Ave Atque Vale

by Fatale (femme)

Summary

Magnus, of course, offers to break them both into the Louvre. “Darling, you’re such a rule follower,” he pouts when Alec turns down his lovely offer of a romantic evening of B&E.

As Alec haltingly tries to explain that rules are actually extremely undervalued, Magnus goes serious, leans close. “Eventually, if you live long enough to see empires rise and crumble, rules won’t mean as much. Schools of thought will come and go.”

"That’s--nice," Alec says, rubbing the back of his neck, “but I still don’t want to get arrested by mundane cops."

Notes

Guys, guys. I don’t know what happened. I just wanted to write some sex on a balcony, but then 3000 words later, I have some navel-gazing vampire!Alec mess. Follows "rip us apart at the seams."
Alec has seen Paris before, but only once when chasing a demon through the muddy streets, rain coursing over his face and soaking through his clothes. It was miserable, and he nearly died. Afterwards, he and Jace had laughed, jumping through the portal back to New York, before sitting on a curb and pulling off their shoes to pour water out, shoulders brushing companionably.

He mostly likes Paris.

He knows that Magnus has some history with Camille here, and he’s both touched and mildly creeped out that Magnus had insisted this be the first stop on their whirlwind tour. They agreed that getting away from New York for a while was a good idea and Alec thought he might enjoy the anonymity, people that don’t recognize them, that don’t have an opinion that they feel absolutely compelled to share.

And why not go on an extended vacation with his hot boyfriend? Alec feels that running away from problems is kind of underrated. It’s not really been an option before, but he’s eager to try it.

It doesn’t take him long to realize that the reason people don’t just relocate to solve all their problems is because you can change the scenery all you want, but like bad habits, problems tend to follow you. Even among the faceless crowds, Alec cannot shake the feeling of being slightly out of sync with the world, like a projection slightly out of phase, two seconds too early or late.

Food is out, since Alec hasn’t really built up a tolerance for much in the way of solids. Museums and tourist destinations operate during daylight business hours. It’s a magical city filled with places he can’t go and food he no longer enjoys.

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"That’s--nice," Alec says, rubbing the back of his neck, “but I still don’t want to get arrested by mundane cops. Jace will laugh himself sick.” He lets himself imagine having to call his mother and father to come bust him out of a mundane jail and shudders. Gay, a downworlder, and incarcerated: it’s like he’s going for the disappointing son trifecta. It sounds like a crappy MTV reality show.

“I would never let them take you,” Magnus says earnestly, wrapping an arm around Alec. “Besides, that pretty face? In prison?”

Alec snorts. “Are you saying someone would make me his prison wife?”

Magnus stops, peers up at Alec. “No, Alexander. I’m saying you’d be terrifying in prison, a force to be reckoned with. You’re far more capable than you give yourself credit for.”

Alec feels his face heat. He’s still lousy at taking compliments, probably from a lifetime of hearing
them so infrequently. He threads his fingers through Magnus’. “Let’s just go for a walk?” he suggests.

“Just to be clear, we won’t be breaking into--”

“No,” Alec interrupts loudly.

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After Paris, it’s Rome, then sultry Buenos Aires, electric Kyoto.

It’s not all bad. At night, the cities come alive, music and light spilling out onto the streets. Magnus pulls him into a club in Marrakesh, convinces him to dance under the flashing lights between the sweaty, stifling press of bodies. They drink too many neon cocktails -- his spiked with a little something extra, courtesy of Magnus -- until they tumble back to their hotel room, laughing and kissing like teenagers.

Alec strips off Magnus’ shirt, kissing the exposed skin inch by inch. Magnus leads Alec out to the balcony where the breeze blows gently, the only light spilling out from the double doors. Alec is not familiar with international indecency laws, but he thinks two grown men fucking in plain view of the street is probably illegal in most countries.

“Alec,” Magnus says, distracted, “I don’t think--”

He feels the warm familiar tingle of Magnus’ magic prickle across his skin. “No one will see us,” Magnus reassures him, pulling Alec’s shirt off. It sails over the edge, probably landing on some unsuspecting couple out for a midnight stroll.

Magnus walks him back until Alec coasts himself onto the wrought iron table. Magnus taps his leg and Alec obligingly lifts his hips so that Magnus can peel off his pants. Alec still feels way too naked to be in the semi-public, but he trusts Magnus.

Alec leans in, presses a soft kiss against the sharp hinge of Magnus’ jaw, the tip of his nose, above each incredible eye. He can feel Magnus hard and restless against his thigh, but he takes his time.

They’ve done fast impulsive fucks before in clubs, alleys, the back of a cab, and once, memorably, in a Ferris Wheel, despoiling all of Alec’s childhood fantasies in one fell swoop while Magnus cackled with his hand down the front of Alec’s jeans.

They peel off each other’s clothes, unhurried. They’ve done this a thousand times, and Alec is familiar with every line, every mark on Magnus’ body, but seeing his bare skin revealed never stops being new, exciting.

Alec sits, bare-assed on the table, wistfully thinking they can never eat here again, but the tradeoff is totally worth it. He pulls the dry air deep into his lungs, tasting sand and salt on the breeze, as Magnus spreads his knees, crowding close and kissing him lazily while slick fingers press gently into Alec’s body.

And then he hisses, a quiet release of breath, as he feels Magnus slide into him, stretching him wide, one hand buried in Magnus’ hair, the other slung low across sweaty shoulders. Magnus pulls almost all the way out, then in, punctuated by fingernails scratching across skin as Magnus
fucks into him slow and steady, a low thrum of pleasure burning through him. They kiss messily, a wet slide of lips and tongues, dissolving into open-mouth panting. Alec slumps back, arms shaking, leg held up against Magnus’ side, as Magnus speeds up, thrusting into him over and over again, until he presses deep, gasps, and Alec tumbles after him, back arched, mouth open.

Alec lies back, stares at the stars above them.

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Magnus dresses for the weather and his general disposition, alternating between fitted linen suits and silky brocade coats. Alec mostly sticks to his usual combo of black t-shirt, black pants, black boots. Not really being susceptible to the elements gives him even less reason for variation. He frowns when thumbing through their vacation pictures. He looks like a sad internet meme photoshopped into happier backgrounds.

Still, it’s a cheap and practical uniform. When he told Magnus this, Magnus had looked amused and a little sad. “There are other reasons to wear clothes than to just cover the body, Alexander,” he’d said. But he’s not like Magnus, who enjoys every eye swiveling to look at him when he enters a room.

Alec has spent his life trying to be as inconspicuous as possible. When people look at Magnus, they see a mysterious beauty, sense his power, consider what it’d be like to take him to bed. When people look at Alec, it’s usually because he’s done something frightening or wrong, or both.

He was sixteen the first time he’d forgotten his invisibility rune and was fighting a demon.

Just as he’d plunged his stele into one of the demon’s hearts, a sound across the street startled him. He saw a mundane family, and as Alec watched, the mom pulled her son back, circling him in her arms protectively, like Alec was a threat.

He didn’t chase the family while they’d fled, had carefully kept it out of the report he filed later. But he never did forget the look in their eyes. Fear. They were afraid of him. He had not understood the inherent violence of his job, that the whole world did not work the way he had been brought up. And it was a lesson that he’d never forgotten: that he was abnormal, frightening.

“You should wear a little color,” Magnus says, holding up an olive green coat. Alec runs his fingers lightly down the front. It’s a buttery soft leather with a round collar and epaulets, no-nonsense, vaguely militaristic.

“Okay,” Alec agrees and slips the coat on while Magnus adjusts the fit. Alec catches sight of himself in the mirror. The dark color makes his skin seem even paler, makes his eyes look wide and luminous. He’s going to stand out.

“Perfect. I saw it today and I thought you,” Magnus is saying, telling him about popping into the shop to buy it and how he knew the color would suit Alec well, but Alec can’t concentrate on that right now. He’s thinking about being fourteen and being ashamed of who he was, sixteen and afraid of who he was becoming, twenty-one and feeling alone in the world.

Except since meeting Magnus. Magnus makes him feel -- well, he doesn’t make Alec feel less frightening, any less tall, less imposing, less awkward and occasionally unkind -- he makes him
feel like he’s all of these things and he’s okay anyway.

He leans over and kisses Magnus mid-sentence.

“Not that I’m complaining, but what brought this on?”

“Thank you,” Alec says, resting his head against Magnus’ shoulder. Whether Magnus thinks Alec’s thanking him for the coat or something else, Alec’s not sure.

He thinks Magnus knows.
Istanbul, San Sebastian, New York

Chapter Summary

They fight in Istanbul.

Chapter Notes

This is it! Thanks for taking a chance on a possible upsetting premise with an unknown writer! Kudos were appreciated!

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

They fight in Istanbul.

It feels too easy, Alec gets paranoid when things are too easy. He texts Izzy and Jace in the morning. They tell him everything’s fine back home, but Alec figures they’re probably lying. Jace tells him to figure stuff out. Izzy tells him to get laid. He hasn’t done much of the former, but he can do the latter just as easily in New York.

Alec picks a fight about something stupid, Magnus’ lips thin and his eyes go dark before he storms off to go for a walk.

It would be better, Alec thinks, if Magnus would slam the door, act as petty and unreasonable as Alec knows he’s being, but the door clicking softly behind him feels a little like a gunshot wound. Their relationship has always been full of drama, some caused by their own fuck-ups, most out of their control, three steps forward and two steps back, a kind of awkward homosexual tango through messy dating life.

Now that things are finally settling down, Alec has to go and be shitty about what country they’re going to see next in his free worldwide vacation with his gorgeous boyfriend. Jesus.

He shrugs on his jacket to go after Magnus.

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Alec looks for a couple hours with no luck. Magnus could be in Timbuktu by now, for all he knows. He tosses his jacket on the back of the couch, hears splashing coming from the open back doors. He sees Magnus swimming in the small infinity pool overlooking the Bosphorus.
He remembers learning how to swim. Jace had been a natural, taken to the water like he was born to do it. Izzy was inherently graceful and learning it came easily to her. But Alec was skinny, already a little gangly, hands and feet a shade too large. He’s a solid swimmer now, but only after putting work into it. He’d practiced with them, then snuck back later to practice for a few more hours alone, putting in twice the effort just to become as good as them. And he never could manage the kind of graceful breaststroke that Magnus is doing, slicing effortlessly through the water.

He doesn’t notice when Magnus makes a turn, stopping at the edge of the pool just at Alec’s feet.

“Stop brooding, Alexander,” he says.

“I don’t -- that’s not what I was doing.”

Magnus laughs. “If you say so.” His eyes gleam wickedly. “Why not get in with me? No bathing suits required.”

Alec shakes his head. “I like to watch,” he says. “I’m sorry about earlier. I wasn’t sure you’d come back.”

“Alexander, people have disagreements all the time.”

“Ours usually involve extermination of entire species.”

Magnus inclines his head. “And what a relief it is to fight over something so petty.”

Alec pulls off his shoes and socks, rolls up the edges of his jeans. He sits down, lets his feet dangle in the warm water. What would it be like to be so unselfconscious, so free? “We can go wherever you want,” he says.

“Do you want to go home?”

“Not yet, but I’m tired of tourist stuff. Let’s just--be us, for a little while.”

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They settle in San Sebastian, Spain.

Alec has spent most of his life being invisible both literally and metaphorically, an average person surrounded by the extraordinary. And now he’s not only the gay shadowhunter that’s dating the warlock, he’s the gay former shadowhunter that got turned into a downworlder and is still shacking up with a warlock. It’s a lot to adjust to.

Magnus starts to work on his third book, *Ex Nihilo*, which as Magnus explained in a confusing and exhaustive conversation, is about the theory of spontaneous generation through magic, whether it can be done or whether matter is unconsciously being pulled from incalculable other dimensions. Aside from worrying about whether his boyfriend is breaking the laws of thermodynamics, The Clave, or anything else, one thing occurs to Alec. It was something he’d known intellectually, but when confronted with the physical proof of it, it’s a bit imitating: Magnus is really, really fucking smart.

He drops a kiss behind Magnus’ ear, on the tender patch of skin on the nape of his neck, where if
he closes his eyes, he can feel the pulse thudding dully against his lips.

Magnus turns, golden eyes warm. Alec is gratified that Magnus hasn’t bothered with his glamour while on vacation unless they leave the apartment. “Alexander,” he says. His eyes look tired, eyeliner smudged slightly. Alec likes Magnus just about any way he comes, but he likes him best like this, slightly rumpled, blurry and imperfect.

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He bought a ring for Magnus a while ago, while telling himself repeatedly it was—just a ring, nothing special. Maybe a Christmas present, but the holidays came and went and the ring stayed tucked in the back of his sock drawer. Then they broke up, got back together, fought The Clave, fought Valentine, and just when things were starting to go well, and he pulled out the ring to look at it every morning, thinking, maybe, Alec had to go and die in the most embarrassing way possible, on a routine patrol. God, he might as well have choked to death on gum.

But when they’d left, he had, unthinkingly, grabbed the little velvet box, slipped it into the furthest corner of his duffle, then promptly put it out of his mind.

Alec was meant for small moments, paperwork, running The Institute. People like Jace, Isabelle, and Magnus -- beautiful people with flashy personalities -- were meant for bigger things. And Alec has always been painfully aware that he is ordinary, surrounded by special people. But maybe even ordinary people can live extraordinary lives.

He digs the ring out, holds it tight in his fist. Maybe.

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He’s stretched out in bed with Magnus, curtains open. It’s a full moon and that doesn’t mean anything more to him than it’s particularly bright out tonight.

Alec rolls to face Magnus, head pillowed beneath his hands. “What would you have done if you weren’t a warlock?”


“What, really? No.”

Magnus chuckles softly. “Probably lived a boring life and died an unremarkable death.”

Alec lets his gaze trace the outline of Magnus’ profile. “I don’t think you could ever be unremarkable,” he says honestly.

A shy smile curves across Magnus’ lips. “You do have a way with words.”

Alec licks his lips, mouth suddenly dry. If he still had a heartbeat, it’d be racing. “Yeah?” He rolls over, grabs his pants off the floor and pulls out the small box hidden in his pocket.

Magnus sits up, not looking sleepy anymore. “Is that what I think it is?”
“I was waiting for some big moment,” Alec says, uneasy. “I mean, like fireworks and or twelve dozen roses, but--” he shrugs helplessly. “I usually leave the big gestures up to you and like, it would be pretty crappy to make you plan your own proposal, so.”

Magnus is smiling so widely it looks like it hurts. “That might be the most goddamn romantic thing you’ve ever said to me.”

“So, that’s a yes?”

Magnus makes little gimme motions with his hands and Alec feels like a dumbass as he hands the ring to Magnus. “Of course it’s a yes,” he says, plucking the ring out of the box and sliding it on his finger. He frowns thoughtfully. “I always pictured myself a summer bride.”

“Yeah, but, long days, short nights.”

“You don’t have to worry about daylight, you know, you could drink from Jace -- he told me he offered.”

Alec shudders. “I know, and I probably will, I’m just--not ready for him to see me like that.”

“Okay,” Magnus says easily, and Alec’s relieved that he doesn’t press the issue. “Winter it is. We’ll have to pick out china patterns together.”

“I figured Izzy would help you with that?” Alec says, panicky. He doesn’t know anything about china patterns. If Izzy and Clary are to be believed, he has terrible taste in décor, but personally, he doesn’t see anything wrong with using crates to both sit on and as extra storage. Free, pleasing to the eye, and functional. He has a feeling Magnus’ standard is higher than his, though.

“She could, but she’s in New York,” Magnus says carefully.

“Yeah,” Alec says and stretches his hand out. “It’s time, huh?”

Magnus laces their fingers together, ring gleaming in the moonlight. “Let’s go home.”

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On their last day, bags packed on the bed, Alec wanders out to the beach, stands at the edge of the ocean, feeling cold water lap gently over his toes.

He thinks, maybe this is the nature of happiness: You take what you can get, and leave the rest behind.

Alec pulls off his jacket, letting it drop onto the sand, takes off his t-shirt and lets the wind carry it away.

He strips away his fear and doubts with his clothes, shedding them all like an unneeded skin.

You hope, at the end of it all, you had more happiness than hurt and if you can answer yes, then you had a good life. And he has Izzy and Jace waiting anxiously for him; his parents, who love and want the best for him in their own fashion; Simon and Raphael, to help him adjust to his new circumstances; Clary who is genuinely and disgustingly kind; and Magnus, above all, who sees
him exactly as he is and loves him anyway. Alec cannot long for the past or be afraid of events to come. His future is now; he’s making his own history, writing the story of his own life. And it’s going to be amazing.

Magnus is out there waiting for him, just past the first sandbar.

He steps into the ocean, water swirling around his ankles. One foot after the other, until he feels as light as a feather. The water’s up to his shoulders now and he holds his breath reflexively and takes the plunge.

When a Shadowhunter dies, they say, Hail and Farewell. It’s both a greeting and a goodbye.

Chapter End Notes

“You’re my parabatai,” Jace says, clutching at Alec’s shoulders. “Always, rune or no.”

Alec takes the offered arm, leans down, and drinks deep.

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