ever met any new and interesting people anymore. He knew all the Downworlders of New York, he probably knew all the warlocks in the world, now that they were no more demons to give birth to new ones. He had known most of his friends for decades or centuries, they were bound to fall short on new topics of conversation.

He didn't know what it was with that boy, but he never wanted him to stop talking.

Alec was the eldest son of the family running the Institute, and as such, he had much pressure on his shoulders and few friends around him. The persons he seemed closest to were his siblings, and that was about it. He had already a lot of responsibilities for his young age. He was an ambassador. And he believed in peace. Magnus had noticed it more and more in the newest generation. Even when they had come up together to definitely seal demons out of their world, Downworlders and Shadowhunters had never managed to be truly at peace with each other. The Nephilim were warriors and the vampires and werewolves, even the faeries, were naturally territorial and inclined to fight. But the new comers, Raphael and his lieutenant, Luke and his, and now Alec and some of his kind, they didn't want to fight. They wanted peace, truly. For Magnus, it was a wonder.

Alec was passionate and kind. They lost track of time, talking and laughing, sharing something they didn’t recognize but didn’t want to lose regardless.

It was a terrible thing that was happening, but Alec was so beautiful, Magnus couldn't bring himself to care.

Isabelle had told the Downworlders she would find their missing friend to prevent them from wandering around the Institute. They may have been more or less well received at the celebration, but it was over now, and sadly things were back to usual, meaning it could escalate into a fight very quickly.

She was busy hoping he hadn't been gutted somewhere, when she stumbled on a scene she thought she'd never witness in her lifetime.

Alec was talking to a handsome stranger, and he was laughing. She was so surprised she stayed motionless for a bit. They hadn't notice her, so she observed, astonished, her closed off and ever so serious brother trying not to laugh too hard at whatever the warlock had said. They were sitting
close to each other on the stairs, bent toward each other as if to share secrets, lost in their own world. It was both beautiful and painful to watch, and she interrupted them quickly.

"Everyone is leaving," she announced loudly when she walked toward them. "Your friends are waiting for you," she said to the warlock. He nodded with a smile and got up, Alec following suit.

"It's pretty late indeed, I hadn't realized," he said carelessly. Alec looked pleased. Isabelle felt like she was intruding.

"I can find my way back," he said to them. "Goodnight, Alexander. It was a pleasure," he said, extending a hand. Alec took it. They were completely ignoring her.

"The pleasure was all mine," her brother answered, and she had no doubt believing it to be true. Their hands and gaze stayed locked for an impossibly long time, before the warlock finally turned and walked away. Isabelle looked at her brother gazing after him, and she felt the violent urge to shake him out of it.

"Alec," she called, and her firmness caught his attention. He turned toward her. She hated being the one to wipe the smile from his face, but she had to wake him up.

"Please be careful," she said. He frowned.

"I know," he answered. "I know."

"Where the hell were you?" pestered Ragnor on their way back, but nothing seemed able to alter Magnus’s good mood.

"Socializing," he answered simply.

"I was too," said Camille with a predatory smile.

"I hope you didn't do any damage."

Raphael was looking at Camille with a worried look. Catarina was more preoccupied by Magnus.

"No," they answered in the same innocent tone.

They were probably going to regret that night, they reflected darkly.

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"I hate those stupid meetings," complained Jace for the hundredth times that day, prompting Alec and Isabelle to roll their eyes in synch.

“Really? I couldn’t tell, you hide it so well,” answered the girl, sarcastically.


“How long is it going to last? To say I could be training or doing about anything else. This is pointless anyway."

“Negotiating Accords to guarantee peace isn’t pointless,” Alec said angrily, fed up with his
brother’s immaturity. Jace was going to answer when the door to the meeting room opened. Their father made a gesture for Alec to come in.

“I guess they’re at the voting part of the process. Don’t worry Jace, the big guys are going to talk some more and then you can go back to play at home and eat candy like a good little five year old.”

Jace’s outraged answer was cut short by the door closing on Alec’s back.

He wasn’t the only one to join the meeting just now: Shadowhunters and Downworlders both were represented by council members, but the actual decision voting extended to their seconds in command. He nodded to Raphael Santiago, Lilly Chen and Maia Roberts, the only vampires and werewolves he knew, and when his eyes traveled to the rest of the crowd, he noticed familiar faces on the warlock’s side. Namely, the ones who had come to the party last week. Namely, Magnus Bane.

Alec couldn’t help but look at him discretely, and he didn’t really pay attention to what was going on, but, in his defense, it’s because he was used to it. As much as he hated to admit it, Jace was right, in a way. It was pointless. Not the intention, but the way it was done: regularly they would all meet, Nephilim, werewolves, warlocks, faeries, vampires, for long and boring meetings dragging on and on, where each parties tried to make its interest prevail, and where nothing was ever done. Everyone stayed firmly rooted in their position, and it made him feel both angry and a little desperate.

Vampires wanted human blood, it was denied.

Werewolves wanted to run free in some territories, denied.

Faeries wanted to mingle with mundanes for their celebrations like they used to, denied.

Warlocks wanted to be left out and stay away from all this, denied.

Shadowhunters wanted their authority to extend to all, Downworlders included, and for their justice to apply to them too, denied.

And deep down, Alec knew it, everyone wanted to fight. Denied. For now.

Stable peace wouldn’t be achieved today either.

The meeting was adjourned, with everybody wary and angrier than before it, and they all left the meeting room to go back to their own territories. The fact that this always took place at the Institute didn’t help the matter: the Shadowhunters stubbornly refused to set foot to any of the Downworlders stronghold. Alec didn’t understand the mindset of the eldest, the ones in charge, no matter the side. To him, they were acting like children. His parents presided this as heads of the Institute, and at least they weren’t as thick headed as some others, but they still couldn’t do much. No one ever agreed on anything. It was infuriating.

He was amongst the last one to exit the council room, but someone grabbed him by the arm before he was out of the door. He turned back to meet Magnus’s cat’s eyes staring at him.

"Hello,” he said, coming up short on anything better.

“It’s a pleasure to see you again, Alexander,” said Magnus softly, and somehow, Alec believed it was. Magnus looked like a flirt, a seducer, but Alec was good at reading people, especially at telling if they were lying or pretending. Izzy called it his seventh sense – he had never dared to ask
her what she thought was the sixth one.

“Likewise,” he answered, and he meant it. “I wasn’t hoping on seeing you again so soon.”

“As you should have. I don’t usually bother with that kind of thing.”

“Why did you come today then?”

“Can’t you guess?”

This was bad, Alec realized. Sure, they were at peace, technically, but there was no love lost between Shadowhunters and Downworlders, and, good terms or not, it certainly wouldn’t sit well with anyone to see them flirt so shamelessly.

“I’m afraid I don’t know how to get out of here. See me out?” asked Magnus, extending an arm. This was a terrible idea.

Alec took it.

“Let’s go.”

Magnus could see the conflict in the young Shadowhunter’s head, but he could also guess the boy had no wish to fight against himself. If Magnus was a more reasonable and strong person, he would get away from him, himself, but he was not, and this was too good not to enjoy. He had been alive for a long time. He knew you didn’t actually meet that many people with whom you really clicked, with whom something happened, the moment you met. He had no idea what it was, what made the boy special, but he was drawn to him, almost physically. He didn’t want to stay away.

“Why don’t you usually come?” asked Alec. His tone was relaxed, but Magnus noticed they were going through narrow corridors and empty rooms. No one was on their path, a sensible choice from the boy. He was probably much more reliable than Magnus himself.

“I find those little meetings to be extremely tedious and entirely without results. I grew bored of the same outcome, year after year. Nothing ever changed.”

“But at least it doesn’t get worse either.”

“A meager consolation. You really believe in what is being done there, don’t you?”

“I do. At least I want to believe in what could be achieved. Now I can’t argue on the useless front. It’s so frustrating.”

“It used to rile me up too, but I let it go.”

“I don’t want to give up on it. I’ll be head of the Institute someday. I’ll have some real power.”

Magnus said nothing. He was oddly touched by the boy’s determination, but then again, Alec had way less time than him to dwell on the matter, and less time to get disappointed. He truly had been hopeful once, but it was a long time ago, and nothing had changed since then.

“Where are you taking me?” he asked to stray the conversation on a happier note. They were walking up a flight of stairs. “I’m pretty sure the exit is down there.”

“Do you want to leave so bad?” asked Alec and Magnus was startled by his smile, both playful and
shy, his eyes laughing, focused on him like they could see nothing else.

“Not at all,” he managed to whisper in response.

“Then trust me.”

It seemed like a simple enough thing to say, but they both knew it meant far more than those simple words. How could there be trust between them? How could there be anything but old grudge and suspicion?

And yet.

They went up and up, climbed more and more steps, until Magnus was fairly convinced they had reach the top of the building. Then they climbed some more. Alec pushed a heavy wooden door at the top of the last stairs, carved with leaves and flowers, and ushered him inside.

They found themselves in a large, bright space, with a high glass ceiling and rows of trees and flowers breathing a clean, fresh smell.

“A greenhouse? How romantic of you,” teased Magnus, but he was enchanted. The place seemed well tended and healthy, with bright fruits and berries crowding thick branches, sweet smelling flowers of various colors and shape lining the alleyways.

“Who’s doing all this?”

“Our instructor, Hodge, mostly. He grows medicinal and healing herbs, magical ingredients too actually, I know he supplies some to you.”

“He does. I had no idea he grew it himself though.”

“I… have my hand in it too, actually.”

“Really?”

“I like it here. No one ever comes, it’s peaceful, quiet. I work on the plants, I tend to them and watch them grow. It’s nice to work for nurturing life for a change.”

“Have you ever killed a demon?” asked Magnus, curious. There was still a few left, but they were growing rarer and rarer. The last ones who were in the wrong dimension when the bridge between them was closed. Alec looked terribly sad at this and he averted this gaze.

“No.”

“Then…”

“Downworlders.”

Magnus frowned.

“Rogue werewolves, a few years ago, I don’t know if you remember. They wreaked havoc in Brooklyn, killed a bunch of mundanes, turned some others.”

“I remember.”
“I’ve been trained to fight all my life, even though we barely have any reason to now. But the Shadowhunters are set on their ways. I think that’s why they send us the young each time there is this kind of trouble. They’re trying to give us… a taste for it, I guess. As if we couldn’t be good at anything else.”

Magnus answered nothing at that, because frankly, he believed they couldn’t. The Nephilim culture and way of life revolved entirely around fighting, and a few decades had done nothing to make them reflect on the way to change that.

“Well, you’re good at gardening for a start,” he answered, feeling the absurd urge to comfort the boy, to chase that serious look from his face. He succeeded, mostly. Alec relaxed a bit, a small smile playing on his lips.

“And it is kind of romantic too,” he added, changing the subject and the atmosphere between them. Magnus was suddenly very aware they were surrounded by trees and flowers, completely alone, and standing very close to each other, lost in each other’s eyes.

Alec was the one to shy away first. He turned on his heel toward the nearest flowers.

“Do you know what those are?” he asked, wincing at his own sudden reluctance. He felt on edge, like the moment was fragile, ready to break at the first mistake. He didn’t want to remember why this was an incredibly bad idea, he didn’t want the world to catch up on them yet. This was innocent enough for now, but he had the sensation it could change quickly. He had always been reasonable, the sensible one, and he had never wanted to go against it so badly in his life.

Magnus went with it, asking questions and listening to Alec exposing his limited knowledge about the plants and their property. It was nice, but frustrating at the same time. They were exchanging meaningless information at a respectable distance from one another, and Alec was the one to put it there but he didn’t know how to cross it again now.

Until his eyes laid on the next flowers on their path, and he got an idea. But would he dare? He had few doubts that his attention would be ill-received – Magnus wasn’t exactly subtle – but still, he was unsure. Isabelle had warned him to be careful, and she was right. However they were alone in there, no one was coming for them. Would they have another chance? And really, what was the harm? If anyone had anything to say on the matter, it would only highlight their own hypocrisy and the failure of the friendship between the races. They weren’t doing anything wrong. Frowned upon, surely, but not wrong.

How wrong could it possibly be when Magnus was smiling at him.

“How wrong could it possibly be when Magnus was smiling at him.

“Do you know anything about the language of flowers?” he asked suddenly.

“I know my share,” answered the warlock cautiously. Alec bent down to pick a flower carefully, and presented it to the man with a small smile.

“Tulip?”

“Variegated.”

Magnus eyes widened and for a moment Alec thought he had overstepped, but, to his great surprise and infinite delight, Magnus actually blushed slightly.

“I’m the one who should be telling you that,” the warlock said while he rested a hand on Alec’s
cheek, thumb brushing under his eye.

“I found yours to be entrancing,” Alec said simply.

How could he say that so easily? Well, because he couldn’t know what effect it had on Magnus. He bears the demon in his eyes, they had always made others uncomfortable, especially Shadowhunters, who couldn’t look past it. Alec had leaned slightly into his hand and was looking at him with an intensity that made him shiver. He was crushing the poor flower in his other hand without even realizing it. It was hard to notice anything other than that beautiful man staring right at him, eyes alive with a cluster of different emotions, the hint of a smile softening his face. Magnus knew he was hungry for love. He was definitely done with Camille, to his friends’ relief, because he knew that’s what she could never give to him. They could have eternity together, sure, but what kind of eternity? Flicking emotions, inconsistent feelings, careless attachment. That’s not what he was after. He wanted more.

More intense, more passionate, more real.

He wasn’t sure if they were leaning forward or nor. Maybe they were still as statues, maybe they were irrepressibly attracted to one another like magnets. He made the mistake of letting his eyes flicker to the man’s lips, which didn’t go unnoticed.

Then the door opened abruptly, and it was over. But to Magnus great pleasure, Alec didn’t jerk away and act like a guilty husband in front of his wife. He took a measured step back and lifted his head gently to leave the cradle of Magnus’s hand, and he was still standing closer than strictly appropriate when he turned his gaze to the door with a frown.

Magnus turned too, only to be greeted with the unwelcomed sight of Alec’s brother Jace, knuckles white on the doorframe, looking angry.

“What is it?” asked Alec first, looking annoyed at the interruption. Magnus didn’t think he would be so unperturbed. It was hot.

“We’ve been looking for you. Hodge wants us in the training room. And Mom will want to debrief the day with you. Well, not all of the day, I guess,” he added with a dirty look to Magnus. The warlock made a case to look supremely unimpressed. Alec turned back to him.

“Let’s go then,” he said, and Magnus liked to think he heard the same disappointment he himself felt in the young man’s voice. They left the greenhouse, passing Jace without a glance at him, and went all the way downstairs to the front door.

“Well thank you, for the tour,” said Magnus on his way out, locking eyes with Alec one last time.

“You’re welcome.”

“See you soon, hopefully,” concluded Magnus. Alec smiled but said nothing, looking unsure again, and Magnus felt his watchful gaze on his back while he left the Institute.

Alec pointedly avoided Jace and his disapproving glare. He couldn’t bring himself to care about his brother’s opinion. It was misplaced anyway: he hadn’t any intention of pursuing things more seriously with Magnus. There was too many things at stake, he couldn’t afford to be so reckless.
But then when he undressed that evening, he noticed something on the pocket of his sweater. It was a card, printed with a phone number, “Call me” scrawled in elegant loops just below. There was a flower too. Snowdrop.

Hope.

Camille had been to the meeting too. She never did, and Raphael had thought maybe she just wanted to follow Magnus and make a move in that strange dance of theirs. But then he had caught her talking to some Shadowhunter, a nerdy looking boy with glasses. The boy looked entirely too entranced, and Camille way too pleased with herself. Raphael had a very bad feeling about all this.

8

Alexander didn't call, but a few days later Magnus received a message on his phone. It was a picture actually, a zinnia with soft red petals. “Thinking about you”.

Magnus couldn't bear how sweet this was. Alec was reserved, but not as shy as Magnus had thought had first.

Only in a good way I hope, he answered. The reply took only a moment to come.

Of course.

Was is that obvious? He didn't think so, but then again Alec didn't seem to embarrass himself with second guesses and prejudices. He was refreshing in his simplicity and honesty. Magnus discerned no agenda behind his words, no hidden meaning. He didn't doubt the man could be sarcastic and cunning if he wanted to. But he wasn't with him.

Magnus wanted so badly to see him again, it was kind of scary.

He was startled by his phone ringing suddenly in his hand. Alec's name flashed on the screen. Magnus picked up.

"Missed my voice?" he said with an amused tone. He heard Alec chuckle embarrassingly on the other end of the line.

"Actually, yeah, I think there's a bit of that."

Once again Magnus find himself left speechless by the bluntness of the man. How could he say such things?

"You're going to have to stop saying things like this to me, Alexander. It's not good for my heart."

"Oh, of course. I'll stop if you want me too."

The tone was playful. Magnus felt completely owned.

"Well, maybe I could get used to it."

"I think I could too."

They shared a long silence. Magnus was smiling stupidly and he was sure Alec was too. They
didn't feel the need to add anything for a while.

"I have an errand to run. I have to hang up," Alec said finally, though he didn't do anything to make his goodbyes.

"Where are you going?" asked Magnus, suddenly desperate to have the conversation last a little longer.

"Hum, Brooklyn. I have to pick up some supplies for the Institute."

"What a coincidence. I happen to live in Brooklyn," said Magnus with attempted casualness that was received with a deep silence, tenser than the last one.

"You could come by, it you have time. Have a drink, chat a bit."

He winced. The words were tumbling out of this mouth, but they felt like lies. They felt casual and inconsequential when they were anything but that. They were heavy with meaning and possibilities, both good and bad.

"I don't know if it's a good idea," breathed Alec after an awkward pause. It sounded like it wasn't what he wanted to say.

"I'll text you my address," said Magnus. "I'll be working at home all day. Come by if you have the time."

If you wish. If you want. If you dare.

It was a bit mean of him. He was putting the choice on Alec's shoulders, letting him do all the work. But Alec was more reasonable than him. If one of them was to be trusted with making that choice, that step, it was him. Magnus wouldn't even think twice about it. Or he would, but for all the wrong reasons. He was more afraid of relationships than social taboo between archenemy races. He was more afraid of love.

He sent his home address to Alec and didn't receive anything in answer. Hours passed slowly as he tried to focus on his potions and spells, but it was a lost cause. He received only two messages during the afternoon. Two flower pictures again. First Aquilegia, then purple morning glory. Folly, and uncertainty. He didn't answer. What could he say? Then, as the sun was starting to set behind the buildings of the city, another one.

Pink camellias.

Longing for you.

Just at this moment, the bell from the door downstairs rung, and he leapt to his feet, work forgotten.

"Who is it?" He asked, trying not to sound as hopeful as he was.

"It's... it's Alec."

Magnus felt a heady mix of relief, excitement and fear run through him as he buzzed him in, muttering "fourth floor" before unlocking the door and looking around him to settle his mind, find an anchor to his erratic thoughts. All too soon Alec was at his doorstep. He knocked softly, like you do when you hope no one will answer, and Magnus remembered he wasn't the only one out of his depths here. That centered him a bit.
"Hello, Alexander," he greeted when he opened the door. "I'm glad you came."

Despite his nerves, Alec couldn't help the smile spreading on his lips. Under all the doubts and warnings in his mind, he was still incredibly pleased to see Magnus again.

He couldn't not have come, he realized. He had tried to talk himself out of it when Magnus had suggested it, but really, it was pointless, battle lost before it even began. He still walked aimlessly for hours after his errand to work up the courage to finally knock on his door.

He was glad he did, if only for the genuine pleasure lightening Magnus's face at that very moment.

"Welcome to my humble abode," said Magnus theatrically while gesturing him inside with a grand sweeping gesture. Alec laughed at his antics, then at the place around him.

"Is that what you call humble?" he asked with amusement, eyeing the vast spaces and rich furniture of the loft. "You should see my room at the Institute."

"Is that an invitation?"

Alec blushed slightly, but he had come all the way here, it was too late to get put off by flirty comments. They had been walking a thin line last time, constantly fearing pushing too far, getting too suggestive, still uncertain. But the line was crossed now. So Alec smiled a seductive smile of his own.

"Maybe."

Magnus looks briefly surprised, before he let out a soft laugh.

"Why, I never would have thought you to be so naughty Alexander," he commented.

"I guess there's a lot you have to learn about me."

"Oh, but I intend to."

It was fun, Alec realized. It was pleasant and stimulating, how unguarded they were, how sincere they dared to be. He had never done that, never expressed his interest so openly. Maybe he had never been that interested in anyone either. He frequented the same small circle of people since he was born, and none of them were as interesting as Magnus was.

"Drinks?"

"Please."

They moved to a bar in a corner of the room and Alec watched Magnus mix them some cocktails, fascinated by his hand and the way the moved, fluid and elegant, precise. They clinked glasses and settled on one of the plush couches of the loft, angled toward one another, legs brushing, heads bent.

"What were you doing before I came?" asked Alec after an embarrassingly long moment of simply gazing into each other's eyes.

"Working. Or trying to at least."

"On what?"
And just like that, they were off. Magnus talked animatedly about his latest project. He liked practicing magic, potions especially, and even if Alec didn't really understand most of what he was talking about, his enthusiasm was contagious, and Alec really wanted to learn more.

They switched to Alec's work at the Institute, his relationship with his siblings and parents, their respective thoughts on Shadowhunters and Downworlders politics. Alec knew he sounded like an idealist, but he had power at the Institute, leverage, or at least he would someday, so he felt legitimate in his hope for some changes in the situation. Magnus, even if he was far more pessimistic than him, didn’t shut him down either. Hours passed, night settled over them, the soft lights and seeping warmth of the loft bringing them closer together on the couch, until Alec could rest his hand on Magnus's thigh, a little high to be completely innocent, his other hand holding Magnus's ankle on the leg he had thrown across his lap. Magnus's hands moved wildly while he talked, sometimes producing little sparkles of magic that danced on his fingers and captivated Alec.

The conversation faded eventually and Alec resigned himself after his third yawn in as many minutes.

"I really should go back," he muttered, and he wondered how obvious it was that he didn't want to, at all. Magnus didn't seem any warmer to the idea.

"Yeah. It's late."

They didn't move an inch.

"If I don't get up now I'm going to fall asleep on your couch," tried Alec again, stirring a bit to at least look like he was putting some effort into it.

"I wouldn't be opposed," said Magnus, predictably.

"I bet. But they must already wonder where the hell I've been, and I don't want to endure an interrogation when I make it back."

"It'll be our secret."

Alec was surprised by the bitterness in his tone, but Magnus apologized almost immediately.

"I'm sorry. We obviously have to keep this to ourselves, at least for now."

"I don't know. It's mostly because I don't want them to bother me but..."

Alec considered carefully what he was going to say. Maybe it was his idealistic string again, but he kept on, determined:

"I don't think there is anything to hide."

Then he realized it could be wrongly interpreted and tried again.

"I mean... I don't mean there is nothing. To hide. There is something here. But nothing shameful. Okay, that's confusing."

He ran his hands in his hair. He was tired and way too relaxed to form coherent thoughts, let alone sentences.

"I like you. And I guess it will be kind of badly viewed. But it shouldn't be, and I don't want to act like I think it is."
"Love against prejudices, Alec? How very Disney of you."

"Don't mock me."

"I... I'm not. I'm only resorting to sarcasm because I'm beyond surprised and touched."

Magnus looked surprised to have said this aloud. "I'm letting you influence me," confessed the warlock.

"Is it a bad thing?"

Magnus crossed his gaze again and smiled.

"No. No, I don't think it is."

Alec then remembered he really needed to get going. He got up from the couch, already mourning the warmth and comfort. Magnus escorted him to the door.

"Let's do that again some time," Alec said and winced. Too casual again. Like they hadn't had a wonderful time, like there wasn't something between them, something neither of them could describe but that they could perfectly feel, surrounding them and getting under their skin, deeper and deeper with each passing second and each shared glance. He didn't want to sound like this didn't mean anything to him.

"I mean..."

"I would love to see you again, Alexander."

They fell silent at that and Alec had a sudden perfect clarity of what was going to happen, like it was completely inevitable, a fact of life. They leaned in at the same time and without any warning, with all the ease in the world, they kissed.

It hadn't been at the forefront of Magnus's mind. Really, it hadn't. He had been surrounded by Alec's presence, his warmth and scent, his voice and pining gaze, and they had talked and touched lightly, and really at the time he wasn't thinking about anything else, anything more.

It suddenly came back to him at once, as Alec's lips were pressing on his for the first time. He hadn't been thinking about it or waiting for it, and it still felt like it had been burning to finally happen. Alec's hand were hovering over his cheeks, hesitant to touch, and maybe it was for the best, for Magnus didn't think he would ever be able to let go, and getting too into this would only make it worse. It was so simple and so chaste, why did it feel so all-encompassing, so fulfilling? Alec drew back and Magnus couldn't help but chase after his lips before leaning back, a little lost. Alec had the most dazzling smile on his face, awed and happy. Magnus had to kiss it again.

Alec, ever the reasonable one, was the first to draw away for good, but not before several minutes of trying. He walked back and through the door without looking away, still looking impossibly happy and content, lips reds and shining, cheeks flushed. Magnus squashed the urge to reach out for him and bring him back against him.

"Come back whenever you want, or can."

"I will."
"I'll see you soon."

Alec seemed to remember something suddenly at that, because he walked back enough to hand him something he had fetched from his pocket. It was a snowdrop.

"I hope," he said, smiling proudly, obviously pleased with himself. That was until he walked back again and tripped on the first step of the stairs. Magnus had the decency to close the door fast enough to give him the impression his clumsiness hadn't been witnessed. He heard Alec laugh to himself before walking down the stairs. Magnus twirled the flower absentmindedly between his fingers, knowing he was smiling like a fool but unwilling to stop.

Alec was on his phone again. Apparently he hadn’t realized that that fact alone would get anyone who knew him suspicious. Isabelle frowned, annoyed. Her brother I-can’t-be-bothered-to-answer-to-text-and-calls Alec could now be found at all times smiling stupidly at his screen, each excuse more lame than the last to justify it. She found it a little hurtful to be honest. Since when did he keep things from her?

"We’re worried about you”, said Ragnar as soon as Catarina and him had their drink and were settled in Magnus’s couch and chair. The warlock rolled his eyes and smiled playfully.

“What for this time?”

“Don’t play daft. You can’t hide anything from us Magnus. We know you too well.”

Magnus dropped his smile, sensing the conversation was a serious one.

“We just want you to be careful,” tempered Catarina gently, “and to not get hurt.”

“I’m afraid that already isn’t for me to decide anymore,” sighed Magnus wistfully.

“Why is he so special, this one?” asked Ragnar with disbelief. They were used to Magnus flickering heart, but this was something else, something new, and dangerous.

“I don’t know,” replied Magnus honestly. “He just is.”

It did nothing to ease his friends’ worry.

Alec was absorbed by the message on his phone’s screen, so he entered his room, closed the door and switched on the light mechanically. He sat down on his bed without looking up, and as such, he was so surprised to hear a clear chuckle from the corner of the room that he leaped to his feet, tripped, and ended up falling not too gracelessly beside the bed while Magnus tried not to laugh too loudly.

“Angel, Magnus, you sacred me! What the hell are you doing here?”

“I wanted to see you”, said Magnus with a shit-eating grin. He was sitting on the window frame, by
which he had probably entered the room.

“Told you I’d try to come to you soon. You’re crazy to be here, what if someone sees you! And how did you get in there anyway?”

Magnus laughed. He seemed in a bright mood, happy, and Alec had a hard time staying angry. A part of him didn’t care about how our why, wanted to just stop talking and cross the distance between them. But he had given that part way too much power lately, so he reigned it in firmly and crossed his arms on his chest to appear at least a little bit annoyed.

“I warded this place, very long ago. I know it well. Most of it doesn’t really hold anymore you know. I can enter easily.”

“Well don’t go around bragging about it please. I’m not sure my parents would be too pleased with that information.”

He regretted being so harsh when Magnus’s smile faltered.

“I’m sorry,” said the warlock. “It’s stupid right? I really just wanted to see you. I was at home and we were texting, and suddenly I couldn’t sit still. I don’t know what came over me.”

Alec couldn’t hold it anymore: he reached the window in a few smooth steps. He uncrossed his arms to wrap them around Magnus’s waist and bend to kiss him in the same movement. Magnus sighed with relief against his mouth and molded himself into his embrace. It wasn’t long before they were tangled together and a little breathless. Alec hadn’t realized how restless he had been, how agitated and impatient, until he settled against Magnus and finally felt at peace again, at home.

“It’s not so stupid,” was the first thing he said when they finally parted, like the thirst was quenched, at least for now. “But don’t make a habit of it. I don’t want you to get assaulted by a too-eager Shadowhunter around here.”

“Don’t worry, I have a very good sense of self-preservation.”

“Really?” asked Alec with a raised eyebrow, but there was too much disbelief in his voice. He saw Magnus open is mouth but hesitate to answer, suddenly ill at ease. Alec took a step back.

“I’m sorry. That was terribly insensitive of my part.”

“No, no, it’s… you’re probably right. Not so good, I guess,” answered Magnus with a forced laugh. “But I’ll be careful, I promise.”

“That’s all I ask.”

“I didn’t come here as a provocation or a challenge. I admit I didn’t think this through but I really wanted to see you. That’s it.”

“I believe you.”

He did.

They were startled by a knock at the door and Alec had just the time to push Magnus in the corner where the open door would hide him before Izzy threw it open.

“Alec, have you seen Simon?”
“Izzy, what’s the point of knocking if you don’t wait for people to answer.”

“I only knock so that I won’t catch you masturbating. So, have you?”

Alec rolled his eyes and fought not to look on the right where Magnus was trying not to laugh and make his presence known.

“No, not since this afternoon.”

“I’m sure he’s out again. What can he possibly be doing all night? I swear he has another girlfriend.”

“I thought you weren’t his girlfriend,” Alec pointed, just for the pleasure of seeing her flush, embarrassed.

“’m not,” she grumbled. “Send him to me if you see him.”

He nodded and closed the door. Magnus had the mind to wait a little until her footsteps had faded in the hallways before bursting out laughing, Alec following suit.

“I feel like a teenager in a romantic comedy,” Magnus managed to say between fits of laughter. It wasn't that funny really, but they were a little giddy and dazed, not really understanding what was happening to them, and it felt good to break the building-up tension.

“So, what now?”

Alec had trouble wrapping his head around it, but he spent the next few hours playing with the high warlock of Brooklyn in his room. They tried to make shadow puppet with their hand against his blank walls, Magnus conjured little animals made of sparkling lights who climbed on them and roamed the bed they had settled on. They played twenty questions, with the questions getting dumber and dumber. They cuddled, they kissed, they laughed. It didn't make any sense. Their case was no laughing matter, anyone could barge into the room or hear them from the corridor. Alec tried several times to remember that, tried to shush Magnus only to be met with a childish grin that made him dissolve into ridiculous giggles, and then it was his turn to try and stay quiet.

"How do you do that?" he asked after a tickle fight they aborted shortly in fear of waking up the entire Institute. They were lying flat on their backs, shoulders pressed together, gazing at the ceiling where Magnus was projecting the twirling stars of the night sky.

"What?"

"Let’s just say I was never the most cheerful one. I haven't had that much fun in... a very long time."

He didn't want to reflect too closely on how long exactly. Magnus chuckled and laced their fingers together. He was looking at their intertwined hands when he answered.

"If is make you feel better, it is mystery to us both. I'm no stranger to amusement myself but I'm certainly not use to this."

What "this" was, was Alec's guess. Affection, intimacy, youthful joy, peace? He didn't know. He knew almost nothing of Magnus, and yet he felt closer to him than to people he had known all his life. He turned away from the twinkling stars to look at the warlock, only to find him already
staring at him, enthralled. The room was dark, only the magical stars glowing softly, highlighting the lines of their faces and the shine in their eyes. Magnus's eyes glowed, like cats. Alec couldn't look away.

Then, in a matter of seconds, it was all over. Light was back on and Magnus was across the room, already behind the window.

"Someone's coming," he explained. "It's late anyway."

Alec leaned through the window.

"Now it really feels like a movie," he joked. Magnus laughed, before leaning to kiss him goodbye.

"I'll come to see you soon," Alec promised, already calculating mentally when he would be able to sneak out of the Institute.

"I'll look forward to it."

In a blink of an eye he was gone, and Alec didn't see him well in the dark of the night, but he swore he saw him jump from the building, and he wondered if his eyes were the only things he had in common with cats.

Just then, someone knocked on his door.

"I'm coming," he called, and the person actually waited for him to open. Not Izzy then.

Indeed Jace was looking at him with a frown, arms crossed and expression dark, when he opened the door.

"Hey, what is it?" asked Alec, trying to feel if he looked abnormally content and relaxed for a boring Thursday night.

"Were you with anyone?" accused Jace. Alec frowned, his smile slipping from his face.

"No."

"I heard you talk to someone."

"I was on the phone."

"With whom?"

Alec crossed his arms, adopting his brother's defensive stance. He didn't like where this was going, and he didn't like his reprimanding tone at all.

"It's none of your business. Why does it matter?"

Jace lost a bit of his hostility at that, thrown off balance by Alec's firm rebuttal.

"Izzy told me you made acquaintances with one of the warlocks."

"I did. So?"

"Alec. You can't do that."

"I don't know what you're talking about," Alec answered, but he wasn't satisfied with it. He knew,
and he meant what he had said to Magnus. He didn't want to hide, he didn't understand why he felt so guilty.

"And what is it I can't do exactly?" he asked with a measured tone.

"You know what."

"No, I really don't."

"For fuck's sake Alec! You can't... you can't associate with them. Him."

"I can and I will. I'll do as I please, and we're doing nothing wrong."

"So you admit you're doing something!"

"Yeah, I do! And I don't see how exactly that's your problem. What's gotten into you?"

"Alec, you know... you know you can't trust a warlock."

The venom in Jace’s voice, the finality of his words, took Alec aback.

"Things are getting worse with the Downworlders. We don't know what they're planning, what they could do. We have to be careful. Now is not the time to forget who we really are."

Alec was so shocked he didn't find anything to say. He heard the words of the most extremists of them in Jace's mouth, Valentine Morgenstern and the lot of them, who were always going on and on about how Downworlders were barely any better than demons, how they were a menace. How they had to be "taken care of".

"What the actual fuck Jace? Is that really what you think?"

"I know you believe we can get along with them, but you're wrong. They're not..."

"The Fairchilds seem to manage well enough," Alec spit venomously. It was a low blow on his part. Jace tensed, his anger flaring.

"Don't bring them into this."

"Why not? I thought that’s what you wanted. Peace. You could see Clary again."

"Don't talk about her! They left! They betrayed us!" Jace screamed, losing his temper. Alec screamed right back.

"They left because they were rejected by their own! We're the ones who betrayed them! Luke got bitten and what did we do? Throw him out and said to his wife and adopted daughter that they weren't allowed to see him again? Of course they left!"

"We don't mingle with their sort!"

It was a nightmare. It had been a long time since they had talked about this – Jace in particular avoided the subject of his ex-girlfriend like the plague. He had always had less progressive views than Alec, but the eldest had no idea it was that bad.

"I see you've been hanging with Jonathan," he said in a defeated tone. Jace grimaced but didn't deny it. Alec felt like punching him.
"Goodnight Jace," he said instead.

"Be careful Alec please. I know you didn't have many opportunities to date or whatever but..."

"Goodnight, Jace," he repeated more forcefully before closing the door to his brother's face. Gone was his elated mood and the wonder of his evening with Magnus. Instead he felt a bitter sense of defeat and disappointment. He had thought he would at least be able to count on the support of his family. He had planned on talking about it to Isabelle, but he wasn't so sure anymore. What if she reacted the same? He doubted it. It passed, but she had been well acquainted with a number of Downworlders in her teenage years. He had no idea how many of them she still had contact with, if she still did at all. But Jace too was open and pacifist when they were younger.

Feeling lost and demoralized, he went to bed and sent a picture to Magnus.

Briza. Agitation.

He received an answer almost immediately.

White poppies. Consolation.

It was efficient enough to ease him to sleep.

6

Despite himself, Alec was affected by Jace's words. He looked around him at the Institute and wondered which one of the Shadowhunters here would deny him, would turn his back on him, if they knew he was getting closer and closer to a Downworlder, a warlock. His parents were far from being the most vehement in this conflict. His mother had a harder time dealing with Downworlders than his father, but both of them were quite moderate compared to most of the hunters of their generation. Of course they had passed down ingrained prejudice to their children, but Alec really thought they had come out of it less biased than the others of their age, some of which were very progressive and some really scary.

Like Jonathan Morgenstern. Alec couldn't stand him, and, until recently, thought Jace couldn't either. They had always found him arrogant and fake. And, of course, as set on Shadowhunters supremacy as his father was.

“T’m going out,” he called to Isabelle when he passed the kitchen. They had nothing terribly important to do today, it was his chance to go to Brooklyn.

“Wait Alec! Where are you going?” she yelled after him. He waited for her to join him in the corridor, a little annoyed. He wasn’t in the mood for questioning.

“Just out.”

He regretted being so cold when he saw the hurt on her face, but he couldn’t tell her. Not when he was feeling so threatened, so trapped.

“I don’t know what’s worrying you. But regardless, you look happy these days.”

He stared at her, her perceptive eyes and indulgent smile, and thought, not for the first time, that he was lucky to have her. She rested both her hand on his shoulder.
"I’m with you Alec. I’m at your side, on all things. You know it don’t you?"

He knew she wouldn’t put it into words, wouldn’t say anything more before he did first. But of course she knew. She always did. He was about to reassure her that of course he knew, but he didn’t want to lie. He had been worried, even if it was stupid, even if he should have known better that to doubt her.

“I do now.”

She seemed satisfied with his answer.

“T’ll cover for you. Go.”

He dropped a grateful kiss on her forehead and left the Institute.

"You're distracted," Magnus said into Alec's hair. He was pressed against the warlock’s chest on his couch, wrapped safely in his arms. He never wanted to move.

"I'm sorry. I worry."

"What happened the other day after I left?"

Alec exhaled slowly, relaxing a bit more in his embrace.

"I had a fight with Jace. About Downworlders in general, and you in particular, although no names were mentioned."

"It's okay, I bet he just couldn't remember it."

Alec didn't laugh.

"I... I can't believe what he said to me. I don't know when it happened, when he became so... Angel, so fucking stupid. I know it's no way to treat people with views opposite to you but... I thought we agreed on this. At least on the basics. But he..."

Magnus tightened his grip to settle the boy down when he felt him get agitated. Alec gripped his arms too tightly.

"He would actually... I think he would turn on me. For real."

It was so awful to say it aloud, to take the full account of what had transpired between his brother and him. His brother. His own family.

"We have to... we have to keep fighting," he stuttered suddenly, trying to get a grip on his emotions. "It can't go on this way. This is ridiculous, why do we fight exactly? What’s gotten into us? People have been so restless lately, Shadowhunters and Downworlders have been picking fights over nothing and I... There's nothing I can do. I try, but I'm powerless, and now someone I thought was on my side turned out to be at the exact opposite. Who else then? Are we alone in this, is this truly so set in stone, as immutable as everyone says it is? Are we really so fucking incapable to evolve, to change?"

He knew he sounded distressed and hurt. He didn’t want to appear so weak, to bring all his doubts and fear into his very limited time with Magnus, but the warlock was also the only person he could talk to about all this. He had never realized before how alone he was, how estranged from his own
kind. Who did he have on his side? Isabelle, Lydia maybe, although they hadn't talk in a long time either. Max was too young. He didn't even have Jace anymore.

He must have said it aloud, because he felt Magnus's hand slipped into his gently, to release his death grip on his arms.

"You have me too," Magnus said quietly in his ear. Alec closed his eyes at that, breathed out some of the tension wrecking his body.

"Do I?" he asked quietly. How could he? They had just met a handful of time. They had shared so little. They were so far away from each other, even now, pressed up and intertwined, there was still that gap between them, impossible to close or cross, a gap the size of the entire world, of two entire worlds clashing against each other, never to merge, never to reconcile.

"I'm with you, Alexander."

It was the second time he heard it today. And maybe twice was enough, he thought. It had to be enough, for now.

"Don't give up just yet. You can win Jace over. You can do anything."

"How can you be so sure?"

"I'm old and wise. Trust me."

That finally won Magnus a little laugh, which had been his intention, Alec suspected.

"Will you help?"

"Yeah."

"You promise?"

"I promise. I'll be there."

Alec turned into Magnus’s embrace, enough to kiss his lips gently. He felt too fragile and vulnerable to add anything more. He hated it. Now was not the moment to break, to get insecure and doubting. He had even more reason to fight now, to make his kind see reason. He had been a good soldier all his life, following the rules, never a foot out of line. All so that he could be trusted, have value, be heard and listened to. He had to get through them.

"This feels too good to be true," he whispered against Magnus's lips, and felt his lips stretched into a smile.

"Well, sometimes, life is good."

Alec wondered if he really believed that.

The sun was setting. Simon was pacing in front of the Hotel Dumort, where the vampire clan of New York lived. He knew it was a bad idea. He didn't know why he was there. He shouldn't be. But he couldn't help it.
"Do you have to leave?" asked Magnus between heated kiss.

"Not yet," Alec panted, breathless, battling against reluctant clothes, trying to get closer, always closer, to disappear into Magnus's embrace, to find a place there and never leave it.

Raphael had a very bad feeling about this.

Alec's phone ringed in pants, abandoned on the bedroom floor. It rang several times, but they were too busy to notice, and then the battery died.

They were all going to regret that night. Or to wish it had never ended.

Alec would have given everything to spend the night at Magnus's place. Precisely, in Magnus's bed.

But he couldn't, and really, he deserved an award for being able to get out of the comfort of Magnus's arms. Granted, he only left it for the shower, where the warlock joined him, but still. It was getting close to midnight, and he couldn't imagine what Izzy had to come up with to justify his disappearance. He would make it up to her.

"My phone is dead," he noticed aloud when he got dressed again. "Izzy is going to have my head. She always pesters me for not answering."

"Really? You reply to me fast enough," Magnus noticed with a sly grin.

"Shut up."

Alec fought a smile, he really did, while he battled Magnus's hands away from his clothes.

"Come on, I have to go. Behave yourself!" he scolded. Magnus pouted.

"You're too responsible for your own good, Alexander," the warlock said mournfully when he walked him to the door.

"I make up for you."

"So insolent."

Five minutes later they were still making out on the doorstep, even if Alec was trying very hard to stop.

He was.

"I'll be back soon," he said finally, taking a few steps back to stop them, mindful of the steps this time.

"I'll be waiting."
When Magnus closed the door, the sudden silence of the loft was immediately disturbed by his phone ringing. It was Catarina. He noticed a few missed phone calls and unread texts and figured she had been trying to contact him. He smiled to himself, thinking of how exactly he was going to not apologize for that at all, when he picked up.

"Hey, Cat..."

"Magnus."

His smile disappeared.

Alec had a little more time, the whole way home to bask into his feelings. Then he set foot into the Institute, and it was like the evening had never happened.

Chapter End Notes

And then shit hits the fan haha. A couple of precision:

1. I mixed several language of flower (including a french one) to have them say what I wanted to say, so it may not be accurate, I know. Also the greenhouse is from the book, I often saw Alec and Isabelle allergic to flowers in fics but I don't know if it's canon, and well, I wanted flowers. Alec's gardening is my friends Océane's idea.
2. I'm physically unable to write love at first sight.
3. I actually gave the Ligthwood parents a good role for once, haha.
4. Yes, you have seen the full extent of my sex scene writing. If you missed it, they did have sex.
5. A small spoiler: I'm not killing Max in this fic. No one else is safe :)

Oh, and come yell at me on tumblr, I'm Inrainbowz there too!
Chapter 2

Chapter Summary

Part Two : Where Everything Goes to Hell

Chapter Notes

SO. I lied. There will be a third part. I didn't plan on this to get this long.

WARNING : This is ANGSTY SHIT right there. I'm talking inevitable fate, tragic misunderstanding, people getting killed angst. There are death in this one and will be in the next one too. Don't say I didn't warn you.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

5

Raphael felt very much like a rat trapped in a cage.

As a vampire he was quite unfamiliar with being the prey, but here he was now, and on his own accord. He was pacing nervously around the room they had locked him in, and he didn't regret his decision to come in person, but that didn't mean he was pleased with his situation either.

His gaze fell once again on the dead boy he had brought back home. This was all his fault. Stupid, stupid Shadowhunter. For a mundane to get tricked by Camille's way, he could understand, but a Shadowhunter? Sure, they were declining, but still, this was so shameful. And on the verge of creating a very bad situation.

Of course, more than on that Simon, the blame lay entirely on Camille. Raphael knew, he fucking knew how bad she was, how careless of the rule, of the prospect of war. Camille intended to do as she pleased, consequences be dammed. He shouldn't have listen to Catarina, he should have stuck to her shoes like her goddamn shadow every time she had all but set a foot outside the hotel. Oh no, not even that. He should have aced off that bitch years ago. Take the lead of the clan and maybe finally do something about this absurd, constant almost war that was about to become anything but almost, all because he didn't have the guts to go against her.

It was no use getting lost in what ifs now. He had just brought the dead body of one their boys, he doubted the Shadowhunters would be receptive to his very sincere regrets. On top of it all, Alec Lightwood, the only one of them he knew for sure could support him, wasn't at the Institute when he arrived. Raphael had an idea of where the boy might be, and it angered it even more. Damn Magnus, he had chosen his moment to fraternize with the opposite side.

He could hear faint noises outside the door, people arguing loudly with one another, no doubt debating his fate and that of his entire clan and race. He had explained to them very clearly that Camille was to be held responsible and that she would be punished by his own, put to death if he had his way. But what did Shadowhunters care of Downworlders’ justice? They only went with
their own. And with no one to stop them, Raphael feared they would deal with this like they did with everything: with the Angels’ will as their supreme card against every moral conflict. He had seen it before.

Alec knew something was wrong as soon as he passed the door. He was ambushed quickly by Lydia, whom he had never seen so dishevelled.

"Alec, where the hell were you? I've been trying to call you all night."

"I'm sorry, I... my phone died. What is happening?"

She grimaced, a pained, sorrowful expression, and Alec felt his throat close up.

"Lydia, what is it?"

"Come with me. We have to go see Izzy."

"Did something happen to her?"

Lydia was dragging him by the hand and he tugged to make her stop.

"Lydia, please, tell me."

Her mouth was set in a thin line but his authoritative tone seemed to settle her back in her usual professional demeanour.

"Raphael, Camille's second in command, arrived earlier at the Institute with Simon's corpse. She killed him."

That's the moment Magnus completely left Alec's mind. He would later mourn the loss, when he wouldn't be able to call back those feelings, when it would feel like it had happened to someone else.

"Where is he?"

"Raphael was locked up in the basement with Simon's body. They feared he would turn, so they left him down there."

"That's not how this works," Alec said sternly. Were they stupid? Since when did a newly turned vampire do it just like that?

"I know."

They were walking towards the bedrooms, where Izzy probably was. He didn't really understand what was between Simon and her, but regardless of their ambiguous romantic relationship, Simon was simply her best friend. Her only friend maybe. He had so much trouble winning her over, but he was nothing if not persistent. He must have been so lonely, Alec couldn't blame him for pursuing Isabelle's attention once she showed the hint of an interest. It had worked for him in the end.

They were reaching the stairs when someone barrelled into Alec's legs and almost knocked him off balance.

"Max?" asked Alec when he recognized his youngest brother. Max looked up at him. He looked
like he had been crying, but his eyes were dry now, his face dead serious.

"I think Isabelle has gone to see the vampire downstairs," he said in a panicked rush. "I was with her in her bedroom but then she said she needed some air... I can't find her anywhere, I think..."

Alec took off before the young boy could finish, sprinting towards the basement like death was at his heels. Maybe it was.

If Isabelle did something irrational, if she sought vengeance herself now... It couldn't happen. Things could still be mended, it could still end without bloodshed. But for that, he had to stop her.

He ran down the stairs, only keeping his balance thanks to his runes, and kept running through the corridors until he reached the part of the floor they used to keep prisoners. He didn't have to look for long - enraged screams guided him to one of the cells. Two young Shadowhunters were lying unconscious by the door - the one who had to guard it, probably.

Astounding job.

Alec was in full combat mind-set when he scanned the room, assessing the scene rapidly. There was the pale and unmoving body of Simon resting on a table in a corner, and on the floor next to it, Isabelle was straddling Raphael, a seraph blade pressed on his throat.

Alec didn't say anything. In a few long steps, he was behind her, and he hauled her off the floor and the vampire's body. Arms wrapped around her waist, trapping her against him, he was determined not to let go.

After a few seconds of surprise, she began thrashing, screaming, hitting anything she could. Her foot connected with Raphael's jaw when he tried to stand up, sending him back to the ground with a growl. His fangs were bared but he didn't look out for a fight. That made at least one of them.

"Isabelle, stop!" tried Alec, barely loud enough to be heard above her cries.

"Let me go, let me go, I'll kill him!" she screamed, murderous gaze fix on a slightly worried Raphael. She kicked her head back, hitting Alec hard on the nose. He winced in pain, but he didn't let go.

"No you won't! It will achieve nothing, it will only make things worse!"

"What things? What worse? Simon is dead! He killed him!"

"It wasn't him!"

"It's all the same!"

Alec squeezed tighter, desperate. He didn't want to hurt her.

"You don't mean that," he protested weakly.

"It's all the same Alec! The whole lot of them, they all deserve to die!"

Lydia had joined them, fortunately without Max in tow, but her husband John was following close. Alec cast her a pleading look. She nodded tightly, and, with on swift hit, knocked Isabelle unconscious. His sister sagged in Alec's arm, her voice cut short, an abrupt silence falling in the room.

"I'll take her to her room," offered John, when it became evident Alec had no idea how to proceed
from there. He needed to talk to Raphael. He nodded, and John picked his sister up gently. He exchanged a quick glance with Lydia, which was probably worth a thousand words, before leaving the room.

"Raphael," Alec finally greeted, turning towards the vampire. He had stayed perfectly composed throughout the whole ordeal, if a little worried at times. He was smoothing creases in his suits when Alec addressed him and when he looked up, Alec saw less assurance than usual in his demeanour.

Alec was used to Raphael's smooth ways, but he was dead serious right now. Alec’s gaze drifted helplessly to the body lying behind the vampire on a discarded table.

"How the hell did this happen?" he asked, voice controlled and tense. Raphael clenched his jaw and fists in obvious anger.

"It's my fault," he gritted through his teeth. “I should have known something was up with Camille. She looked actually happy these days."

"And it's a warning sign?" asked Lydia, acid.

"Anything that makes Camille happy puts everyone else into misery, but it's usually confined to the limit of our own clan." Once again there was no trace of irony in his voice. He was completely serious.

"I think she met the boy at the celebration we crashed. You remember us, being there, right?"

Alec wondered if the question was for him specifically. It was the night he had met Magnus.

"She looked for him again at the last Accords meeting."

Where he had seen Magnus again.

"I guess he went out to try and join her a couple of times."

Like the night Izzy had asked, while Magnus was in his room.

"And tonight he didn't stop at the door. She lured him inside. And she sucked him dry." While he was at Magnus’s place. Some of the best moments of his entire life, and that's what was unfurling at the same time. While they were lost in their own world, happy and light and convinced they could change the entire world, it was all building up to this.

The irony was so cruel. Alec had trouble hearing over the blood rushing in his ears. He felt sick.

"Is he going to turn?" he heard Lydia ask at his side. She was casting him worried glances and he was trying hard to stay composed and focused. Raphael had a knowing look on his face and the fact that he probably knew more about what was going on in Alec's mind than Lydia only made things worse. Raphael surely knew, because he was Magnus's friend, and Magnus talked to his friends, unlike Alec. This was so twisted.

"If things are done properly, he could, yeah. It is up to you.”

He didn't mean Alec and Lydia, of course. He meant you, the Shadowhunters. You, the Institute. And they were all very aware of what their answer would be.
No matter what happened to him next, Simon was and would stay dead to them.

Alec's mind was reeling. They had to get this under control immediately. Camille was known to be a volatile element, and Raphael to be reliable. They had to work with this, to limit the damage. Alec couldn't think about Simon. About that idiot boy, one of the last humans to Ascend and become a Shadowhunter before they closed the Shadowhunter Academy, obsolete without demons to fight. Simon who had never stopped to try and mingle with them, even if they were a closed off, intolerant lot who never went easy on him. Whose first friend had been Clary, barely a few months before she left with her mother, betrayed and heartbroken. Simon, whom Isabelle... could have loved.

Simon, who was dead.

"The council will meet soon. We’ll do all we can to have you set free and returned to your clan.”

“I knew what I was getting into when I decided to come myself, and alone. My people are aware of the situation and they are restraining Camille back at the Hotel. I’m not looking for war.”

“We’re not either.”

“You, maybe not, but I know some of your kind won’t be quite so complying.”

They nodded curtly. They didn’t need the reminder.

"One last thing,” Raphael said before they left. “You have until tonight to decide about his fate. It'll be too late after that.”

Alec and Lydia nodded gravely. Raphael looked at them curiously.

"Don't give up,” he said simply.

"You either,” answered Alec.

"I won't.”

Alec left the room, thinking about Izzy and Jace, about the Institute, about Simon and the vampires, and he wished the night would never end. The sun would never rise, all would stay still, and they wouldn't have to deal with any of this.

Wishful thinking, wishful thinking.

For a few hours after that, things were actually fine.

Everyone was busy arguing, debating, screaming non-sense and not going anywhere. Letting Raphael go was out of the question for now, but they couldn’t keep him forever without a valuable reason. Valentine and his lot were the loudest, demanding Camille be handed to them and her whole clan suffering some kind of punishment, but for now they were all talk and no bite.

It would pass. It was fine.

Isabelle wasn’t talking to Alec. She had woken up alone in her room and he had thought she was going to hit him when he came to find her, but she just brushed passed him without a word or a glance and had been ignoring him completely ever since.
But it was fine, it was okay.

Jace had stormed out after they had a fight. Jace was always confrontational, it was in his nature, and Alec usually indulged him, but today he couldn’t deal with his brother’s harshness. He had accused Alec of sympathizing with the vampire, of disregarding Simon’s death and Isabelle’s pain. Like he could claim fucking “brother of the year” title, Jace, careless and selfish Jace who didn’t know Simon's last name and didn’t understand you could be friends and lovers at the same time. Like not wanting to take arms like a barbarian and kill people made a coward out of Alec.

He was nowhere to be found but he would come back eventually. It didn't matter. It was fine.

They were completely against turning Simon. It was out of the question. And there was no one to really plead in favor of the decision: his family was the Institute ever since he ascended, and the only person who cared at least a little about him didn't know how to take that decision.

Simon was all but dead for good.

But at least he wouldn't turn into a vampire. That's probably what he would have wanted. Being Undead was so hard, and would mean for him to be rejected completely. So in a way, it was fine.

He hadn't been able to contact Magnus. Even a message felt impossible. Alec felt so guilty he couldn't breathe, and so he couldn't indulge into his desire, his urge to talk to Magnus in any way possible, just to reassure himself that it hadn’t been a dream, that he had actually been happy and hopeful a few hours ago. He couldn't do it. He didn't deserve it. He had been fooling around, and Simon had been killed. He didn't deserve any form of comfort.

Magnus would probably think he was turning on him because of what had happened. Maybe it was for the best. Maybe it was fine.

It was fine, because things could get better. They could. The majority of the Shadowhunters were fine with Camille taking the blame alone, so maybe not all was lost. He would make it up to Izzy every day of his life until she forgave him, and he would give shit to Jace for disappearing like that when he returned, and then talk to him properly and win him back on his side. They would get over Simon's death eventually. He would get over Magnus too.

So maybe things weren't fine but they would be. It was rock bottom. They had to climb back up now.

Alec really believed that.

And then, as he was trying to tune in on Downworlders activity to see if anything was amiss, he fell to his knees, suddenly overcome with an unbearable pain, as if he was dying. His parabatai rune burning on his side.

4

Really, Alec didn't understand.

He was such a fool. Of course Jace wanted to believe in peace and rainbows and butterflies like him, but he was a realist when Alec was an idealist. It was simply impossible to achieve, and one day everyone would realize that and give up the pretenses of an understanding between them. Jace just thought it was better to realize it now, to be ready for when it would come. There was no point in keeping this show up. They had to prepare for when it would collapse.
And that night’s event had only comforted him in this belief. The vampire had come to their doors, he had walked into their home just to lay one of them on the floor, dead and cold. Jace had wanted to murder him with his bare hands, but had refrained. It wouldn't do, not yet. But he was sure it would give the final push. They would finally stop being hypocrites and admit the painful truth: they were simply destined to fight, there was no going around this.

For now, he had had to leave. He couldn't bear to stay near the vampire and Simon's still form. He wasn't particularly fond of the boy, who was too loud and awkward, but he was still one of them, part of their family. And he had been killed like a prey, like a fucking discarded toy. He had been killed, because Downworlders had no consideration for Shadowhunters. Nor respect. They didn't fear them anymore.

It had to change.

He had walk aimlessly for hours, trying to calm down and not do anything foolish. This wasn't about personal vendetta. They had to all come together and decide to fight as a whole. They had to strike back.

When he felt a little more centered, he made his way back to the Institute. He had left his phone in his room, not wanting to be disturbed, but he had to be there now. He had to comfort Izzy, to reason Alec, and to help in whatever way he could to that this wouldn't go unpunished.

He ran into Jonathan just outside the gates.

"What are you doing here?" he asked the other boy. He couldn't say he liked Jonathan. He felt as he had always felt about him, grossed out and wary, but at least he had some amount of common sense, compared to his foolish siblings. He was the only one their age not to be shy about his opinion, even if it was shared by many others.

"That little shit came looking for supplies as if nothing had happened," spat Jonathan venomously. He was pointing at a silhouette walking away on the sidewalk. They could see two oily black wings balancing softly on his back.

"Who's that?"

"Some warlock, I don't know. Come on."

"Where?"

"Come on! I just want to scare him a little."

It was petty and stupid, but Jace was still worked up, and really, what did that demon spawn think coming to the Institute in these circumstances, to buy some fucking grandma powder like all was fine in the world? Jace fell into Jonathan's step, affected despite himself by his bloodthirst.

Magnus jumped on his phone as soon as he heard it ring, but his eagerness deflated as soon as he saw it was just Elias calling. He had been waiting with an unhealthy amount of urgency for Alec to reach out to him all night. He didn't want to look into the boy's sudden silence. Damn Camille. He had trouble believing he had sincerely love her once. They had all turned a blind eye on her perversions because they thought she would never actually break the laws and doomed them all. How naïve of them. She was poison. They should have known better. He should have known better, should have seen. But to say he had been distracted was an understatement, and now it was too late to think about it.
He almost didn't pick up, but it was really too childish even for his standards, and the young warlock was his responsibility, false hope or not.

"Elias, what is it?" he asked in an annoyed tone, figuring the boy was once again lost in the street of his own district.

"Magnus, I think I'm being followed."

Any annoyance left the older warlock as he straightened up instinctively, fully alert.

"What do you mean? By who?"

"I came by the Institute on my way from Ragnor's house to pick up our latest command to their herbalist. I... I figured something had happened, because their looks were even dirtier than usual, so I didn't linger but I... I'm almost certain two of them have been following me since I left."

A cold dread filled Magnus's mind as he fought to remain calm. Of course, they didn't know yet, because Ragnor was a fool living like a hermit in the countryside and Elias was way too fond of the man for his own good.

"Something happened indeed. Where are you?"

"Walking in the park near the metro station. There's... there's not many people here. I..."

Elias's breath was a bit labored, and Magnus could hear him walking faster and faster.

"Magnus, I'm scared."

"Don't stop walking. I'll be right there. I'll call Ragnor too. We're coming to get you. Right away, Elias. Don't worry," he promised, hoping the boy wouldn't pick up the worry in his own voice. He sent a fire message to Ragnor, hoping two warlocks would be enough to prevent two Shadowhunters from picking up a fight, before drawing a portal as fast as he could to the premise of the Institute.

One moment, they were trailing the warlock not so discreetly and watching him grow more and more frantic, the next, Jonathan was throwing a dagger at him that sunk right into the warlock's calf. He collapsed with a pained cry. Jonathan let out a triumphant exclamation before taking off like a hunter going to collect his prey.

Jace felt numb.

By the time he recovered enough senses to join them, Jonathan was towering over the squirming warlock, arms crossed, watching with a pleased smile, his victim crawling weakly on the ground to get away from them. He looked barely sixteen.

"Jonathan, what are you..."

He was cut by the other Shadowhunter kicking the boy in the stomach.

This was getting out of control very quickly.

The boy whimpered, but before Jace could say anything or Jonathan could lay another kick, a portal opened a few feet away from them. Through passed an older warlock with an impressive pair of horns on his forehead. With a flick of his hand, he had them staggering several steps back.
"Are you alright, Elias?" asked the warlock, managing to sound both caring and incredibly angry. The boy on the ground nodded weakly. He was crying.

Jace was going to call the whole thing off. He was going to apologize and drag Jonathan away and run without turning back to try to forget he had bullied a fucking teenager for no fucking reason. Maybe warlocks lived for hundreds of years while looking ever young, but they had to be young for real first, and this one was definitely acting like he was.

And even if he wasn't? Was Jace really up to attacking random people just for the hell of it? Had he considered what open war would really mean? Like the most intrusive of thoughts, he suddenly had in mind an image of Max, bloodied on the floor, beaten up because he was from a specific group of people.

Is that what you want? asked Alec in his head, with the same pleading and hurt look he had had before this day, when Jace had said to his face that they weren’t really brothers anyway. He had a hard time realizing it was the same day.

He was going to stop this, when another portal opened on Magnus Bane.

Reason surrendered to anger.

"What the fuck do you think you're doing?" the newcomer asked after assessing the scene, pausing briefly on the young warlock the horned one was tending to on the ground. He looked more shocked than angry, like he couldn't quite believe what he was seeing. Didn't want to.

"You're the one Alec befriended," Jace spat as an answer, because that's all he could think about. He knew befriended wasn't the right word. Why? Of all the people Alec could have, all the boys and girls at the Institute who batted their eyes at the strong, handsome, so reliable and so serious future head of the place, why did it have to be a warlock? Why now, why him, when he had never expressed an interest in anyone? Anyone apart from Jace of course, a long time ago. Jace didn’t even know he was over it.

"Is that all you have to say after being caught brutalizing a teenager without motives?" Magnus asked with disbelief.

"We have motives scum," Jonathan answered, who was getting way too much into this for Jace's liking.

"Oh yeah?"

"Yeah. He's a warlock. That's motives enough."

Magnus stared at Jonathan with fury and disgust but it was Jace he turned to ask:

"Is that so?"

And how dare he judge him? What was that look supposed to mean? Did he think he was just an impressionable boy following Jonathan around? Did he think he had to have the same utopic opinions as his brother? Jace crossed his arms and raised his chin, defiant.

"Are you going to do something about it, warlock?" he challenged. He was so damn angry he needed to punch someone, anyone. He needed to fight.

To hurt.

"Well now that you're mentioning it..."
"Magnus, no."

It was the other warlock, cutting his friend with a stern voice. He was supporting the injured boy on his shoulder and had gripped Magnus’s arm with his free hand.

"Can't I teach the children a lesson?" Magnus asked with a fake innocent tone, as if he was genuinely asking permission.

"No."

"Fine. Sorry shadow boys, but we are actually responsible adults, unlike you, so we're going to walk away now. Don’t worry, we will report the full incident to the Institute. They will be the ones to decide what to do about it."

"What's the Institute gonna care about what happens to you? No one would care if you died here like animals," Jonathan snapped, taking a step forward. Magnus tensed all over, but he kept his pleasant, if completely artificial, smile.

"That might be true. But our side of the Accords might be interested don't you think? And even if they're not, you know, I think it will still be a good story, two noble, respectable Shadowhunter soldiers creeping after a defenseless child in the middle of the night and attacking him behind his back. Everyone will be so impressed by your deeds."

"Magnus, enough. Let's go."

But of course the man didn't know when to quit.

"I'm sure your parents will be proud of their sons’ accomplishments. Really, what would your fathers say?"

For a second, Jace considered that. What would his father have said. His real father. He would never know. Because he was dead.

Killed by some warlock.

Then, it was over. Only a couple of seconds, a fast enchainment of action, but a few seconds were enough. Everything could happen in just but one. Jace could lose it and draw a blade from his back, enraged. Magnus could have the time to be truly taken aback, unlike his friend, who had sensed the tone changing, even if he had failed to stop the other man from pushing. Jace could watch like he was out of his body, horrified and yet unable to stop, those few seconds unfurl, as he charged toward Magnus, too fast for the sparkly warlock, but not for the one with the horns, who, in such a short span of time, couldn’t think of anything but moving forward, forward, anything to stop the momentum, to stop this from happening.

And the seconds kept on ticking, long after everything went still. The teenager on the ground, mouth open in a silent cry, Jonathan, just a few steps behind and yet so far away, so out of this scene. Magnus, his face changing fascinatingly slow, from stupor to a rising fury that was overtaking his whole composure, as he stared at the bloodied blade just centimeters away from his chest. The blade, stopped by another body right in front of him. Blood dripping on Jace’s hand gripping the hilt of his blade, pressed against the chest of the horned warlock who was hiccupping blood, so loudly in the dead silence.

And the seconds kept on and on as Jace drew back his blade abruptly and staggered back, shocked, as the warlock, without the support of his assassin, fell face first, caught before he hit the floor by Magnus. Jace was staring at his blade with fascinated horror, and he couldn’t look away from the
blood staining the blade, until his eyes fell on the man dying in his friend's arm. They barely exchanged a few words before the warlock's heart gave out.

Then he died. Jace had killed him. He was dead.

This was hell.

And Jace was ready to run, to turn back and run screaming back at the Institute, to throw himself in a jail cell there in the basement and never get out of it ever again.

But once again, a few seconds and everything changed.

Just a second and the air suddenly felt charged with magic, with a crushing power pulsing around them, suffocating them. Magnus got up, releasing his death grip on his friend’s dead body, and turned toward Jace. He had never seen anything like this. Maybe this really was hell. He could see fire in Magnus’s eyes, dancing flames pinning him to the spot. Magic escaped from Magnus’s fingers. His eyes followed Jace as he was trying to get away from his gaze, to move, to do something.

A few seconds were enough. Enough for Magnus to suddenly take off but not enough for Jace to understand what was happening, before it was too late. Before Magnus, blinded by grief and despair, ran straight into him.

Ragnor was dead. He was dead. Dead. They were supposed to be forever. To face eternity together. But they wouldn't. Because he was dead.

The boy had to pay. He had too.

Get the boy. Get the boy. Get...


No.

Elias managed to scream this time. He let out an awful wail, loud and impossibly long, until his voice broke and he collapsed on the floor. Magnus’s hand had hit Alec's brother in the sternum, sending him flying backward. He landed heavily, his body bending in an awkward way, not far away from his friend who didn't move an inch, obviously lost, staring at Jace.

He looked unconscious, but Magnus knew what he had done. Knew his magic was merciless.

Knew, without the shadow of a doubt, that Jace was dead, as surely as Ragnor was.

Time seemed to stop, but it was just an illusion. The seconds kept going. They always did.

Lydia was walking in Alec's direction to talk strategy and maybe offer him some comfort after their hectic day, when he collapsed on the floor with an inhuman cry of pain. She was at his side in an instant, but there was nothing unusual, nothing that could explain why he was suddenly out of breath and crying like a child.

Nothing, until her eyes landed on his side, where he was clutching viciously at the spot where his parabatai bond was engraved.
She crossed his gaze, full of horror and pain, and then he passed out.

3

Shadowhunters couldn't lie in trial.

In fact they didn't even talk. The Mortal Sword was there to search their soul and uncover their memories and feelings, to make the truth come out for everyone to see. Jonathan tried to act all innocent, but the images in his mind didn't leave any room for doubts.

But he was alive. It was his fault and yet he was alive. Ragnor Fell and Jace Wayland were both dead, never to open their eyes again, when Jonathan Morgenstern would live.

Alec couldn't stomach it. He left the courtroom as soon as he understood there would be no punishment for him. After all, he had only brutalized a Downworlder – if they were to be sentenced for this each time, there wouldn't be a Shadowhunter free in this world.

Jace wouldn't be tried either. Because he was dead.

Jace was dead.

Magnus had killed him.

Alec felt nothing. He was numb, his entire body cold and painless, foreign to him. He could see and hear but he couldn't make sense of either of his senses. There were words said to him, people in front of his eyes, but he didn't recognize anything.

His parabatai bond was broken. It extended from his body, as always, but there was no one on his other side. It hung limply, dragging behind him like a broken chain attached to his body. A dead weight.

They had all waited for the dispatched team to come back with Jonathan and Jace to finally realize that his brother was really dead. They had still hoped, even when they saw Alec beg and cry on his bed, because what did they know? They could believe still.

He couldn't. He had sometimes wondered what the breaking of the bond would feel like, but he couldn't really fathom it. It couldn't not be there. It was inconceivable.

Until this day.

Alec wandered the deserted halls like a drunk man lost in an unknown city. He could barely walk. He didn't know where he was and where he was going.

He looked at a clock above a door and laughed. Precisely twenty hours ago, he was happy and content, naked in Magnus's arms. He was hopeful and confident in their future. He really was. He thought he could remember it if he concentrated very hard. He knew it for fact, but this seems so foreign now. Twenty hours. He had lived so many twenty hours before. Sometimes in twenty hours nothing had happened at all. A lazy Sunday at home, a boring weekday at school, uneventful, insignificant. How had things gone so terribly wrong in such a short period of time? What had happened?

Where was Jace?
Where was he? He needed Jace. Jace didn’t embarrass himself with those stupid considerations. He didn’t count the hours, he didn't care about time running out or stretching so long it seems it had stopped. He needed Jace to be alive. He needed Jace, to be alive.

Where was Jace?
Where?

Max didn't think Alec noticed when he wrapped his small body around his, where he was curled up in the corner of a corridor, wrecked by terrible sobs. He was calling for Jace. Max was almost certain Alec didn’t hear or see him, but he still held him and he cried too.

Elias wasn't strong enough to draw a portal but he did anyway, because Magnus was in no state to do so, and Ragnor... He didn’t dare to call anyone else for help. If only he hadn’t call them, if only he had dealt with it alone, if only...

They appeared in the werewolves’ lair, because there was to be a meeting of Downworlder representatives, and that’s where Catarina and Tessa would be, the only ones he trusted. He wasn’t strong enough to draw a portal properly. They crash-landed right in the middle of the crappy restaurant the werewolves were running.

They didn’t even blink now, at Clary and her mother taking part in the werewolves politics. They had gone into hiding at first, when they had been cast aside their world and family. She remembered all too clearly that terrible feeling of betrayal, of finding herself and her family completely alone, despised, in all but one night. It had taken time to convince Luke not to give up on life and eventually sought out help from the local werewolf pack. In the meantime the one who had attacked him had been dealt with by the Shadowhunters, and if he didn’t want to suffer the same fate, he couldn’t stay a rogue, lone wolf.

They had gained their trust, painfully, bit by bit. Even if they were Shadowhunters. Mostly because they weren’t anymore, not really. Maybe it had seduced the Downworlders, in a way, to take in the outcasts, to show they were better than that.

Well, they were, more or less.

Clary had only managed to remain hate-free thanks to the tireless work of her mother. She had gone out of her way to ensure her daughter wouldn’t cultivate anger and resentment towards those who had let them down. She was convinced that they could reconcile both sides of the hidden world. And then they would be able to go home.

Clary didn’t have much hope.

She was doodling on her notepad instead of listening to the ongoing discussion. Her mother would shun her for it later, but she didn’t care. She knew how this went, could recite by heart what was going to be said. Well, at least this time there was the question of Camille to be dealt with. It was terrible that she had killed some Shadowhunter, but at least this would finally put an end to her misdeeds. She’d be executed, Raphael would take over as head of the vampires, and maybe they would head somewhere. For now, he was still back at the Institute, and it was all very boring.

Until a portal suddenly opened right in the middle of the room, and Elias stumbled through it. He was dragging Magnus by a sleeve. And Magnus was holding an unmoving Ragnor in his arms,
covered in blood.

Clary's thoughts stuttered to a complete halt, and the world kept spinning, but she was left behind, lost and helpless. Then, she panicked, as did most of the people present. Elias collapsed on the floor and Magnus stood there, motionless, face blank and posture rigid, the only movement being the blood pouring from the open wound on Ragnor’s chest, soaking his clothes and dripping from his side onto Magnus’s hands and to the floor.

Catarina was the first one to move. She jumped from her chair and was at her friend’s side in an instant, Tessa following close behind. She clasped her hands on Magnus's shoulder, resisting the urge to shake him like a tree.

“What happened?” she asked, voice frantic, pleading. Magnus wasn't meeting her gaze, looking sideways, his mouth set into a thin line.

“Magnus, what happened?”

Tessa had kneeled near Elias to check on him.

“He fainted. Magic depletion. He’s alright,” she reassured them. All eyes turned to Magnus and Ragnor. Catarina took Magnus’s face in her hands and spoke more calmly, soft and coaxing.

“Magnus? Magnus, talk to me.”

“He killed him.”

A shocked gasp ran through the small crowd. Clary, who had gotten closer, studied Magnus intently. He looked wrecked, completely out of it. He was clutching Ragnor’s frame tightly to his chest and she had the feeling they would have a hard time making him let go.

“He killed him Cat and I… It was my fault, and then he was dead. I had to… I couldn’t… Cat, he was dead.”

He was becoming hysterical, his entire frame shaking, face drowning in tears.

“Magnus, you have to tell me what happened,” Catarina tried again. She was only whispering but it sounded like a scream in the thick silence of the room.

“I…”

“I called them for help,” came the voice of Elias. He was still on the floor, propped against Tessa for support. “I was… there were hunters following me. They attacked me, and then Magnus and Ragnor came… and they argued with the two men and I… I don’t know, I don’t know why but suddenly…”

He was crying too. Tessa was stroking his hair soothingly, rocking him.

“One of them attacked Magnus. And Ragnor got in the way. And then…”

“And then I killed him.”

Magnus had stopped crying. His face was hard and emotionless, as he stared at Catarina, and only her, while he talked.

“I killed the boy. The other one took him and ran away.”
For the first time in more than two years, Clary looked for Jace's number on her phone. At that very moment she couldn’t think of anything else to do. She had to reach out. This was too horrible. They had to communicate, to talk. She was lying to herself, she did believe in peace, she didn’t want to go to war, she didn’t want to fight her friends. She dialed his number.

It rang and rang until a weak voice answered her on the other side. But it wasn’t Jace.

“Clary.”

“A… Alec.”

It was so strange, talking to him. They had never really gotten along, but she knew he was of the few against their banishment at the time. He was too young for it to really matter though.

“There’s… something happened. I think…”

“I know.”

She believed that’s when she understood. Or maybe it was just a trick of her mind, but she could swear that she knew, at that moment, what he was going to say. She heard distantly Catarina ask Magnus if he knew who the boy was. She didn’t hear his answer, but she heard Alec’s, and they were one and the same.

“Jace is dead.”

Clary saw a whole part of her future suddenly disappear right before her eyes. The part she had been nurturing secretly, where there would be peace, when she would go back to the Institute, where she would hug Simon and Izzy, where she would give Jace hell for forgetting about her, where she would be free to forgive him, or not – it was yet undecided. Well, no, it wasn’t. Not anymore. It was a future that would never come to be.

“Camille killed Simon and Jace went out with fucking Jonathan Morgenstern to hunt down children for fun. Then he killed Ragnor Fell. And then Magnus Bane killed him. And now there will be war Clary. We’re getting out the pitchforks as I speak. There’s nothing we can do now.”

Anger was growing in the room, Downworlders shooting angrily at each other, already ready for a fight.

“I never told you how sorry I was for what happened to you, Clary. I wish things were different. Be safe.”

He hung up. Clary stared at her phone, the tonality ringing in her empty head with the finality of the flat beep of a heart monitor.

Camille had killed… Simon? And Jace had…

She jumped out of her skin when a big hand landed on her shoulder, only to be faced with the concerned but caring gaze of Luke on her.

“What is it?” he asked, and she had the sentiment he really didn’t want to ask at all, and wanted even less to hear the answer.

“War.”
Alec pocketed Jace’s phone and let out a long, drawn-out sigh. He had been surprised to hear it ring, and even more surprised to see Clary’s name flashing on the screen. For a second he had foolishly imagined that maybe Jace and her had been in contact all this time after all, but then he had thought back on what his brother had said the last time they… Angels. The last time they talked. Not the latest, the last. The absolute last. They would never talk again. He would never be able to apologize.

He breathed deeply to try to reign in his emotions. He felt on edge, ready to break, but he couldn’t, he couldn’t. He wanted to reach out for his own phone but dismissed the urge. What would he say to Magnus if he called him? Why did he want to hear the sound of his voice, even now?

He was at the morgue. He had been for several hours now, and would be fine with staying for a few more. Jace’s body was unhurt, unmarred. He could have been asleep, if not for the lack of breath, the unnatural pallor of his skin. Just like Simon. Except Simon was still in the basement with Raphael.

That’s probably what magic did. Maybe it simply stopped his heart, froze the blood in his veins, shut down his brain. Nothing was visible. The blood on Jace’s hands was not his own.

He couldn’t stay here. He had to go back upstairs, to sit at the meeting and try again to prevent an all-out war, even if he was getting desperate. He couldn’t stay here. He couldn’t mourn. There was no time.

“I’ll be back soon, Jace,” he said to his brother, because he couldn’t not, and left the room.

If there was one thing Alec was good at, it was compartmentalizing. He had always done it, as far as he could remember. He didn’t remember now what has pushed him to become so detached from his emotions, but it was almost an automatism. As soon as things became too stressful, hurtful or chaotic, he would enter what his siblings called his "soldier mode". No place for feelings and doubts, only reason and action. It had helped him go through tough times in the past.

It had to help him again this time.

Izzy hated it. The worst time had been when Max had almost died when an unknown assailant infiltrated in the Institute, years ago. She hadn't been able to deal with his calm, his composure, the few hours when they hadn't known if the boy was going to survive. Their family had been falling apart and Izzy had seen only cold stoicism in her brother's demeanor, like he didn't care. She had blamed him for a long time, before understanding what it really entailed.

It was still difficult to accept, she thought, when she watched him enter the council room barely a few hours after he had cried himself to sleep, on the floor, in his twelve-year-old brother's arms.

Nobody made a single comment when he took the place she was keeping for him around the table. That's probably how they thought things had to be. Him powering through a grief none of them could imagine. Well, almost none. Their father looked like he wanted to reach out for Alec. To do what? It was anyone’s guess. Izzy often forgot that Robert had lost his parabatai too. Jace's father. They had never met him. The first time they had heard about Michael Wayland had been to hear about his death at the hand of a warlock and the orphaning of his only child. Robert had adopted
him without a second thought.

And now he was dead too.

She settled against a wall, not allowed to sit in but not wanting to miss it either. She had never attended to those things. She found it so boring, so dull. It was Alec's thing.

She'd been so stupid. So naive to think this would never catch up with them. And now her brother was joining the discussion about war, revenge, punishment, with his hand pressed hard against his side but his face stoic, impassive, his eyes dry. They hadn't even talked at all since Jace… since Jace…

She wouldn't cry either, even if she wanted too.

The two sides were clearly defined, so much that people had sat on one side of the room or the other as a clear sign of their opinion. On one side were Alec’s parents, head of the Institute and presiding the meeting, wanted to prevent a war at all cost. Those who were with them had different motivations, some of which had little to do with being pacific and reasonable, but the result was the same, they didn’t want war.

On the other side, led by Valentine Morgenstern and his “awfully wounded” son – Jonathan had apparently tripped while fleeing and opened his forehead on a rock or something – were the Shadowhunters out for blood and revenge. Their motives weren’t very noble either. Most of them couldn’t care less about honor and proper retribution. All they saw was the opportunity they’ve been waiting for, to take arms and finally wiped out Downworlders from this land.

“We will achieve nothing but more death if we go against them!” screamed Lydia from the first group. Usually Alec would be by her side, arguing too, but he was so tired, he could barely make out the words, let alone form them himself.

“More death is what we will have if we do nothing. Two of us have been killed in as many day, isn’t that proof enough?”

“Proof of what exactly, that people are capable of murder? Just like the one perpetrated against one of them, during those precise days?”

She was right, and yet he still wanted to deny her, to jump to Jace’s defense. But how could he? They knew exactly what had happened. He was at fault, there was no doubt in it. He shouldn’t have been killed in retribution, but he was still guilty.

“And they decided to take action themselves! They don’t care about justice! They don’t respect us!”

“Jace wasn’t killed by an angry mob or a vengeful commando, like you plan to do. The situation escalated. And it was caused by your son!” accused Maryse with a powerful voice. Her words usually meant law, but they were outnumbered this time. Valentine took a sorrowful expression and Alec wished he had the strength to punch him in the face before he uttered his next words.

“And yet it’s you who lost a son, Maryse. Don’t you want retribution for this?”

As if it was what this was about.

“I want justice. Trial, punishment. Not some vendetta that will only kill more sons. We are not
savages.”

“But they are.”

Of course, if they truly believed that, there was no point in arguing. Why would they care to battle Downworlders if they thought they weren’t people? But didn’t they care about themselves? About their children and friends? Or did they fail to see that they would get injured and killed, convinced as they were of their own superiority? They had a thirst for it, for battle, for glory. What glory was there in killing someone? He would never know.

On the top of their list of priorities, there was Magnus’s head on a stick, and for some of them it was barely a metaphor.

His brother had killed his lover’s best friend and his lover had killed his brother in return. And now his lover would be killed. This was his hell. There was no getting out of it. Nothing could make it better, only worse.

Valentine turned toward him then. Alec stiffened, ready to take what the man would throw at him.

“Alec, my boy, your parabatai was killed. Your brother, you friend. I’m sure you must be beyond angry. I’m sure you want payback for this.”

Alec stared at him, ignoring the nods of approval of those around him.

“Did it work for you, Valentine?”

The man gritted his teeth, tensing visibly. Sure, they had hunted and killed the werewolves responsible for Luke’s turning. It hadn’t soothed Valentine at all, hadn’t tempered his anger, hadn’t helped him deal with the fact that his parabatai had turned into a Downworlder.

“Do you think Jace would thank me for killing on his behalf? Did Luke thank you?”

There was a sudden movement forward as Valentine jumped on his feet, only to be restrained immediately by his closest allies.

“The meeting is adjourned” Maryse said, loudly. “Go cool down somewhere else. We’ll pick this up again in a moment.”

Alec immediately isolated himself from the group. Every noise, every word, the slightest things set him on edge. He felt like his skin had been peeled off, he was bared to the world, exposed to its aggressions. He felt naked, alone. He braced himself against a wall, trying to catch his breath. He only opened his eyes when he felt he was no longer alone.

His mother was watching him from a few feet away. She seemed to hesitate, like she wanted to get closer but didn't dare too. It was a dance they had been doing for a long time now, ever since he became a teenager and stopped being her little boy. He knew the steps well. They were always trying to reach out, to cross this gap between them, but they didn't know how to communicate, how to talk to each other.

She wasn’t saying anything, probably because she had too much to say and no idea how too. She looked so tired yet so strong, standing tall, never breaking. For Isabelle it was insulting, to be able to hold on even in times like this. For Alec, it was more than a strength, it was a necessity. Breaking was not an option. Quitting was out of the question.
Sometimes he hated how alike they were. Sometimes he was grateful for it.

"I'll do it, if that's what you want," he said finally, because he knew that's what they were asking of him. That he avenged the death of his brother and parabatai, that he made the murderer pay. Thousands of years and that's where they still were: an eye for an eye. It was revolting.

"Is that what you want?" he asked quietly. He didn't know why it mattered so much suddenly. Probably because, as much as he wanted too, he had never really got free of her influence, and likely never would. He had gone against her in the past, sure, but it weakened his will when they disagreed. He didn't care what others said or thought, but he needed to know what was on her mind.

She finally crossed the space between them to rest both hands on his cheeks, framing his face. She was shorter than him but he always felt smaller, because she made him feel safe and dominated.

"No, my son," she said, and there was so much pain in her voice, revolt, resignation. "No, it's not. What I want is not to be afraid of losing another son. What I want is a chance for us to do better, to be better, to finally focus on something other than war. Beyond everything, what I wish is for my children to be safe and happy. The rest doesn’t matter to me. What will the death of the warlock bring us? Not Jace, not solace, not anything."

They stared at each other for a long time, silent and motionless in the empty corridor, and Alec suddenly caught the glimpse of a way out, a solution. He took her hands in his and held them close to his chest.

"I'll do as you want, mother" he said solemnly. She looked surprised but nodded. Her face was serious, as it always was. She never spoke lightly, and knew he rarely did too.

“I have a proposition for you,” Alec claimed as soon as he went back into the room. All heads turned to him with curiosity, but he was looking straight at Valentine.

“Go on.”

“We will get revenge on the warlock.”

Isabelle gasped at his back and Lydia looked at him with a mix of disbelief and calculation, like she was trying to decipher some hidden motives in his decision. It was pleasant, he realized, how much faith she had in him, to immediately jump to the conclusion that there was more to it. He couldn't help but give the smallest nod in her direction. He didn't want her to think he was betraying her and their cause. She would understand soon enough.

“I do want to, but I guess someone will want to take actions against us in return. It will never end.”

Valentine nodded. They knew that of course, they were counting on it.

“So, since all of this is about justice, and setting things right, we will avenge my brother’s death. And if they want to kill us in return, there will be nothing to do to prevent the escalation of violence. So be it. But if they don’t…”

He paused. He wanted to look at his parents, to smile reassuringly at his baby sister, to see a friendly face, but he didn’t let himself break gaze with Valentine.

“If I can convince them not to, if no one avenges him in return, then this will be the end of it. End
of the story. Everybody will go back home, no more measures will be taken, it will be all over. There will be no more payback to get, right? No more vengeance.”

Valentine couldn’t admit out loud that he didn’t care for honor or justice. He couldn’t say that what he wanted was Downworlders’ blood on his blades and nothing else.

“You’re a fool if you think you can reason with these savages,” commented Valentine. His expression was calculating, focused. He was looking for the catch, trying to find a reason why Alec was risking such a bargain.

“Then it’s all the same to you, yeah? Or do you actually believe, deep down, that they could be wiser than us?”

Valentine’s mouth was set into a smile, but his face was anything but smiling. Alec felt like this would have evolved into a fight if they were without an audience. As it was, his smile simply grew wider, and he nodded curtly.

“Only on one condition.”

“What?”

“That you be the one to do it.”

Alec didn’t show anything. No emotions, no reactions, nothing. He was thinking fast, but he was trapped. He couldn’t back down, and he certainly couldn’t give any valuable reason as to why it was out of the question. For a moment he thought he was going to be sick. Valentine obviously took pleasure in this. Even without knowing what he really was asking of Alec, he enjoyed forcing him to go against all his principles.

“Agreed,” Alec managed to say with a strangled voice.

“Very well. Let’s do that, Alec. If no one comes after you, we’ll leave this alone, for now. But if they do, there will be war. And we’ll kill them all.”

Maryse stood up, outraged.

“You can’t do that!”

“And you can’t stop us. You’re outnumbered Maryse. The majority has spoken. We’ll send back the vampire with a formal request for a confrontation, and it will be set. As it’s been said, so it shall be.”

This concluded the meeting, but for a few seconds everyone stayed still, defying their opponents. Then Valentine moved, and his group followed him out. Isabelle rushed towards Alec, as did their parents, and Lydia and John.

“Alec, why did you do that?”

“Alexander, what is this nonsense?”

“Brother, you can’t.”

Alec chose to focus on that. He looked at Isabelle, ignoring the others.

“I know what I’m doing. It will work, trust me.”
“No but, you can’t.”

Her gaze was insisting, pleading. She wasn’t talking about politics, about crazy bargains. And she was right. He couldn’t do it. But he was going to find something. He had to.

“It will be fine Izzy. It will all be fine.”

“Magnus doesn’t have to die,” declared Isabelle when she barged into his room some time later, while everybody was busy preparing for the event to come. Alec was sitting at his desk, pulling out his hair in search for a solution to this mess.

“What are you talking about?”

“He doesn’t have to die. Not for real. If the whole point of this is revenge and how to stop it, Magnus doesn’t have to die. It will be enough if everyone think he is and still decide to stop the fight there. That’s the point, right?”

“Yeah but…”

“They are going to issue a formal request for a confrontation soon. You have to warn him. Tell him it isn’t real, tell him to protect himself. Cast a spell, something. It shouldn’t be that hard for him! We just have to…”

“Izzy, please slow down,” asked Alec, head spinning. She was agitated, walking back and forth in the small space of his room, and it was setting him off.

“That’s… that’s actually what I thought about. When I suggested this. But can we really pull that off? What will happen when everyone discovers I lied and deceived them?”

“It’s a thing to think about later. You can’t kill him, Alec, this is ridiculous, people don’t get killed like this, this is not the Dark Ages.”

“Feels awfully like it lately.”

“You could always run away together.”

“Izzy, be serious.”

“I am.”

He had to met her steady gaze to realize she indeed was. She had taken off all of her makeup and was wearing a sober knee length black dress with long sleeves. He hadn’t noticed.

She was mourning. Of course she was. In the midst of all this, she still needed to.

“I… I really believe that I can make this work. That they will see reason. But our side… I know they need Magnus’s death. It makes me sick but I don’t see a way out, and my priority is this, it’s to end that conflict, it had always been. The rest doesn’t matter, it doesn’t.”

She got closer, enough to kneel in front of him and take his hands in her own.

“Alec, do you hear yourself? You’re talking about fighting and killing somebody. It would be wrong even if you didn’t now him. If we’re so bloodthirsty that we need this of you to back off, then we don’t deserve that peace, and we don’t deserve to call ourselves Angels’ children. There is
“no need for more death.”

“I figured that I could… could save Magnus from this. But I didn’t know if you’d agree.”

“What do you mean?”

“You, and the parents… I don’t know. That could be what you want. For him to die. Maybe that should be what I want too. He did… He killed Jace. Jace is dead, but I… I still can’t hate him. I can’t wish for his death. I just can’t.”

“Alec, I don’t either! I’m angry and sad and nothing will make me feel any better, especially not killing the warlock.”

“You almost killed Raphael.”

She let go of his hands and sat down on her heels, head hung low. She tightened her fists on her lap and he feared he had angered her, but she simply stated, without looking at him:

“And I’m glad you stopped me.”

He tried not to show how relieved he was to hear that. He didn’t want her to know how much he had feared she wouldn’t forgive him, that she would stay in that set of mind.

“I was hurt and shocked, and I wasn’t thinking. I don’t want any of us to be murderers. I don’t want anyone to die. And Jace he… he…”

She was crying again, trying to wipe away tears that kept flowing and flowing. Alec fell to the ground at her side and took her in his arms as she sobbed.

“He should have known better Alec. He should have fucking known better. This shouldn’t have happened.”

They held on tightly to each other. Alec stroked her hair soothingly, his own tears blurring his vision, and he had no idea how long they stayed like this, but he actually felt better once they finally calm down and let go. He was more centered, focused. This wasn’t over yet. They could keep fighting.

“Warn Magnus,” Isabelle said decisively. He shook his hand.

“I can’t.”

“Alec…”

“No but… I don’t… I don’t know where… we stand. He might hate me for what happened to his friend, he might think I hate him, I can’t… I can’t confront him now. Later maybe when… Maybe later.”

“Someone else then. You can contact… the vampire. Raphael. I know you trust him.”

“Izzy.”

“I have contacts of my own. I’ll pass the message. It will be okay. It will work.”

They stared at each other for a long time, trying to decide if they really believed that, if they really could hope.
They didn’t find any answers.

Sun had barely set down when Raphael was allowed to leave the Institute, but giving the situation he believed he would have tried to leave even if it was midday.

His cellphone was useless in the basement of the Institute, but he called Lilly, his most trusted lieutenant, as soon as he was at a safe distance from the Shadowhunters. She quickly updated him on the last events, even worse than what he had imagined. He wanted to go see Magnus immediately, especially given the message the hunters were sending him back with, but he had to take care of the burden in his arms first.

He had taken the boy with him, convincing the Shadowhunters that they wouldn’t know how to kill him properly. Actually, it was probably true. They were an ignorant lot.

He had made his decision: he would turn the boy, if he could. Another Shadowhunter in their ranks could only be a winning argument in the conflict to come. And he couldn’t bear the thought of leaving him to die simply because he had had the misfortune of finding himself at Camille’s. All her wrongdoings weighed on his shoulders. He would make it up to the boy.

Granted, that Simon would probably not be thrilled. Well, that was life. And death.

He brought Simon back to the hotel with clear instructions to the ones holding the place and keeping an eye on Camille to proceed with the boy’s turning and keep him within the hotel’s confine. Then he ran to the werewolves’ lair. One issue at a time.

The first person he saw was Clary Fairchild. She was fiddling with her phone outside of the restaurant, like she hesitated to use it. She accosted him as soon as she recognized him.

“Raphael! The boy Camille killed, the boy, was it… who was it?”

“His name’s Simon,” he answered, and it clearly was what she had feared to hear.

“And is he… is he…”

“I’m turning him. I think it has a good chance of success.”

She looked relieved, then horrified, and then she couldn’t choose between the two. He understood. She didn’t want her friend to die, but he wouldn’t be living either.

The choice wasn’t hers anyway.

“Is Magnus still here?” he asked, tempering his impatience.

“Yeah, in the back”, she answered absently, still measuring what he had told her, but she still fell into his steps when he went inside.

The main room of the restaurant was in chaos – vampires, werewolves and faeries argued loudly with each other, some of them close to getting physical. Everyone was in a general state of agitation and confusion, and most of them ignored him completely, didn’t even notice him. He made his way to the kitchen.

This part was calmer but somehow even tenser. The atmosphere was heavy, the silence thick despite the sounds from the other side of the door.
There was a sit-in: Magnus was propped against a wall, cradling Ragnor’s head close to his chest. Catarina was sitting on one side of him, Tessa on the other. Luke was standing a few feet away, arms crossed and face closed off, looking ten years older than the last time Raphael had seen him. They all turned to him when he pushed the doors, except for Magnus, still as marble.

“I can’t leave you alone for one night,” Raphael sighed without humor. Nobody smiled. “I have a message from the Institute.”

That at least had the benefit of waking them from their stupor, Magnus included.

“They are asking for a formal fight, to death. Between Magnus and the Lightwood eldest, Alec,” he said with a measured tone, even if this was dreadful news.

Magnus closed his eyes as if he was in pain and his head fell back down.

“He’s coming to kill me,” he declared simply. Nobody said anything. It was the naked truth.

“What are we going to do?” asked Catarina to no one in particular. She looked tired, drained, one of her hands clasped in a painful hold in Ragnor’s. Magnus couldn’t look at her.

“Nothing.”

“What? Magnus, you…”

“If he’s coming for me, I’ll give hell to anyone who tries to stop him or blame him for it. He can have retribution and be done with it. It’s fine by me. I deserve it.”

“And does he?” asked Catarina, voice shaking with anger. “Does he deserve to go through this?”

“If that’s what he wants…”

Raphael rolled his eyes.

“Stop it with the martyr number. It’s not taking us anywhere. And do you believe it’s really his wish? Do you?”

“I killed his brother!”

“After he killed your friend. Don’t presume to know his heart so well, Magnus.”

“Don’t you either. He was his parabatai. What is supposed to trump that?”

“Many things,” came the answer from Luke, dark and regretful. He knew what he was talking about.

“It doesn’t matter,” dismissed Magnus quickly. “We can convince our people to leave it as it is. We can stop this. If all it takes is…”

“Your death?” finished Tessa with a pained tone. Magnus looked apologetic, but he nodded.

“I can’t fight him anyway. I won’t. I won’t hurt him.”

There was a finality in his words that cut the conversation short. Luke sighed before going back to the dining room, claiming he had to warn the others and prepare them for the Shadowhunters, and Raphael made his excuses too, having to return to the Hotel to gather his own people and take care of Camille.
He had his phone in hand to warn Lily when a werewolf in the middle of an aggressive shouting match with a faerie knocked into him, sending the device flying and crashing on the floor with a sinister sound. The idiot hadn’t noticed a thing. Taking a deep breath, Raphael picked up his phone on the floor – dead, of course. He pinched the bridge of his nose, talking himself into remaining calm.

Really, when would thing stop getting worse and worse?

“Raphael, it’s Alec Lightwood. I really hope you’ll get this message, I… The fight isn’t real. Well it is, but I won’t… You have to tell Magnus I’m not out for blood. I would never… You have to tell him. I made a deal with Valentine Morgenstern, and they want Magnus dead, but it doesn’t have to be this way. My hand are tied, he has to protect himself, he has to fake his death. That’s all that matters for now, that he knows… I… Tell him that… that I… Tell him it’ will be fine. I’ll fix this, I’ll fix everything. It will all be fine.”

Isabelle was fiddling anxiously with her phone. She had told Alec she could reach out to someone on the other side, but now that she was racking her brain to decide on who to call, she was coming up short. She was out of touch with most of her Downworlder friends, and even the one she had been really close too and kept acquaintances with, she wasn’t sure she could trust them. They had been a way to rebel for her, to feel like she was making a difference, like she wasn’t like the others, and she didn’t know what she had been for them. Maybe the same thing, a challenge, exciting because it was forbidden and new, but did it go deeper than that? The only one that had been really different, was Meliorn, a faerie, but things had ended a long time ago and not too well. And if she recalled correctly, he had a deep mistrust of Shadowhunters.

No, really, there was only one person she really felt like she could trust with this, but would she dare to call her? Izzy had been too ashamed, too guilty to try to contact her after they’d been thrown away, discarded like they were nothing. She had wanted to, so much, but she wasn’t brave enough to face her. And to reach out now after all this time in these circumstances…

It wasn’t the moment to dwell on that, she decided, and pressed the call button resolutely.

Clary stared at her phone, like it was suddenly going to stop displaying what she was seeing right now. She was sitting on the stairs, her sketchbook laying open on her laps, forgotten. She was frozen in place, unable to pick up, unable to look away, as she stared at the two young girls smiling joyfully on the screen. A picture several years old, because she hadn’t seen the person it was attached to ever since. Hadn’t heard about her at all. Isabelle was calling and she couldn’t answer.

The call ended and Clary breathed, only for her phone to start ringing again a few seconds later.

“Izzy <3 :D is calling, Izzy <3 :D is calling, Izzy…”
She picked up with shaking fingers.

“Y… Yeah?”

“Clary, thank the Angels you answered, I have something to tell you.”

“Wh… What is it?”
“It’s about Alec. I have to tell you…”

Clary pulled the phone away from her ear. It had been years. She was heartbroken when she left the Institute. They had grown up together there, she loved Izzy dearly. But she had never heard from her after that night. Not a phone call, not a message, nothing. Izzy had never tried to contact her.

And she was calling now, tonight of all night, because she wanted to talk about Alec.

Her hands brushed the half finish drawing in her lap. It was the Lightwood siblings, Simon and her, as she remembered them. She had drawn it often, but it was getting less and less clear in her mind, like a picture fading years after years.

“You will tell him?” she heard Izzy said when she started listening again.

“Why did you call me?”

“I… Your… your number is the only one I… I didn’t know who else to call. I know Alec talked to you on Jace’s phone so I figured…”

She figured it was fine to call and do as if nothing had happened. That surely her calling meant everything was fine.

Clary felt dizzy and weak. Things were in chaos, Simon was dead, Jace was dead, and Magnus was going to join them soon, and Izzy was calling her to play the messenger. To say what? That Alec was very sorry but it had to be this way? That all they wanted was for Magnus to die and then it would all be fine, they would go home, end of the story? That Clary could be their mediator because she wasn’t really a Shadowhunter anymore but she wasn’t a Downworlder either, right?

“Clary, you’ll tell him right? Alec won’t kill him, it doesn’t have to be this way, it doesn’t have to…”

Of course Alec wouldn’t kill him. Even discarding the question of skills – Magnus was a high warlock after all, they weren’t so easily defeated – Alec wouldn’t do it. He couldn’t. Clary was sure of it.

“Don’t worry, Magnus won’t die,” she said without thinking. Isabelle didn’t pick up on her acid tone.

“Clary… when this… when this all ends… when…”

“If this all ends,” Clary cut, fighting back tears, “do you think there will be anything left to save for us?”

She was met by silence at the other end of the line.

“When this ends,” finally said Izzy, voice loud with determination, “I’ll show you there is.”

Clary hung up and resisted the urge to throw the phone on the floor. Instead she took a deep breath, two, three, until she was calm again. Luke went out of the kitchen just then, looking for her.

“We’re leaving soon. They’re… preparing for battle. Are you coming?”

“Yeah, of course.”

“Who was it?” he asked, looking at the poor object she was crushing in her hand. She shrugged.
“Nobody.”

Chapter End Notes

To be honest, I wouldn't read a fic like that if I stumbled upon it on AO3 x)

I am so sorry for this. Really, I am. I have trouble writing the last part but it will be more or less as horrible as you're imagining it I guess. I'm sorry, Romeo & Juliet command it. I really don't know why I wrote something so terrible, but well, I have to go to the end of it now.

Thank you for reading, come yell at Inrainbowz on tumblr, see you for the dramatic conclusion.
Chapter 3

Chapter Summary

Part Three : Where It Shall End

Chapter Notes

I finally got around to finish this. This part gave me trouble mostly because... well, it was terrible from beginning to end. I'm glad it's over though.

No surprise as to how this end but I still want to warn you that this is ANGSTY AS HELL. No but really. I never killed so many people I loved, I feel dirty. Some of you had predicted this chapter pretty well, it's embarrassing, but well, you can still enjoy the pain. I still can't believe I wrote something like this. I'll post some fluff next I promise.

If you're interested Magnus and Alec are finally going on their first date in the next chapter of my WIP. Now that I think about it, this two fics have the same word count right now. How it that logic.

A big thank you to my beta NightChanger who had to suffer through this.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

1

In Magnus’s opinion, Downworlders and Shadowhunters were exactly the same.

He had frequented both extensively and the conclusion was obvious: they couldn’t stand each other because they were too much alike. Driven by warrior’s instincts, set in the past, unable to evolve. To him, this world was not theirs, hadn’t been for a long time. Mundanes had this world, they were moving forward, constantly changing. They adapted. Them? They still lived in their feudal system, still fought over old feuds like lords disputing a patch of land, and they still believed they were on the top of the world.

But the truth was, be it Shadowhunters or Downworlders, no one would miss them if they were gone. They had no purpose, no use. Demons had disappeared from their world, but they had kept trying to keep a special place in it, instead of just fading among the Mundanes and finally letting go of their archaic way of life.

Magnus hated every single one of them, just like he hated himself.

They were all gathered on the docks near the werewolves HQ, all the Downworlders of New York it seems. They were waiting for the Nephilim to come and claim repayment. Some were impatient, some were anxious. Some couldn’t be more happy to finally spill some Angel’s blood. It was all so pointless.
They were coming for him, but he honestly couldn’t care less. Some had expressed outrage, anger, at the punishment demanded by the Nephilim, but really, why?

He had killed a child.

That was it. In a fit of rage, without even thinking, he had murdered the shadow boy, with his bare hands. He wasn’t any better than Camille. They deserved the same fate.

It was only fitting in the end. Camille had been the only one he had truly loved and the only one he had believe he could have a life with, because they were alike. Immortal, careless, merciless.

Murderers.

He has asked Catarina to bind his magic.

She had refused at first, of course. She had screamed at him, given him hell for being so intent on dying. It wasn’t how you paid for your mistakes, she had said, it wasn’t how you set things right. But what things, what mistakes? He had killed a boy. An idiotic young man who didn’t know any better, who had his whole life to live and learn. And now he was dead, because Magnus had killed him, and there was nothing he could ever do to make it any better, to right this wrong.

“And what about Alec?” Catarina had asked, so angry, so sad. What about Alec indeed? Alec had lost his brother and parabatai, and he was the one who would carry the sentence for this crime. So what if Magnus had loved him? Alec certainly couldn’t have any kind of feelings towards Magnus. He was a monster. And he deserved what was coming for him.

His magic was quiet and still in his body. It was such a strange feeling, foreign and unsettling, but not so unpleasant after all. He felt bare and defenseless, but also lighter, more at rest. He didn’t feel much of anything really. He couldn’t think properly. He knew things were terrible and wrong but he was confused as to why everybody around him looked so anxious and anticipating. What was supposed to happen? The Nephilim would carry they judgment, Alexander would avenge his brother. That was it, wasn’t it? No need to be worried.

It would all be fine.

“Are you sure?”

“I… yes, yes, I am. I called her, explained it to her… she’ll tell him. There’s no doubt.”

“Are you really sure?”

Isabelle gripped Alec’s arm to stop his incessant passing.

“Alec, you need to calm down.”

It was easier said than done, of course, but she didn’t know what to do to help him relax. How could he, really? The Institute was in an uproar, everybody getting ready for battle, and Alec was to lead the march, to be in the front line. He was getting more and more agitated.

“Talk to him yourself, I’m begging you. It would put you at rest, and reassure you both. He needs to hear from you brother,” she said for the hundredth time this evening. To no avail: Alec shook
his head stubbornly, eyes lit with fear.

“I can’t, I can’t. I don’t know what to say to him. This is so… How did it come to this? Why is this happening to us? I’m scared Izzy.”

She felt her heart break but kept her composure. Alec needed her to be the strong one this time, because he was slowly falling apart and she was the only one who could hold him together. They had to go through with this. Everything will be fine then.

“Okay, okay. You’ll… you’ll see him soon anyway. We’re going to the werewolves. It will be over soon. It’s all an act, okay? They will see reason and everything will be fine. It’s going to work Alec. It’s going to work.”

She didn’t know how she managed to look convincing when she was so unsure herself. She figured that’s what parents always did. Give reassurance and hope they didn’t have themselves. Anything to keep them going.

“Izzy? Alec?”

They turned toward the door to Alec’s room. There stood Max, one of the few people in the Institute who wasn’t dressed like he was going to war. The few children would stay behind with the oldest of them, something the boy wasn’t happy about at all.

“Hey you, what is it?” Izzy enquired softly, motioning him to come closer. She put a comforting hand on his shoulder.

“Why can’t I go with you?” he pleaded. Alec and Izzy exchanged a pained look. He wasn’t throwing a tantrum like he could sometimes, it was something else.

“We talked about this Max. You’re too young to fight, and we don’t know what’s going to happen.”

“I don’t want to be left behind.”

Of course that’s what he was afraid of. They were all going and if it was supposed to be for peaceful negotiations, Max was young but not naïve. He knew what the risk were. Why else would they be so adamant of him staying here?

“We’ll be back in no time Max, don’t worry. Everything’s going to be fine,” she said, and she wondered if she was more convincing to him than to Alec. For the look he was giving her, pleading and terrified, she doubted it.

“We have to go,” Alec urged. Izzy nodded briefly and pulled Max into a tight hug.

“It’s gonna be okay Max.”

“Jace is dead.”

She pulled back to stare at him. He looked fierce, almost accusing. Alec rested a hand on his shoulder, but it was hard to say which one needed the most support.

“Jace is dead,” Max repeated with a wavering voice, What weight could her words have in front of this simple truth? What comfort could she offer him when they had already lost a brother? When she was scared herself?
Alec knelt, folded his tall body to get on eye level with the boy. He had always been incredibly gentle with Max, showing a patience and a softness that made her sure he would be an amazing father someday.

“We have to keep going Max,” he said with a firm voice. They stared at each other for a long time. What were they seeing into each other’s eyes, what understanding, what truth? Alec didn’t add anything, because he had never lied to Max and wasn’t going to start now. It was one of the reason why he wasn’t too good at comforting people. It required too much lying.

“Are you going to kill the one who did it?”

Alec made a pained noise but before he could answer Max cut him.

“I don’t think you should. I don’t think it’s ever a good thing to kill anybody.”

The boy pinched his lips, waiting to be scolded but holding his ground, gaze unwavering. He would do better than them when he was older. He would do the right thing, unlike them.

“I think so too Max. I’ll do what I can to prevent it,” Alec managed to say with a strangled voice. Max launched himself at his neck to hug him fiercely, hard enough that it must have hurt. He hugged Izzy too, but when he stepped back, his face was hard and unreadable. He was putting on a brave front. Alec ruffled his hair.

“Be good.”

He stayed alone in the room while they left.

Izzy tried to call Clary’s phone, Magnus’s, Raphael’s, anyone’s. There was no answer.

The way the Shadowhunters were marching towards Luke’s pack lair, in full combat gear and offensive formation, did nothing to ease Alec’s worries. What was it with them and violence? Fighting, blood, death? Why, why were they so eager to risk their life and take those of others, to harm and kill? He couldn’t understand. It had caused him great suffering when he was younger, convinced that there was something wrong with him, that he was no true Shadowhunter. Growing up, he had decided that there was something wrong with them. All of them.

The difference now was that he wasn’t sure he could change them anymore.

They knew the docks well. Had fought werewolves there time and time again. It made him sick, and still he was marching with the rest of them, powerless to stop them, not brave enough to go against their will. Passive, as always, until he’d become as detached and bloodthirsty as his parents and their friends. And he didn’t see how he could put an end to it.

Maybe Izzy was right. Maybe they should just leave. Take Max with them, ask Magnus and anyone tired of fighting who would wish to come with them. Leave this place and never come back, build a life elsewhere, away from hatred and violence, away from it all. It was a nice dream. Impossible, but nice.

The Downworlders where all gathered, waiting for them when they arrived. They didn’t seem any less ready for a fight than they were. It wasn’t reassuring in the least. Magnus wasn’t amongst
them.

He had never wondered before what was the greeting protocols to people you had come to kill.

There would be endless discussions, angry shouting and threats, but he trusted they wouldn’t open
the hostility too soon. He gripped Izzy by the elbow, driving her away from the others.

“I’m going to find him,” he whispered, anxious to be heard by the Shadowhunters around them.
They were all enemies to him now. The whole world was against him.

“I’ll put an end to it. I’ll bring back his body and confront them, and we’ll go from there.”

“It will work. It will work, the Downworlders will be reasonable. You believe that right?”

“Yes,” he lied. She didn’t see through it, and for it he was both grateful and pained. He would
make it work. One way or another.

The docks were deserted. He could hear the rumor of the conversation from where the two groups
were confronting each other, but where he was things were quiet, peaceful, only the murmur of the
moving water nearby. There was barely any light, only long strip of yellow artificial light cutting
the shadows of the containers scattered around him. He was feeling weak and cold all over. His
parabatai run was hurting like a fresh burn, radiating pain to all his body. Alec couldn’t think about
Jace, because then he would sit on the ground and never move again.

He couldn’t think about Magnus killing Jace either. He had deliberately ignored this fact for the
last few hours and if he could, he would do so forever. It was too hard to reconcile, too hard to
bear. He had to cling to Magnus, he had to save him. And maybe then he could hate him like he
was supposed to. He would, when he was safe.

Alec was blissfully alone and he figured himself in a labyrinth, hopeless to ever go out but free at
the same time, shielded from the outside world. Maybe if he got lost enough he could escape it all.
He would rather wander indefinitely than find what he was looking for.

But of course, his will didn’t matter here. It never had.

Magnus was waiting in the center of the labyrinth.

It was strange, because for a moment, when they saw each other in the dim light, it was like
nothing had happened. They raced and crashed into each other, oblivious, happy, just for a short
while, to meet again. They hugged and kissed, hard, desperate, and it was so briefly bright and
wonderful, before it hurt more than anything. They parted lips but couldn’t let go of each other –
for a moment still they breathed the same air, forehead pressed hard, trying to disappear.

As soon as it had come, it went – Magnus took a step back like he had been burnt, eyes wild and
panicked. They stared, at a loss, before Magnus straightened up. His face lost all emotions. He
seemed resolute, resigned.

“Go on then.”

It’s only at that very precise second that Alec realized he couldn’t do it. He had his blade in hand
and Magnus, his parabatai’s murderer, was in front of him, unarmed and vulnerable, and it
wouldn’t even be for real, but none of that mattered. He couldn’t do it. He couldn’t raise a blade
against him, couldn’t hurt him. It was so obvious, he didn’t understand how he believed he could
do it. Because he couldn’t. No way, never.

“Don’t let it drag, Alexander, please. Let’s be done with it.”

“I can’t.”

His grip on his weapon was so weak he almost dropped it. Magnus had a painful look on his face, and Alec couldn’t bear it, wanted to see him smile, and laugh, and in love with him.

He had to ask if Magnus had done as they said. He had to be absolutely sure.

“I can’t, Magnus, I… I have to know, you…”

“Alexander.”

Alec froze. A shiver ran up his spine, disgust and repulsion, at a voice dripping with hatred and condescendence, from a man he hated with all his being. Magnus’s look hardened, fixated on a point behind his shoulders, and his whole body tensed.

“Alexander, what are you waiting for? Kill him.”

He could feel Valentine on his back, getting closer and closer. Magnus wouldn’t meet his gaze, staring at the man behind him, and Alec was drowning. He couldn’t move, couldn’t turn or lift his arms, or even talk.

“Valentine. You’re on war’s side then, how surprising,” hissed Magnus with contained fury. They obviously knew each other, and not in a good way. What Downworlder would be in good term with Valentine Morgenstern though? He had denied his own parabatai once, for turning into a werewolf.

“You’re the worst of your kind, Bane,” Valentine spat, speaking the name as an insult. “Our worlds will be better off without you.”

Magnus smiled, terrible, hateful, but he said nothing. He agreed, Alec realized, he thought the same.

“Come one, Alexander. Isn’t it what you came for? You can do it right?” asked Valentine with fake concern. Alec mind was reeling. He was trapped. Standing helpless and terrified between Valentine and Magnus, chained to his spot even though he couldn’t see either of them, vision blurred and thoughts tangled.

“Alexander…”

“Alexander, come on.”

It was just a combination of syllabus, his name. Nothing particularly hideous or beautiful, just a succession of sound, a simple world. And yet there was nothing common in the way the two men were saying them. He had never liked his name because of the way he always heard it – always so cold, ruthless, because they had to be strong, had to face the world, and there was no place for love and softness there. But the way Magnus said it, even now that he was getting closer to the raised end of his blade, even now it was so gentle, tender and loving, firmly tied to Magnus’s mouth like a rope send to catch him, to bring him to this man, those lips.

“Alexander.”
He didn’t know which one was talking anymore. He was waiting, he wasn’t sure what for.

Valentine was getting closer and closer, and Alec was waiting. No one would harm Magnus, or anyone. He was the one who was here to kill someone tonight, and he would kill whoever it took to stop this nonsense. He was listening carefully to his steps and words, but Magnus was distracting him. He kept saying his name, kept pleading, for his life or for his death, it was impossible to tell. Alec just wanted for them to be quiet, so he could think, so he could concentrate, and do what he had to do.

“Alexander.”

Valentine was getting closer, closer. He was talking to Magnus now, asking him why he wasn’t attacking, what he was waiting for. Magnus flinched at every words, attacked to his core by the man’s presence and voice.

Alec wanted to kill him.

He had never wanted to kill anyone before, but since everyone seemed to think death was the only solution, the only end to all this, and that he was the one to grant it, he knew where his choice lied.

Head fuzzy and body numbed, he barely registered Magnus gripping the hilt of his blade to guide it closer, resting the point over his chest. Alec stared, horrified, at the uninterrupted line going from his hand to his blade to Magnu’s heart. The warlock kept saying his name, over and over, “Alexander, Alexander, come on, come on…”

To Alec, lost and scared but ever hopeful, he could only think Magnus was trying to have him fulfill his part of the arrangement so that Valentine would be satisfied. Magnus wasn’t really going to die after all. Alec kept saying that to himself, as Magnus was insisting, pressing the blade, he clung to the idea that it would be fine, it wasn’t real, it would be okay, even if he wasn’t sure, and he couldn’t ask, and it was hell.

“Come on, come on.”

For a brief moment he was back in Magnus’s loft, hidden under the sheet, safe and loved, “come on, come on, that’s right…”

Alec lost focus on Valentine behind him. Magnus’s eyes were shining with tears and a terrible doubt broke the mantra in Alec’s head.

“I’m sorry,” Magnus whispered, so low Alec would have never heard it weren’t they so close, the space between their chest the size of his blade but their heads bent toward each other. Alec’s grip loosened of the weapon. He spotted the flower then, in the breast pocket of his coat. Cyclamen.

Resignation, and goodbye.

“What? Magnus…”

It dawn onto him with absolute certainty that Magnus was awaiting his death from his hand. All thoughts stopped spinning into his head and he tried to take a step back, to free his hand form Magnus’s own and run, as far away as he could, away from the war and from the man he loved who thought he was going to kill him.

He tried, but there was someone behind him.

“Won’t you fight, warlock?”
A third hand joined the two others on the blade, and without any hesitation or pause, pushed, hard.

Izzy had no interest in the shouting match between the two camps. Ironically, it was the first time she witnessed any kind of agreement between Shadowhunters and Downworlders – it wasn’t one group against the other, but more like pacifists against war lovers. Basically half of each camp was trying to hold back the other half, who were insulting each other. She didn’t know how it would go, but she didn’t care.

She needed to talk to Clary.

She couldn’t shake the feeling that things were about to go terribly wrong, way worse than how it was shaping to be for now. She was looking frantically through the group, for a head of bright red hair. She spotted Luke, and Jocelyn, but no trace of their daughter. Determined, she slipped away from the gathering toward the Chinese restaurant the wolves used as their HQ. She had to find Clary.

She found her sitting by Simon’s side.

She wasn’t touching him. Just looking. Izzy didn’t even know the vampire had taken him in the end, but it didn’t matter. Having Simon dead or undead was equally awful on the successions of awful things that had happen lately, and she would spare him a grieving thought when there wasn’t a thousand other things to worry about. She envied him, actually. He was better sleeping than witnessing all this.

“Clary.”

She didn’t turn, didn’t acknowledge her. Her long hair hid her face, and Izzy only saw her empty eyes and tear streaked cheeks when she got closer.

“Clary, it’s me,” she said gently, as if the girl wasn’t going to recognize her.

“What are you doing here?”

“I was… I was looking for you.”

If they all have their responsibilities in the current events, hers were to have let Clary down, all those years. Had she been braver, she would have reached out. One bridge between their two sides was better than none. She didn’t know what it would have changed, in the grand scheme of things, but at least they wouldn’t be there now, close but so far apart, with Clary’s voice cold and emotionless, and Izzy swimming in guilt.

“What do you want?”

And she wouldn’t see her closest friend for the first time in years just because she needed her help. Izzy had always believed she would find her way back to them, eventually. She had been waiting for things to get better and Clary to return, convinced it would happen sooner or later. Leaving her to suffer the estrangement, because it was easier this way.

“Clary, I… I’m so sorry. For everything.”

“Is that what you came here to say?”
She wanted to say yes, but it would be a lie.

“No.”

Clary finally turned to look at her. Izzy wanted to take her in her arms, to stroke her hair and promise her everything was fine. She couldn’t though. It would be a lie too.

“Clary, did you tell Magnus what I told you? Did you tell him about Alec?”

“Raphael told us about Alec coming to kill him. You didn’t have to call me.”

“Not that!” exclaimed Izzy, panicked. “Alec didn’t want to kill him. But he didn’t have a choice.”

“What difference does it make? They will fight, and one will die, and then the other and everyone, because that’s what they all want.”

“I told you to tell Magnus Alec wouldn’t do it! That he had to fake his death in order for our plan to work! Clary, did you tell him? DID YOU?” she screamed, grabbing the girl by the shoulders, desperate.

“What… what are you talking about? I don’t… so much was going on and I didn’t… I didn’t want to listen to you, I didn’t want to listen to you. Izzy…”

Clary was crying again, frightened eyes fixated on Izzy. She let her go.

“We have to find them. I don’t think Alec will do it anyway, he thinks he can but I’m sure he won’t. Still, we have to find them soon. It can still… It will be okay. We can stop all this. No one has to die. No one more.”

She was getting frantic, split between hope and dread, needing to move now and do something, anything, to change the course of fate, to give them all a chance.

“Why wouldn’t he…”

“They’re together, Clary. Alec and Magnus. They’ve been... We have to stop them.”

Clary’s eyes widened.

“That’s why he… I think… I think Magnus wanted to die. He said…”

Realization hit her and she scrambled to her feet, seized by the same frantic urge to move, to fight. She grabbed Izzy’s hand tight.

“We can still… we can…”

Izzy only nodded and they run out the door.

In just a few seconds, with surprised ease, the blade went through clothes and flesh and came out on the other side, covered in blood. The world fell quiet, everything stopped.

Alec let go and staggered backward. The blade stayed where it was, embedded in Magnus’s chest, as Alec knocked into Valentine, who stepped back too, admiring his handy work. Alec was frozen
in place, until the stillness of the scene dissipated and Magnus suddenly lost his balance, stumbling. Before he hit the ground, Alec had sprung forward to receive his weight against him.

It’s not for real, he kept thinking, it can’t be real. It’s for the show. It has to be. It’s not for real, it’s not for real, it can’t be.

But Magnus didn’t look like he was supposed to – like he wasn’t really dying here and there in Alec’s arm. Alec slid on the ground under the dead weight of the warlock, their eyes locked in a world of pain.

“I love you.”

And that was all. Three words and Magnus’s eyes closed, his breath ceased, his body went perfectly still. Alec’s world tipped on its axis, lost its balance and started spinning out of control.

Magnus was dead.

”I was hoping he would fight you, maybe kill you. Guess he really was a pacifist that one.”

Alec laid Magnus gently on the floor before standing up to face Valentine. He was eyeing Magnus with distaste, clearly annoyed.

“Well, your deed is done then boy. Let’s put your Downworlder friends to the test shall we?”

He was right, things weren’t over. Alec had to face the others, both sides, and try again, keep on trying, even if Simon was dead and Jace was dead and Magnus was dead too. He had to.

But first…

He was going to make sure it succeeded. Peace would be achieved, one way or another, he wouldn’t permit anyone to take revenge on him. Be it for Magnus’s death, or Valentine’s.

The man wasn’t expecting a fight. He was still talking when Alec fetched the small blade on his thigh and jumped him. The knife went smoothly into his throat and it was over as soon as it started. Alec had already knelt back near Magnus while Valentine was still staggering on his feet, hands pressed uselessly on the wound. Alec didn’t hear the fall, didn’t hear him choke and die. He didn’t care about it, or anything.

Not when he was holding a dead Magnus in his arms.

Tessa gasped, a hand flying over her heart. A look to Catarina confirmed that she had felt it too. She made her way to Raphael, busy arguing loudly with vampires and Shadowhunters alike, weapons already out and ready to be used. She put a heavy hand on his shoulder.

“Something happened,” she said gravely. His face fell.

Izzy shared no parabatai bound with Alec, but that didn’t mean she couldn’t find him. There was nowhere he could go where she wouldn’t be able to reach him. She would always be just one step
behind him.

She led them through the maze of containers and empty boxes. Clary was by her side, their hands still clasped together even if it made it harder to run. They couldn’t let go, especially because Izzy was growing more and more agitated. There was no physical link between her and Alec but still, still. She had to find him.

They run until they stumbled upon blood and death in the middle of the maze.

They stopped running. They approached carefully, hoping against all hope it wasn’t as it seemed, even if there was little room for doubt. Alec sat on the floor, Magnus’s head cradled gently in his arms, against his chest. They were covered in blood. A few feet away laid Valentine, a knife in the throat, lifeless eyes staring at the dark sky.

“Alec,” Izzy called, eyes swelling with tears. He didn’t respond, didn’t move. He was staring before him, eyes wide and empty, rocking gently back and forth. Magnus was still in his arms. His bloody sword laid abandoned at his side.

“Alec? Alec, can you hear me?”

She didn’t dare get closer and touch him, she felt like she couldn’t reach him. His eyes were dry. Hers weren’t. Clary stood behind her, their hands still linked. She heard her choke on a strangle sob.

“I think he wanted to die,” Alec murmured quietly. He still hadn’t moved, wasn’t looking at them. He talked for himself, low and dispassionate, facts that were of little concern to him now.

“I should have called. Now he’ll never know. He was waiting for me to kill him. I think he believed that’s what we both wanted.”

He was stroking Magnus’s hair absentmindedly. Clary’s hand was shaking in Izzy’s.

“Alec…”

He suddenly moved, cutting her off. He raised his head to stare into her eyes, and the determination she saw there frightened her.

“Izzy, I won’t let this go on.”

They all raced to arrive first where Magnus and the Shadowhunters were. Everyone stumbled upon the bloody scene, and chaos erupted in the assistance. The fight was imminent. How hard it was, Raphael thought, to keep advocating peace when one of his closest friend was lying dead on the ground. Or, well, in the arms of his murderer. It was only a matter of time. They were all accusing each other, and another dead Shadowhunter wasn’t helping the situations. Why had Magnus killed Valentine? Well, he could picture why. But it was making all of this worse.

The man’s son, Sebastien he recalled, was getting increasingly enraged. He had drawn his stele. It was really bad.

“I’ll kill every single one of you, you worthless scum!”
“THAT’S ENOUGH.”

The booming voice of Alexander Lightwood and his standing form in the middle of the crowd, covered in blood and with two corpses at his feet, put a halt to the agitation. Silence fell over the gathering, all gaze turned toward the man. He had a short sword in his hand and he looked worse than death, pale and desperate.

“I’m the one who killed Valentine,” he declared with a leveled voice. He looked beyond angry, his hatred englobing all around him, the entire world.

“I’m the one who killed Magnus Bane too. What of it now?” he asked, but there was no challenge in his voice, no victory and pride. Just pain, wild and bottomless, so harsh it seemed physical, affecting every person present.

“Do you want to get revenge? Do you want to kill me?” He turned to Sebastian, then to Catarina and Tessa, to Raphael himself. There was a murmur of ascent fighting a shocked refusal among the gathered crowd. Sebastian’s grip tightened on his weapon. Several werewolves, faeris and vampires put their guard up, ready to fight.

“Won’t you let it go then?” he asked again, addressing the Downworlders this time. “Won’t you turn away from the fight? End this now?”

Raphael didn’t know what answer he found in the people he was looking at. They were split, hesitating in front of that boy, barely a man, calling them out with the blood of both camps still fresh on his hands and clothes.

“And if they don’t, will you take revenge to?” he questioned his side then, his own people, his friends and family. “Will you seek punishment for my death despite my crimes? Will it ever end?”

Of that Raphael knew the answer. The Shadowhunters were ruthless, and they believed themselves to be above all kind of jurisdiction. Killing a Shadowhunter granted death, whether he was a murdered or not.

“I won’t allow it. No one will take revenge over me. I said I would put an end to this conflict, and I will. What follows will be on you. But this spiral, this archaic eye for an eye, it ends now.”

“Why… why didn’t Magnus protect himself? Why doesn’t he heal?” Raphael heard Tessa whisper to Catarina by his side.

“Magnus asked me to bind his magic,” the witch answered with a tearing voice. Raphael closed his eyes. All hope was lost then. Magnus was really dead, and it had all been for nothing.

For a brief moment he wondered if it wasn’t better this way. Let them kill each other until none remains. They deserved it.

But then Catarina gasped, and on the opposite side of the circle, Isabelle Lightwood screamed a gut wrenching sound that broke off suddenly, as Alexander Lightwood drove the blade he had raised against his chest into his own heart.

Isabelle kept on screaming. It was the only thing that could be heard. Alec fell to his knees and she threw herself at him. There was blood everywhere, his eyes were already glassy and unfocused.
She grabbed him by the shoulders, resisting the urge to shake him.

“Alec, Alec, please, come on, please,” she begged and pleaded, cradling his face with her hand. He smiled weakly.

“I’m sorry, I’m so sorry, but I couldn’t... That’s all I could... I’m sorry Iz’, I’m so sorry...”

He coughed out blood and sagged even more. She dragged the blade out and started drawing an irzatz even if it was useless. In an instant there was someone else by her side. A blue-skinned witch, with white hair.

“Let me try,” she asked with urgency. She rested her hands on Alec’s chest, but Izzy knew, beyond the shadow of a doubt, that it wouldn’t change anything. Alec looked in her eyes. He knew it too – he rested a hand on hers, always so gentle, always careful.

“It’s okay, it’s okay girl, it’s okay... It will be okay, you’ll see...”

Catarina fell back on her heels, aghast, having trouble believing what was going on around her. Izzy didn’t spare her a second thought though. She hugged Alec as hard as she could as he kept apologizing, over and over again, until his voice went quiet and he became limp in her arms.

Behind her, her mother screamed.

She turned to see her step forward but she couldn’t bear it, she couldn’t.

“Izzy...”

“STAY AWAY.”

Her mother flinched, frightened.

“They were in love,” she murmured in Alec’s hair but loud enough to be heard. “They were in love, and we thought... We thought... We tried but...”

She stood up then, tall and fierce, to face their confused and shocked faces.

“This is your fault,” she screamed. “All of you! You killed them! You killed my brothers, you killed friends and lovers. You killed them! This is all on you. Their death, and blood, they’re on you.”

Her voice had gone quieter and quieter, but when her mother tried to approach her again, she raised her blade to her face.

“I wish I could kill all of you. I would. Isn’t it what you want? Isn’t it? Come on then. Fight. Fight, what are you waiting for? Isn’t that what you came for?” she accused, voice harsh despite its cracks and wavering. “There is no one else to punish but I’m sure you’ll think of something right? Anything, does it matter? Isn’t that what you wanted?”

She felt like her heart was being torn apart, ripped out of her chest. They had tried so hard, and for what? What did they do to deserve that fate? Why did it have to end this way? What was the point?

Clary stepped forward then, past Maryse, until she was up against Izzy’s raised blade. She put her hands on her then, and she was gentle too, gentle and careful, as she pried the blade from Izzy’s hand before wrapping her in her arms, warm and all-encompassing, receiving her weight against her. After a moment Izzy hugged her back, struggling to keep standing, and they cried, and cried.
She wasn’t aware of anything happening around her. She didn’t want to open her eyes ever again.

He would kill Camille as soon as he would be back to the hotel. Right now there was nothing else Raphael could think about, nothing that could bring him more joy. No one was moving. They didn’t know what to do. From the corner of his eyes he saw the boy Sebastian begin to move, but he barely had the time to raise an arm before Robert Lightwood was punching him hard in the face. The boy went down with an outraged cry that died down when he saw the man towering over him, eyes ablaze with fury.

“Try to start shit up and I will end you Morgenstern,” the man hissed with a low voice. The boy glared at him, but he stayed down. The outburst set the group back into motion though, even if it was slow, lethargic, like they were just waking up for a deep and troubled slumber. There was no waking up though, it wasn’t a dream. Fight seemed to have left them, for now at least.

Tessa had wrapped an arm around Catarina’s shoulders who was shaking uncontrollably. Raphael ordered his clan to step back, fully prepared to take down those who were still feeling vindictive, and made his way toward them.

Tessa was talking to Maryse Lightwood.

“We will portal you back to the Institute premises,” she told her, gesturing toward the dead body of the woman’s son. She was dignified and strong, face hardened, and Raphael admired her composure. She nodded curtly before turning toward her daughter who was eyeing her warily. She was holding Clary’s hand firmly, gripping it like a lifeline.

“You should have told me,” Maryse stated, but there was no reproach in her voice, just pains, regrets. “About them. I would have stopped him. I would have taken his place.”

“He wouldn’t have let you,” Isabelle answered weakly. All this pain, all this waste, and for what? The girl had lost two brothers, Raphael had lost two friends. He felt sick. He wondered briefly if the boy turned vampire had awakened. He didn’t wish it for him. He was better off dead.

“Catarina, what is it?”

Raphael reported his attention back to the two witches. Catarina wasn’t calming down, body racked by terrible sobs, and Tessa was trying to soothe her, to no avail.

“Magnus asked me to bind his magic,” Catarina repeated. Tessa rubbed her back, a sad smile on her face.

“It wasn’t your fault. None of it is.”

“You don’t understand. He told me to bind his magic. But I didn’t. I lied.”

Tessa’s eyes widened. Raphael cursed.

“What?”
Magnus opened his eyes.

Chapter End Notes

I'd like to say I'm sorry but really it was kind of awesome to write, even if I was reprimanding myself at the same time. It was frustrating as hell too.

I like the end as it is but I'm still toying with the idea of an epilogue. It wouldn't be much happier than this of course. I don't know, what do you think?

Next AU will be waaaaay nicer. Thank you so much for reading, I'm on tumblr, bye!

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!