

## Better in Black (INCOMPLETE/SEMI-ABANDONED)

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# **Better in Black (INCOMPLETE/SEMI-ABANDONED)**

by [blurry\\_bones \(orphan\\_account\)](#)

## Summary

When Alec was younger, still innocent and undamaged from the terrors of the Institute and the Shadow-world alike, he would dream about what it would be to fly.

Magnus had been the one to teach Alec, with gentle words and coaxing touches, how to spread his wings; the lift-off.

Catia had been the one to drag him back to Earth again; the fall.

And Valentine had been the landing that killed him.

## Notes

This work has been semi-abandoned. I may come back to it at a later date, or rewrite it completely, but for now, I'm not super into the plotline. That isn't to say I won't be writing more malec in the future, just probably not for this fic in a while. Thank you to everyone who has read and supported this fic, I'm sorry I couldn't complete it.

## Humble Beginnings

Catia Monteverde was a short woman, with long grey hair, a soulful gaze and a tendency to smell like chamomile tea. Despite her frail appearance, and not to mention her growing age, Catia was a feisty individual with a will too strong for her own good.

She had never enjoyed the company of her granddaughter and had always been incredibly vocal about it (not that she had seen Maryse much in the last decade), so when she glanced absent-mindedly out of her front window that overlooked the early dawn and saw Maryse with a bloodlessly pale, black-haired boy - really, he couldn't have been more than twelve - walking up to her front door, she wasn't too eager to open it.

She did though if only for the sake of the child Maryse kept pressed close to her side.

"Maryse," she muttered coldly, opening her ornate front door before Maryse could reach up to knock it, revelling in the dark look on her granddaughter's face. "And..?"

"This is Alexander. My son," Maryse replied, setting her shoulders back in a way that caused the plain black dress she wore to pull taut across her toned muscles. "He needs your assistance."

"So," Catia said conversationally, leaning nonchalantly against the stonework leading into her hallway, "you ignore me and my kind for decades, and then when you need help, you come begging to me like a dog-"

Maryse glared up at her, murderous. "You'd turn him away just because of your resentment to me?"

"I have no resentment towards you, Maryse. You're my own flesh and blood. But as far as I'm concerned, I'm not helping my great-grandson; I'm just helping you." Catia set her mindful gaze upon the young boy who had gravitated slowly away from his mother and further towards the other woman. It was natural for him to want to be close to another valkyrie, after all - Catia had known that Maryse would give birth to another eventually, and the tugging in her chest proved that this boy was the newest of his kind.

"You want me to help him conceal his true form, don't you?" Catia guessed, sickly pleased when Maryse paled and nodded sharply. She sighed. "Let me take him in-" she paused Maryse's progress into her threshold with a palm against her tense shoulders.

"No, not you. You're a racist, bigoted Shadowhunter who wants nothing more than to uphold her family name, no matter the trouble it causes your family. Don't interrupt me!" she snarled, eyes narrowing when Maryse flushed in anger at her words and opened her mouth to protest.

"Alexander," she murmured, voice softer as she bent her knees to get on the same level as the small Fallen beneath her. His eyes were glistening with admiration. Catia smiled gently - just

because Alec was raised in a disgusting society that despised any being with demon blood, such as himself, he still had a fire in him that was something to commend.

“Will you come inside with me?”

The young Downworlder licked his lips nervously, head snapping up to look at his mother for a moment before he swung back around to meet Catia’s gaze. The bustle of the city behind Catia’s townhouse drowned out his quiet whisper of ‘yes’, but she could see his tiny nod.

Catia looked up at Maryse with a less than savoury look. “There’s a mundane coffee shop around the corner. I’m sure you haven’t taught him much, so we’ll be a while.” Maryse pursed her lips, biting one in between her shockingly white teeth.

“I see. Catia,” she nodded at the valkyrie and then her son. “I’ll see you in two hours.”

With that, she turned on her heel, pulling her stele from her pocket and activating a rune on her forearm. Alec and Catia watched for a few more seconds as she strolled out onto the street ahead that was becoming increasingly busier. It could have been the crowd of people or the rune she had activated, but neither of the two Downworlders could see her anymore.

“Come in,” Catia smiled invitingly, pushing her front door open more. “My name is Catia Monteverde. I’m your great-grandmother.”

“I didn’t know I had one,” Alec breathed, staring in wonder at the grandeur of Catia’s home. The majority of the paintings lining her walls depicted delicate Japanese flowers, dark oak frames balanced upon creamy walls. The carpet was a deep crimson, with even darker fern details. Nothing was lacklustre, and having lived in the plain four walls of the Institute his entire life, it was a pleasant change.

“I didn’t know I had a great-grandson. Your mother isn’t close enough to me to get all the latest family gossip,” Catia quipped lightly, leading Alec with a gentle hand against his back to her living room.

Bookcases full of gorgeous leather bound volumes lined the walls, vases littering the tops of them. They looked expensive and old - a way for Catia to show her age and wealth. The Fallen grinned at Alec’s awestruck expression, throwing herself gracelessly on the plush velvet sofa overlooking a large window.

“Sit down, sweetheart. No need for the straight spine pose, you’re not a warrior here. You’re just Alexander with me.”

Alec swallowed thickly, letting his arms fall to his sides. In a moment, his shoulders were loose and his once rigid back was relaxed. “You’ve been waiting for that, haven’t you?” Alec nodded - it was clear that he wasn’t usually allowed to let his guard down. The pull that valkyries felt between each other was most likely what offered the comfort Alec already felt with Catia.

Once Alexander was settled, practically drowning in the velvet of the sofa, Catia began her interrogation. She’d been careful not to mention the name of their species when talking to

Maryse, not even sure if Alec had been told that.

“Tell me, Alexander - how much do you know? Could you tell me why Maryse wants you here?” Of course, Catia knew to some degree what Maryse desired, but she also knew that Alec didn’t deserve just to be taught how to conceal himself.

The young boy sighed deeply; Catia thought that he was just thinking or steeling himself for his own words, but a moment later, a fine gold mist pooled at the air above his head, dripping down like paint and thickening into the shape of two incredible wings. They darkened from shimmering, unreal golden wings to midnight feathers.

They were large for Alec’s age and pointed at the tips. The transformation was quick and seamless - it was truly beautiful, the control that Alexander had already over his valkyrian form.

“My mother...she, er, she wasn’t happy when I starting exhibiting traits like this. I woke up about three weeks ago and they were just there,” Alec mumbled, voice choked as he thought back on the memory. It obviously wasn’t a nice one. “It felt so good to have them there, so natural...”

“That’s good, my lovely. That’s how it’s meant to feel. It’s how it felt for me,” Catia reassured the young Fallen. Alec furrowed his brow, shaking his head in an almost subconscious gesture. A drawn out sob rose in his throat, but no tears filled his eyes. He’d been taught to conceal more than just his wings, it seemed.

“My mother came into my room the first time it happened. It was as if she just knew.” There was a long pause. “She sat in the corner of my room and watched me on the bed and told me that my siblings would hate me if they saw me like that, that my peers would never respect me. It hurt so bad, but the first time that I concealed my wings, it hurt so much more.”

Catia sighed, breath shuddering as she pulled Alec into a tight embrace. The first time she had hidden her wings was dreadful, but it seemed that it had been ten times worse for her great grandson. It could have been because of the pressure Maryse must have put on her son to shift his wings back into his body.

The fabric of her shirt was wet with tears, grey darkened into black where Alec had rested his head. She didn’t mind, only watching carefully as Alec raised his head again, eyes slightly glazed with tears. There was a high flush on his cheekbones.

“Valkyries naturally feel comfortable with each other,” Catia explained quietly, noting Alec’s embarrassment. “There’s an almost gravitational pull between us all. It’s even stronger for us because we have the same demon blood.”

“Why is there a pull, though?” Alec asked, rubbing at the raw skin around his eyes. His wings twitched slightly under Catia’s gaze.

“Because,” Catia sighed, “valkyries, or Fallens as they are often called, are some of the most feared Downworlders. Arguably, warlocks are some of the only half-demons that don’t battle with their demon blood. Vampires have a thirst for blood, Seelies are naturally manipulative

despite not being able to lie, but valkyries go through an entire process of overcoming their demonic side.

“A large amount of us were wiped out by wars from between ourselves. Battles for power, mainly. And then, when we finally came together as a concise group, we became even stronger. We wanted the world and that was terrifying for every other member of the Shadow-world. They wanted to wipe us all out....and they almost did, actually.

“After they finished hunting us, only about a hundred of us were left surviving. It grew this natural need to be near each, to protect each other. We dispersed across the entire globe, but there was still something inside us that craved the contact of other Fallens. I feel it every single day.”

Alec sat, dumbfounded for a moment. He was tempted to feel the same anger his mother must do at his race for being so hellish to have warred against themselves, to have almost wiped themselves out, but he resisted it. It would have been easy to feel hatred, and he knew that he couldn't judge an entire species for their past misgivings.

Catia then stood, elegantly, strolling to the bookcase in the corner of her room, where the oldest of her books resided. One stood out in particular to her, it's bejewelled, ornate cover calling to Catia, drawing her in.

“Do you know how to draw a Glamour rune?” she asked her great-grandson, glancing behind her, pleased to see Alec hadn't even moved. He nodded silently, then asked ‘you can't draw one yourself?’

“I'm not a Shadowhunter, my dear,” Catia smiled brightly, “my rather large age is thanks to being a Fallen. Pure valkyries could live for thousands of years, if they could be bothered to continue to replenish their natural magic every few months - otherwise we'd just live the same amount of time as sickly mundanes.”

“Do valkyries not have angel blood? Can't they draw runes?” he asked curiously, readjusting himself on the plush sofa so that he was leaning over the coffee table, where Catia had placed her beloved tome. From there, he could really plainly see the care that had been put into making the leather supple and the jewels shine.

“Dragonskin, not leather,” Catia murmured, seeming to read Alec's mind. “And yes, we do, but steles reject us because we also have demon blood. You'll have noticed by now, I assume, that it hurts a lot more than it should to apply or activate runes. Now, that's for the same reason. You'll get better at dealing with it, I assure you.”

Alec pulled his stele - it was dark, steely grey and subtly curved in a way that suggested he had gripped it too hard when drawing runes had caused much more pain than it ought to - out of his pocket, poising it over the book and applying a Glamour rune with some clumsiness.

A moment later, the cells of the book shifted and changed into a smaller, simply bound notebook. Alec arched his brow in confusion, reaching out tentatively to open the cover. The pages inside were all blank.

“I know your mother isn’t all that glad that she passed her valkyrian gene onto you, so the book - an encyclopedia, almost, of valkyries - can be glamoured into something simple and inconspicuous. You just scratch out the rune and the book shifts back into it’s natural form. Like valkyrian shifting,” Catia explained, sitting back down besides Alec.

“Why does she hate valkyries so much? My mother, I mean. Wasn’t her mother a valkyrie too?” It would have made sense to Alec for his Maryse to have been a Fallen as well, but considering her increasingly cold nature towards him after his wings had came out, it might not have been so.

“I’m a pure-blooded valkyrie, as you know. Completely equal levels of demon blood to angel blood - Shadowhunters have slightly more mundane blood than angel blood. It’s the fact their sides don’t have to war with each other that makes Shadowhunters more stable. But, I did end up having a child with a Shadowhunter. Her name was Phoebe.”

“So, she was part demon, part angel, part mundane?” Alec guessed, folding his wings tentatively so that he could sit more comfortably. Catia nodded with a small smile.

“Just like you and your mother,” she added. “But, the thing is, the valkyrian gene tends to skip a generation. Phoebe was part valkyrie because I was a pure valkyrie. But, she also ended up having a child with a Shadowhunter, meaning Maryse was always much more likely to have more angel and mundane blood than demon.”

“Why was I a Fallen then?” Alec asked, forehead creasing in puzzlement.

“You’re an anomaly in every sense of the word, Alexander,” Catia mumbled, increasingly aware that Alec was a very young individual, who mustn’t have known until very recently that he was a Downworlder. “Most valkyries don’t Unfurl so young. Most aren’t male - actually, I’ve only heard of one other male Fallen. And most valkyries don’t have so much control over their shifts so early on.”

Alec winced, uncomfortable under Catia’s scrutiny. He didn’t want to be reminded of what Maryse had said and done during his first shift.

“Look, Alexander,” Catia said, taking a mental note of Alec’s growing displeasure, “it’s not the most kosher thing to assist a young valkyrie throughout their transitioning phase, but you need this. You need help. And Maryse isn’t prepared to give you that.

“We’ve talked a lot,” she sighed, “and I think you need some time to process everything. You take this book - it’ll tell you everything you need to know when you feel ready to read it.”

Catia stood, encouraging Alec to match. His face twisted in discomfort as his wings begun to shed its feathers, the small plume curling into gold that disappeared by the time it reached the floor. A pair of skeletal wings were left behind, bones cracking and pushing back into the meat of Alec’s back.

It was an impressive show of power, but it had obviously caused Alec pain. “I...thanks, Catia. For everything.”

“Now, now,” Catia admonished playfully, “don’t act like we’re never going to see each other again. You can come visit whenever you want to, if only just to talk.”

“I don’t know if my mother would like that,” Alec said almost silently, not meeting Catia’s probing gaze.

“Then just come in secret. I’m sure someone with your talents could manage that,” Catia smiled genuinely, flinching when the doorbell rang, echoing throughout the large living room. Catia grunted. “Maryse is just in time. Shall we?”

She held a hand out to Alec, pleased when the young boy took it without hesitation. It was surely the start of a beautiful relationship.

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“So, Odin doesn’t have anything to do with us?”

Alec was sitting, cross-legged on the floor of Catia’s dining room, chewing idly on a piece of peppermint. Papers of various sizes and quantities of text lay in a circle around him. The one in his slightly sweaty, tiny hands had a large picture of a classic valkyrie from Norse mythology.

“No. It’s a common misconception about modern day valkyries; some pure blood Fallens from the very beginning came directly from Odin, but it isn’t common any more. Not at all, actually,” Catia replied, sipping her tea from her own place across from Alec.

The young boy’s brow furrowed, lips twisting awkwardly around his mouthful of mint leaf. “Okay...what about the wings? Every source that I could find in the mundane library said that the wings were the only physical change.”

Catia huffed out a small laugh. “It depends, really, on the Fallen. The standard change is a pair of, usually black, wings. Some valkyries have a spread of gold, like the mist that appears when you Unfurl your wings, from their fingertips to their elbows, at least when your form matures. There are other aspects of the valkyrian form, of course, but you’ll learn about that in time.”

“When’s that?”

Unfolding her legs, Catia stood with a grace that was surprising for someone with such age. She set her mug aside on the marble counter across from her, stretching out the kinks in her back and then reaching back down to help Alec scramble up.

“You’re very different for a valkyrie, Alec,” Catia sighed, “I have no idea when your form will mature. And even then, you might not have the standard changes. Your natural magic could be stronger or weaker than the usual Fallen has.”

Alec rolled his eyes. “So, the same answer to any other question about me I’ve asked you,” he muttered under his breath. Catia was kind enough not to mention it.

“Come on, you,” she chuckled, leading Alec away from the mess in her dining room. “It’s getting late and your siblings can only cover for you for so long. What was the excuse you used again?”

“Oh, that I was meeting some girl. Jessica Hawkblue, I called her,” Alec said vaguely, smiling as Catia laughed bright and loud.

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It was three o’clock on a Sunday morning when Catia next opened her door to her great-grandson.

The sky was dark, storm clouds dancing overhead, a surprisingly idle pitter patter of rain falling and dripping from the plant leaves decorating Catia’s pristine garden. Alec stood, barely upright, on her front doorstep. His cheeks were tear-stained and blotchy red and his tiny, fragile chest shuddered with every heaving breath - Catia wasn’t entirely sure if it was because of exhaustion or because of his panic.

“I-I ra-ran here,” he choked out, falling into Catia’s awaiting arms. So; a mixture of weariness and frenzied alarm. Catia hated the idea of her young ward having ran the eight miles to her townhouse in Brooklyn.

“Oh, my sweet boy,” Catia whispered against the slick hair of her great-grandson’s head. His shoulder convulsed as he buried his head against Catia’s neck, quiet and constricted whimpers getting lost in the soft fabric of her night-dress.

“What happened, my darling? What happened?”

Alec only shook his head, hands tightening uncontrollably in Catia’s dress. The older valkyrie felt tears welling up in her own eyes, heart jumping in her chest as the skinny thirteen year old in her grasp sobbed sharply, the sound wrenching from the very pit of his soul.

“Come inside, my lovely. Stay here tonight. Tell me what’s upsetting you so much,” she reasoned, a deep sigh of relief when Alec nodded once after a long moment of deliberation, it seemed. She edged the young boy inside, only letting go of him long enough to close the door behind him.

He collapsed as soon as they reached the living room, legs wobbling and toppling from beneath him. It should have been humiliating for someone raised to be a strong warrior - and

a Lightwood, at that, too - but Alec didn't even seem bothered, utterly enamoured by Catia in such a way that he could set aside the personality Maryse had drilled into him.

"It's Jace," Alec gasped out without any warning, "I don't know what happened. We were sparring a-and he just got so angry all of a sudden. And he started hitting me over and over and over and I didn't want to hurt him so I just-" his breath trembled, a loud sniffing noise coming from his flushed nose, "-I just let him. I just felt like he had the power, like he was better than me for some re-reason."

"But he isn't, you understand that, don't you?"

Alec didn't say anything, only rubbing roughly at his eyes with his knuckles. The whites of his eyes were bloodshot and glistening. Catia's face twisted in an anxious grimace at the look on Alexander's face, but considering the tired lines of his twitching shoulders, she didn't want to push him any more.

"Alright, love," she mumbled, lips pressing together in a thin white line. "There's a spare room across from my bedroom. We can go there right now or we can stay down here for a little while."

"I..." Alec's eyes drifted closed. "I'm tired. I'm sorry." It was an automatic response, apparently, to apologise for his weaknesses. "Can we just go to sleep?"

"Yes, of course, darling. You don't have to apologise for wanting to sleep. You must be exhausted," Catia said, gently encouraging him to his feet. He was unsteady, bones aching and numb. It took some time for the young Fallen to follow Catia up the two flights of stairs to the bedrooms she had set up and spare.

The one that Catia lead Alexander into had deep, midnight blue walls, a black, filled to the brim bookcase and a large bed with shimmering gold sheets. The windows protruded from the rest of the room, with velvet sofas overlooking the intricacy of Catia's back garden.

"I re-decorated it a few days ago thinking of you."

As much as Alec would have enjoyed to test out the plush armchairs in front of the fireplace besides the bookcases, or take the time to dissect the patterns and gorgeous details of the large rug beneath him, but he only stumbled to the bed, collapsing forwards on to it.

The duvet was silky and the mattress beneath him felt like a cloud. His great-grandmother chuckled quietly, moving forward to tuck Alec into bed. It wasn't as if Maryse would have done it too often as he grew up.

"Catia," he muttered, syllables dragging slowly from his lips. He was already half asleep but Catia didn't leave until his quiet little snores filled the room.

"Goodnight, Alexander," Catia sighed.

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Alec stayed with Catia for six weeks until his mother came to drag him back to the Institute.

In that short time, he'd taken to calling Catia's townhouse home. They went out every morning, after Alec had settled in, to a coffee shop a few blocks away. It was a hole in the wall and the sign was so decrepit and uninviting that the majority of mundanes - other than a few hipsters here and there, who only came to photograph their coffees - missed it, but it was practically a designated 'hang' for Downworlders.

It was a perfect place for Alec to meet others at least similar to him. There was a young vampire, changed when she was only eleven - Alec seemed horrified that she would stay that age for the rest of eternity, but Adelita, as that was her name, was gleeful that she could throw herself into the thick of the fray and her enemies wouldn't suspect anything to come from the skinny preteen girl.

"-and then I'd bite their heads clean off!" she cried, imitating the movement with her sharp fangs. Alec laughed, flinching away when Adelita came nearer just to make the youngster feel better.

"But, don't you miss being mundane? Don't you miss just being normal? Your friends and family?" Alec asked one day, about three weeks after meeting Adelita. The girl fell silent, grin fading, and her minder, a quick-witted, intelligent vamp hissed warningly at Alec.

"My parents were abusive. They used to burn me with the ends of their cigarettes and lock me up in my room without food for days. They weren't my family, but the clan is. They protect me, have down ever since I was turned. I've never been happier than the few months I've spent with them," she murmured, smiling to try and lighten the mood when she noticed the glint in Alec's eyes. "And besides, being a vampire is so cool! I can do this thing with my teeth now, here, I'll show you..."

And then there was Jamie, too. A short, rather stout, young werewolf, with just enough fat on him to seem healthy and really quite adorable. He was probably around fourteen, just a year older than Alec, and the valkyrie was smitten immediately.

"-his smile is so nice, Catia, and his hair! It's just perfect, all the time, it's almost aggravating how amazing he looks-"

They kissed for the first time, a werewolf and a valkyrie, behind the coffee shop, in amongst the rubbish left behind in the back alley. It was childish and unpracticed and the setting wasn't exactly fitting, but Alec still babbled excitedly about it - and Adelita's newest trick and Rory (the owner's son, and a half-Seelie), who was seemingly his second crush of the week - to Catia on their way home.

Catia taught him about mundane life too, of course. Alec seemed a lot less excited about those studies, but he tackled them with ease and was soon watching Friends re-runs with

Catia. Her living room, now adorned with a television and much cosier sofas, felt much more a part of her home now that Alec had stapled it as his own.

The talk about Alec's sexuality - which seemed rather unchangeably gay, but Catia knew that attraction was deeper than what it seemed at first - came in the fifth week, a few days after the kiss with Jamie.

"I never did like girls. I mean, there aren't really many my age at the Institute, but whenever I was out or when we go to Ewanson's -" (their coffee shop) "- I never notice the pretty girls. I never wanted to kiss Adelita, but I really like Jamie and Rory. Not that I think my mother would approve-"

The one habit Catia hadn't been able to make Alec kick was the reliance he had on his mother's opinion. "It doesn't matter what your mom thinks. She's not here right now, is she? Alec," Catia sighed softly, "if being with boys makes you happy and if you do like boys the way that you think you should like girls, that's okay. That's great! As long as you're happy with kissing Jamie and crushing on Rory, then I think that you're right."

Alec blushed. "Okay," he muttered, and then skittered up to his room, ready to collapse by the fireplace and finish reading the book on Fae that Catia had given him.

Peace broke soon after. Alec's mother arrived at six a.m on a Tuesday morning. Her face was drawn and pale with fury. Her and Catia's shouting match must have been heard in the next few houses, and it sounded deafening to Alec. Power bubbled at his fingertips, his natural magic, usually dormant, fighting to get out, to protect the host.

Apparently, Maryse hadn't bothered to come collect her son earlier because she had been told by Jace that he was dead. A shadowhunter had spotted him and Catia at Ewanson's and reported it to her. She wanted Catia imprisoned with the Silent Brothers, under account of breaking the Accords.

"I did nothing against your petty laws! I took care of a depressed, frantic child for a few weeks because you couldn't be bothered to fact-check," Catia snarled, celestial outline of her wings twitching in the air. Usually, she could cover her true form with incredible ease - in fact, she had never once let her glamour slip in the year that Alec had known her.

"You kidnapped my son!"

"I protected your son! From you!" Catia bit back, gold dripping down the barely-there-ness of her wings. She had vowed not to reveal her wings again unless she was in dire need of them, and she wasn't about to break that vow now for Maryse Lightwood.

"I don't think that Alexander should return to the Institute," she said slowly, teeth gritted. Maryse laughed bitterly.

"It isn't your decision. You have no rights to him. According to all our files, you don't exist anymore. You're dead - dead people can't take care of young boys, now can they?"

“Neither can you, apparently. I-” Catia began, but then spotted Alec peering around the corner of the doorframe. “Alec, maybe you should wait upstairs.”

“No. Alec, get your things. We’re leaving,” Maryse ordered. She wasn’t expecting Alec to protest sharply, voice high-pitched, reedy and frantic. “I said, we’re leaving!”

Reluctantly, Alec nodded. He and Catia shared a knowing look, that space in their chest panging at the thought of losing another one of their kind.

It was decided, though without the needs of words; Alec would be coming back.

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The next time Alec did come home - to where Catia lived, that is - it wasn’t under the nicest of circumstances. And...a year had passed.

Not to say that Alec and Catia hadn’t seen each other in that year. No, the first week of Alec being back at the Institute, he attempted escape nine times. It was an impressive feat, but would have been more impressive had he actually managed it to Catia. At around the fifth time of trying, he figured he should run to Ewanson's, rather than Catia’s home. It was, after all, closer.

He made it there once, before a Shadowhunter called Sam pulled him away, threw him over his meaty shoulder and glamoured them for the trek back to the Institute. Through the coffee shop window, Alec could make out Adelita’s tiny frame, Rory behind the counter, along with his father, Ewanson, and Catia, in all her aging glory, about to leave out of the front door. She could see Alec too.

A wordless cry escaped her lips and she bolted forwards, desperate to see her great-grandson. Nothing could have prepared her for the sheer emptiness she felt when Alec had left her with his mother. She wanted Alec back.

Sam ran off with Alec before Catia even stepped out of Ewanson's.

At around month two, the attempts to find Catia dwindled. The older valkyrie had seen Alec once or twice, and they had both been frantic to get to each other, but Alec was always whisked away at the last moment. Maryse was really doing her all to keep Catia and Alec apart.

At month six, Catia hadn’t seen Alec for at least seventeen weeks, probably more. He’d been in a mundane library, of all places, with a large, leather-bound volume (probably on Latin or Greek) on the desk in front of him and a beefy Shadowhunter minder grasping his forearm tightly. Alec didn’t even seem like he was noticing the pain.

Catia hadn't tried to show herself to her boy. He was left blissfully unaware as she watched, natural magic casting a shadow over her form, to protect her from unwanted eyes. Her magic wasn't something she could control, like warlocks could, nor did it appear as often for Catia to utilise. But, as it had with Alec, it emerged during times of need, adapting to their host's subconscious desires.

Month fourteen- Alec was nearing the age of fifteen now. The fat of childhood had melted away from his stomach, leaving crisp lines of muscle. His hair was still a mass of black on the top of his head, like Catia remembered, but his face was drawn and eyes dull.

He was unconscious when Catia found him, crumpled in an alleyway near Ewanson's - which seemed to be thriving even more with Downworlders now that Alec was gone, along with the threat of Shadowhunters finding them and accusing them of breaking the Accords for one reason or another. Obviously, Alec had been delirious when he stumbled to the quaint coffee shop, instinct taking over. He had felt protected at Ewanson's, and he had loved the people there. (Adelita often said, when Catia saw her, that she'd snap the necks of any Shadowhunter that had tried to keep them all away from Alec.)

When Alec awoke, it was with a deep groan. Catia fussed above him, pushing his hair away from his fluttering eyelids.

"Monteverde," he stated, cold and toneless when he recognised who was above him. Catia went pale.

"Alexander-"

"Don't call me that. Where am I?" Again, that icy monotone. There was a lifelessness in Alec's gaze that Catia couldn't trust. He most definitely wasn't himself.

"You're at my home. Don't you recognise it?" Catia asked quietly, gentle with her phrasing. Alec's eyes narrowed.

"I'll be leaving, then," he said, lifting himself with a graceful strength from his old bed, swinging his legs to dangle down, brushing the floor. It was as if he didn't even know where he was, despite it being his own room.

The sharp gash down his side, the entire reason he was here, had practically cleared up. Catia would have liked to think it was his valkyrian healing, shielding and fixing his Shadowhunter body, but it was unlikely his valkyrie side had been allowed to flourish for a very long time.

"Don't you feel it, though, Alec? Valkyries are like pack animals, we need to be together. This is what's right for both of us!"

Alec laughed, humorlessly and dark. It reminded Catia of the way Maryse used to laugh. "Pack animals. That's exactly what you are, though, all of you Downworlder scum - animals. And this?" He turned to face Catia for the first time in at least a year. His face was emotionless despite the anger in his words. "This isn't right for me, you selfish bitch. You're just doing this for your own sake."

Catia was speechless as Alec stood on unwavering feet.

“I never want to see you again, Catia Monteverde. Don’t come anywhere near me.”

“Alec, what’s happened? What’s wrong with you?!” Catia cried, finally finding her voice. And, there, a flicker in Alec’s gaze, truth fighting with tooth and claw to get out.

“Nothing is wrong with me. Nothing at all.”

And with that, he gathered his shirt from the foot of the bed and whisked away, leaving a cold emptiness in the pit of Catia’s stomach.

---

Izzy knew that something was up with her brother.

It was easy enough to see, really, just from the stilted way he spoke and his past clumsiness when he walked gone. He was a smoothed down, toned, perfect warrior - and he wasn’t Alec.

Izzy was eight when she began to notice changes with her big brother; the original changes, she would call them, now that she had bore witness to his new attributes. When Alec was eleven, he would begin to disappear for hours on end, and then not have any clue what he had been doing during that time. Izzy had followed him once, when he was dazed and confused, but she could only watch for a few moments as her brother writhed on his bed, screaming at his mother holding him down.

Her memory was wiped after Maryse realised she was there. She didn’t remember the incident, obviously, but afterwards she held an unfounded resentment to her mother.

So, then, when her brother began disappearing again, even away from the Institute after he turned twelve, the familiar feeling of dread washed over Isabelle. She was naturally very protective of her brother, especially after the stuck-up newcomer Jace had arrived.

She tried to follow them, but only made it to the doors of the Institute before Sam was pulling her back. After a while, when Alec started smiling more and laughing more, Iz decided that whoever this Jessica Hawkblue girl was, she was good for Alec.

But then Alec went missing, presumed dead by Jace, for six weeks. He came home and he was disorientated and lost. Completely unfocused on everything. It took six months, of his darting off without his minder to the Angel know’s where, before he finally settled in again.

And now, Alec was a brooding, emotionless teenager, with no interest in girls (or as Izzy had suspected, given how much time he used to spend around Sybil, a poorly-named Shadowhunter who had transferred after his fourteenth birthday from the London Institute, no interest in boys). Iz was concerned. Of course she was!

It was perhaps that mixture of desperation to help her brother and the thirst for knowledge that had her, at a skinny twelve years old, sneaking into her mother's office for some paper - young Shadowhunters weren't allowed to have it, in case security was breached due to a loosely worded Fire Message - and scribing a message to the High Warlock of Brooklyn. Magnus Bane.

He agreed, after months of Izzy begging, to meet both sister and brother in Central Park at noon on the dot, the next day. Despite the warlock seemingly morbidly interested in Alec's situation and despite Izzy being taught that they were a distasteful and untrustworthy breed, she cajoled her practically unresponsive brother into following her there.

Magnus wasn't exactly what she was expecting. An old, decrepit man with a black robe and scaly bat wings, maybe, but Magnus was as hip as a warlock could get. Deep, wine red shirt - and no, it was not burgundy, Izzy knew her shirt colours - with an open neck, a black blazer and tight black jeans. Gold necklaces dangled on his gold chest and his hair was artfully mussed up.

"Isabelle Lightwood - not exactly what I was expecting," Bane smiled, seeming completely unsurprised. He spoke as much with his hands as he did his mouth. Izzy noticed as he tilted his head that his eyelids were painted rose pink.

"Magnus Bane - you've already exceeded my expectations," Izzy replied. Perhaps compliments were the way to go for this warlock. She glanced at her brother for his input but he was only staring ahead, face blank and listless.

"Why have you brought me to this scum?" he asked, voice toneless. Izzy coughed, hoping Magnus wouldn't take offence - by the Angel, Alec had just called him scum, why wouldn't he take offence?

"Oh...oh, that's interesting. I didn't think Maryse and Robert would choose this for their eldest son. Isn't he supposed to be the favourite?" Magnus asked. He took Alec's remark with a flippancy Izzy admired.

"Quite the opposite. Our parents seem to hate him," Izzy muttered, watching a mundane who was creeping closer to them out of the corner of her eye. A silent breeze rustled the autumn leaves on the ground. Central Park was busy enough at noon that Magnus could escape from Izzy and Alec easily, but not so busy that they couldn't have a private conversation. Izzy almost laughed - what High Warlock would be afraid of two underage Shadowhunters?

"What do you think they've done to him?" she asked instead.

Magnus' eyes narrowed. "An enchantment of some sort, most definitely. No outside force is controlling him actively, as far as I'm aware, but I think he's been made not to feel anything Maryse and Robert don't want him to." Izzy made an aborted, concerned sound at Magnus' diagnosis. "Don't worry, it's an easy fix. I just need to place a protective spell on his mind for a few years and then he should have recovered enough to shield himself from any other warlock's magic."

"I don't need to be changed. This is who I am," Alec stated sharply, his words seeming as if he were reading from a script. Magnus huffed impatiently.

"I refuse to let such a young, innocent man go without helping him. Whoever this warlock is, their magic could be burning Alec's mind out," Magnus muttered under his breath. Then, louder, "This won't take long."

And it didn't. A few seconds later, a burst of brilliant blue magic flew from Magnus' outstretched palms and tapped against Alec's skull, seeping inside. His skin soaked up the magic like it was his life support and Izzy glanced from where she was standing a safe distance away, to Magnus. When he saw her looking, he schooled his features from gleeful surprise to a faux-concentrated look.

"There," he said after a few moments, his magic retreating back to his body. "It's likely he won't remember the events of the last few months, possibly longer. He won't remember this little outing of yours either, so I suggest if you want him back to your petty Institute before he collects himself, you'd better move fast."

Smiling, Magnus turned briskly on his heel, conjured a portal with a flick of his fingers and then disappeared without even a goodbye.

Izzy glanced towards her brother, watching as his face turned gradually more like what she remembered the clumsy teen to be. His eyebrows furrowed for a split second and then his eyes crinkled at the edges as he smiled brightly. "Iz?"

"Alec...?" Izzy asked, huffing out a desperately relieved laugh as Alec brought her into a tight hug. He smelled different, even, less like stone and metal and more like crisp magic and oak. "I missed you so much," she sighed into his neck, hugging him tighter.

"What happened, Izzy? I can't remember anything...what day is it?"

"Sunday. November 12th," Izzy told him, concern flickering through her when Alec swore loudly. "What? What is it?"

Izzy knew that Magnus had told her Alec wouldn't remember anything after his initial enchantment, which she had no idea when happened, but he seemed more terrified than what she was expecting. His face was pale and pinched - admittedly she hadn't had her memory wiped and personality erased before, but... well, no, that actually sounded fucking terrible.

"I...Izzy, I've got to go somewhere, I have to check up on someone-"

"No, Alec! Wait-" Izzy's voice cut off as Alec tugged away from his little sister, stumbling at the force of her attempts to keep him by her side. She felt tears prickling at her eyes, deeply hurt as Alec put as much distance between them as possible.

"Why can't you just be my brother, Alec? Why can't you just love me?"

Alec sobbed harshly, chest dry heaving as he collapsed forwards again, dragging Izzy into his arms. She fell to the soft grass with him, crying as Alec cupped the back of her head, stroking

her hair calmingly. "I'm sorry, I'm so sorry."

Izzy nodded quickly, burrowing her head into his shirt front. It was turning from faded charcoal to wet black. Alec didn't seem like he minded.

They stayed there for hours, just talking to one another, arms wrapped tight around each other. Only after the autumn sunlight had begun to wane did they even think about leaving. Alec looked like he had forgotten about whoever he had been so frantic to see - perhaps 'Jessica Hawkblue', or perhaps not.

Maryse was pissed when they returned so late - she was incomprehensibly enraged, though, when she realised what Izzy had helped Alec to do. He laid it all on himself, of course, claiming that he had no idea what had happened. Maryse must have assumed that the enchantment on Alec had just slipped, because she brought a warlock - a stocky, horned, European man - into the Institute. His attempts to magick Alec into submission didn't work.

After a few days, Maryse just stopped trying to bring Alec back to his stoic self. He was professional and respectful with everyone, practically ignored the family favourite, Jace (which didn't corrupt him, as Maryse had worried might happen if the boys grew too close. You could never tell with those with demon blood), and he followed every order to a point.

She wasn't happy, of course, to leave Alec as an aware valkyrie, but she could do nothing to stop him. At the very least, Izzy still didn't know Alec's true nature - she had assumed that Maryse had hired a warlock to try and force away Alec's sexuality, which just made her resent Maryse more.

Five days after the initial incident, Magnus contacted Izzy via Fire Message. He seemed strangely interested in Alec for some reason - Izzy was sure it wasn't a sexual thing, which she was very much aware of, thank you very much - but it was unnerving and Iz didn't want to put her brother in danger.

She was twelve years old going on twenty-five because she was a warrior and a diplomat. Arguably, she was the most intelligent Shadowhunter of her age and it showed. She knew how to manipulate her words to make it seem like Magnus was getting the information he wanted, but not actually revealing anything.

After she fire messaged him back, there was quiet for a long while. Magnus didn't message her back after she assured him that Alec wasn't showing any signs of mental fracturing. Maryse had stopped bothering them both. Everything seemed to be working out.

And then, Alec left again. But, this time, it wasn't for long.

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Valkyries almost had an official way to mourn. It was called Furling - it came from the belief that the original valkyries would furl up their wings around their entire bodies in vigil after one of their kind died.

In the modern day shadow-world, valkyries went into mourning very rarely - so few of their kind died, so there was no need - and it usually just consisted of their natural magic creating a black hole-like shield around their abode, protecting them from the outside world for what could be years.

Catia didn't have the luxury of utilising years to grieve. None of her kind had actually died. No, it was more because she had lost Alec. The remnants of his natural magic had finally left her houser. Despite keeping his room pristine and practically unchanged, his magic had faded from the pages of the books he had left on the armchair and from the velvet smooth bedsheets.

Once she had realised it and finally rationalised that she might not see her great-grandson again, she collapsed in her hallway and didn't move for three days. Catia finally dragged herself to her room and stayed there for the next six days.

The aging valkyrie dipped in and out of consciousness for what seemed like forever, only staying awake long enough to register her bedroom walls burning with stains from her natural magic as it screamed from within her.

When Catia next woke up fully, her Unfurling arguably beginning, it was to a gentle hand carding through her hair. She sighed heavily, pressing into the contact with a delirious smile before she opened her eyes.

“Alexander?”

The boy grinned, hand stilling in Catia's greying hair. The elder Fallen was afraid for a moment that she was just hallucinating her great-grandson, but she verified his existence in her home with a pinch to her wrinkled but muscled upper arm.

“Hey, don't do that! I'm not a dream, I promise,” Alec reprimanded, tugging Catia's nails away from the skin of her bicep.

“Oh, you are most definitely a dream, my boy,” Catia laughed gently, both to compliment Alec, because she loved his smile, and also because she still wasn't convinced the Fallen was real. The last time that they'd met, Alec had told her that he didn't ever want to see her again. Alec didn't have any reason to come back. Did he?

“My mother hired a warlock to enchant me. Made me stoic and emotionless and a follower of every order. The entire point was to try and force my memory of my own valkyrie side away. To make me hate myself. And,” he cut into Catia's cry of anger, “before you go off threatening her...she told me that she'd punish Isabelle instead of me if I told anyone about what Maryse did.”

“So, what - you're just going to lie down and take it?”

“No. Not at all. I’m just going to choose the right moment to strike back at her,” Alec murmured under his breath, almost too quiet for Catia to hear in her weakened state. Alec’s presence besides her had already begun to help her to heal. “I have to get going soon, Catia.”

The elder valkyrie made a pained noise in the back of her throat when Alec moved away from her for a moment. “My sister and I reconciled quite a bit over the past weeks. I can’t let her down again - I’ve already been here for four days,” Alec said, soothing Catia’s nerves with the intimacy of his confession. Despite having missed a year of his life, they were still as close as they had been.

“I’ll stay for a few hours more, but I didn’t tell anyone where I was going and I need to get back to Izzy. I’m sorry, Catia.” Alec really did sound heartbroken to leave his great-grandmother alone in such a time. But Catia understood completely.

“It’s hard to lead a double life, I should know,” she whispered, burrowing into the blankets beneath her. “Go, Alec. I’m not upset.” And she wasn’t. She’d been forced to lead a double life when she married a Shadowhunter and she couldn’t imagine trying to hide the fact that her demon blood made it impossible to draw certain runes.

“Thank you, Catia. I love you.”

Despite Catia giving him permission, it almost seemed bittersweet that Alec had left just after saying ‘I love you’ for the very first time.

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The first time Alec met Simon, he was nineteen.

Four years had passed since he had had his memory wiped of his mother’s control and he had turned into, under Catia’s loving guidance, an intelligent man, along with the pure muscle Maryse had trained into him.

With his runes always on display, even if he wasn’t glamoured, it was safe to say that he was a rather intimidating man. It was probably why, when walking in the mundane library he’d been so taken by, he hadn’t expected a slightly younger boy with a mess of brown curls and broken glasses to poke his head up from behind the book he was reading with a grin so bright it could block out the sun.

“Er...hello?”

“Hi,” the other boy said, voice tremoring with excitement, “I’m Simon. You’re reading my favourite book.” Alec arched his eyebrow in confusion.

“What, your favourite book is Don Quixote?” he asked incredulously. The thick novel in his hands quivered with his shuddering laughter. Simon blushed, looking a bit like a suffocating owl with his wide-rimmed glasses and red face.

“Well...not exactly. My bubbie tried to make me read it a few years ago but I could never get into it, so whilst she was reading other things, I would hide my comic book in the middle of it and read that - she’s practically blind to things that are far away, just like me, so she didn’t see it. Not that I wanted to lie to her, but...”

Alec drowned out the noise of Simon’s rambling by concentrating on other noises around him. He hummed politely every so often, surprisingly happy with himself when Simon giggled and babbled on, sounding even more excited.

His attention was caught by something just over Simon’s shoulder about five minutes later. It was a dark-haired woman with angled eyes and fluorescent lips. As Alec watched her, a balding man brushed past her and the woman shifted into him - it was like seeing someone who was there but he couldn’t quite focus on them.

“Simon...I’m afraid I’ve got to go. You have fun, yeah?” Alec muttered, throwing his bag over his shoulder and leaving his book on the library table. Simon seemed bitterly disappointed.

“Oh...alright. Bye,” there was a pause. “Wait, what’s your name?!”

Alec was already too far away for the valkyrie to hear, but he probably wouldn’t have bothered to answer anyways, not wanting to give his identity away to someone he just met (despite the fact he was really quite adorable, as well as slightly aggravating) nor to the demon who was stalking away from him and leading him away from the library.

He finished it off on his own with some difficulty with his seraph dagger, but Izzy fussed enough over his superficial scratches for him to not mind. Plus, the jealousy that rose from waves from Jace for having defeated his own demon was tangible. They always worked as a group whenever in the field, and Alec had adapted to Iz and Jace’s fighting styles, but he was labelled as the coward that always wanted to stay away from danger. Fighting an adult demon and winning on his own...well, it was impressive as hell.

The next time that Alec saw Simon was in Ewanson's.

He was with Adelita, braiding her hair as she drew a strangely abstract piece of work in the sketchbook Alec had gotten her for her birthday. She would have been sixteen that week, but being a vampire, she hadn’t aged at all. A mundane studying in the corner of the shop was looking at them strangely, but Alec figured they looked related enough for it to be acceptable for an almost-twenty year old to be so close to an incredibly young looking girl.

Ewanson was just coming over with their coffees when Simon dropped down on the chair across from there, wincing when his back hit the broken fixture on the back of his chair that regulars had long since learnt to be wary of.

“Okay, so, I promise I’m not stalking you, but I saw you in Ewanson's and I just remembered that I never got your name- oh, are you Ewanson, then?”

Ewanson didn’t seem amused by Simon’s babbling, his bushy black eyebrows furrowing. “This lad troublin’ yer, Alec?” he asked in a thick accent. His grip on the coffee mugs in his grasp was tight and his expression waspish.

“Don’t worry, Hamish. This is Simon, I met him in a mundie library the other day,” Alec muttered, the slang term for mundane slipping out before he could stop himself. Adelita, who had been drawing and listening intently to the conversation, paused the motion of her pencil. Ewanson bristled, disturbed by the quiet.

“What? What does mundie mean?” The words sounded strange and foreign on Simon’s tongue.

“Nothing,” Alec replied shortly, pleased when Hamish gradually bent to set the mugs on the smooth tabletop. They were cleaned with his wife’s Seelie magic every day - for a mundane, Ewanson was surprisingly knowledgeable about the Shadow-world and had even begun possessing both angelic and demonic traits himself.

“Well, if it’s some derogatory slang or something, I’d like to know-”

“Simon,” Alec said coldly, stopping the mundane in his tracks. Immediately, Alec felt bad. “It just means mundane. Normal. Completely uninteresting.”

There was silence once more as Simon glanced away, embarrassed and upset that he’d caused such a ruckus. Ewanson, ever the polite one (that was a lie - he was a dick at the best of times unless you were a regular), asked the boy, “you be havin’ anythin’, then?”

Simon brightened. “One hot chocolate with mini marshmallows and whipped cream? Oh, and some fresh cocoa powder if you have any, just sprinkled on the top?”

Ewanson raised his unibrow. “We got giant marshmallows that’s three years out o’ date and some hot chocolate mix.”

“Er...I’ll have a water, please...” Simon asked feverently, seeming as terrified of Hamish’s brow as the Scotsman wanted everyone to be. It was hard to become a regular with a guy like this serving you,’ Alec thought to himself as Simon dropped his glass of water on the ground when Ewanson came back with it. Blood drained from the boy’s face and the owner turned blood-red.

Adelita snickered.

---

Magnus crossed his legs over one another elegantly, looking entirely at home on Catia's plush, gold satin sofa that she had kept for the warlock especially.

"Catia," he purred, taking a dainty sip of his steaming tea, "what can I do for you, my dear?"

"You're the one who asked to come," Catia stated dryly. It was too early for Magnus bloody Bane's extravagance. The warlock grinned, cat eyes flashing in the low light.

"That I did." He leant forward suddenly, chest and long necklaces brushing his crossed knees. Catia fought back the urge to recoil in her seat across from him, not used to so much concentrated magic being so close to her. Some valkyries (and Seelies, too, for that matter) relished the awareness they had of magic in the world, but Catia had never taken to it.

"The Shadow-world of New York assumed that you were the only valkyrie left in America. High Valkyrie of the North, at the very least...but there I was, making potions as any warlock does when I received a delightful fire message from Isabelle Lightwood concerning her brother, Alec."

"This must have been quite some time ago, Magnus," Catia said, trepidation creeping into her voice. The Shadow-world knew that at least one valkyrie existed, but they had never bothered to actively track Catia down. Alec, though...a male valkyrie, and one with such an impressive display of power? He'd been slaughtered for his feathers, murdered for his all too unique blood. What did Magnus want with him?

"It was, yes, about one or two...or five years ago, but I assure you, I am still quite invested in his case. You wouldn't happen to know anything about him and his natural magic, would you? I sensed it when I removed the charm on his mind, removing his memories in the process," Magnus said flippantly, twirling his teacup as if it were a wine glass.

"I'm afraid I have no idea what you're talking about."

"Oh, come on, Catia! We've been friends for decades, you can't just spill this tiny detail. No one else will know of him. I'm quite protective of the boy, you see."

"As am I," Catia murmured softly. "Alright," she said finally, "he is a valkyrie. He shows an amazing deal of natural magic, but he can't access it properly - apparently he's only knowingly used it three times, which is how many times I'd use my magic in a day. But, he does have a phenomenal control over his shifting."

Magnus processed this for a moment. "And you think because of this, he'll be hunted?" There was a dangerous lilt to the High Warlock's voice that Catia enjoyed immensely.

"I guarantee it."

"Well..." Magnus said casually, leaning back into his chair, "I'll just have to keep a closer eye on my people and their going-ons. For my sake, not Alec's, of course."

Catia smirked. It was quite a simple, but an effective cover story. "Of course."

---

Alec had met every Downworlder he knew well at Ewanson's. There was Adelita - she was wearing makeup now, and push-up bras filled with tissue paper. Alec couldn't have been prouder - and Rory - he was Ewanson's son, but he was far too intelligent to continue the family business. No, Rory belonged in the sciences, not baristaring (despite Hamish trying to convince him that coffee was indeed a science). Jamie had been killed by rogue werewolves during the time Alec had been controlled by a warlock (still a sore topic) and the valkyrie still cursed the fact he hadn't been able to attend to poor boy's funeral.

It seemed customary, at the very least, to meet new Downworlders over a drink of some kind. It was how Alec had met Maia.

The Hunter's Moon was small, for a bar, and hidden, cupped away in the recesses of Brooklyn's nightlife. Alec was surprised he had never gone, to be frank - he'd taken a liking to going to typically downworlder-friendly bars, glamoured as a mundane - it had never been an issue when he was at Ewanson's, because he had been with Catia. It was a strange habit, but he knew that most downworlders hated most shadowhunters and vice versa. Hiding in plain sight was the only way that Alec could be around downworlders, some of the only people he actually felt connected with.

However, he wasn't glamoured now, nor did he have the strength to bother applying a glamour rune. He had demon blood and it burnt like hell fire when he tried to draw runes on himself. So far, the only rune that hadn't actually worked was an iratze, and it always a pain when Alec refused the rune when he was injured and had to endure the slow healing and worried interrogations from his sister.

As soon as he sat down at the bar at the Hunter's Moon, eyes snapped to his leather-coated back. Werewolves, Alec guessed. They had probably smelt him coming from a mile away. He wondered briefly if he carries the scent of demon blood as well.

"What can I get you?"

Alec's gaze jolted up from the whorls of wood on the bartop, meeting the eyes of an attractive black woman, her hair almost like a halo and red lips like cherries. If Alec hadn't been gay...

"Just a water, please," Alec murmured, resisting the urge to squirm under the bartender's gaze as she stared at him for a drawn out moment. There were three long scars on the left side of her neck that Alec hadn't immediately noticed. A werewolf, then, too.

"You do know that this is a bar, right? People tend to come here to get drunk."

"I, er...alcohol is painful," Alec stuttered out. The werewolf across from him arched an eyebrow, obviously not used to shadowhunters walking into her bar and confessing that they

were hurt by her drinks. There was a faint tweak to her ruby lips now, one that Alec certainly appreciated. She looked good when she smiled.

She left him to sit in silence for a few seconds before returning with a large glass of water. Alec wasn't sure if he would be given time to drink it before he was kicked out by the patrons sitting by the window, poorly hiding the agitated curve of their no longer concealed fangs.

"As I said, this is a bar. Specifically a bar for downworlders. It's sort of the reason it's so hard to find, especially by your kind," the bartender stated, her words calm, if the tiniest bit guarded. Alec chuckled softly, unable to help himself.

"What you mean they don't like shadowhunters down here? That's so weird," he murmured, sipping his water. It was cold. The lycanthrope looked like she was about to reply, seemingly somewhat offended, but Alec quickly tried to amend the situation. "I could swear there's no reason to dislike us - it's not like we're all racist, bigoted assholes, with views that should have been left behind in the Middle Ages."

The woman outright laughed, loud and bright. Alec smiled against the rim of his glass, watching her carefully through his lashes. He liked her, but he was accustomed to being tense all of the time, as if someone was to try and attack him when he was vulnerable and calm.

"You're much prettier when you laugh, you know. You look happier," Alec said, without thinking, the words tumbling from his mouth in an undignified heap. Oh, curse his inability to talk to anyone attractive, no matter the fact he didn't exactly swing this werewolf's way.

Her smile dropped, but not completely. Obviously Alec's statement had brought up some bad memories.

"Sorry to burst your bubble, but I don't tend to go for boys who are too pretty for their own good anymore. It never really went well in the past," her tone was harder now, and Alec felt like flinching. Secretly, he was a little relieved. He enjoyed the company of women far better if he knew they weren't going to think he wanted them...romantically. This was a perfect opportunity to mention Alec's typical attractions.

"Well, I guess we're both in luck because I don't really go for girls who are too pretty for their own good either," Alec murmured, before figuring that sounded like a bit of a douche, insulting thing to say and added, "Actually, I don't tend to go for girls at all. But that lovely gentleman in the corner certainly looks like he could use some company, and I really wouldn't mind being it, if you know what I mean."

Of course she didn't know what Alec meant. Alec didn't even know what he meant.

The guy in the corner was pretty cute though.

"What? Not only are you a shadowhunter who waltzes into downworlder bars without a second thought and asks for water, but you're also not a racist jerk and you're gay and seemingly very accepting of yourself? Buddy, which planet do you come from?"

Alec snorted in a rather undignified manner, almost choking on the water he'd gulped down. "What can I say? My mother always taught me to accept myself. I do think she meant accept myself as an attack dog for the Clave, but I took it to mean it was up for interpretation."

Oh. It looked like Alec had had time to finish his drink before he was thrown out. The empty glass seemed like an omen to leave now, especially considering he seemed ahead. The bartender didn't look like she wanted to rip his head off with her teeth.

"Well, I should be going. It was lovely meeting you," Alec murmured, tugging out his wallet to pay for his meagre drink. A tight grip on his arm stopped him from reaching his back pocket and Alec almost panicked for a moment before the body connected to the hand holding him hostage slid into the barstool next to him.

"You're Alec Lightwood, aren't you?" the man asked, his timbre deep and calming. Alec nodded slowly and satisfied, the tall black man let his arm go.

"My name is Luke Garroway, and this is Maia Roberts," Luke introduced himself, smiling faintly. He'd been watching the shadowhunter and his packmate for a while and was decidedly pleased with the choices Maia made with her friendships. "You're not like most Lightwoods, are you?"

Alec bit back a laugh as he thought of his wings and his mother and father's distinct lack of them. "I guess you could say that."

"I'm glad. Put your wallet away. You're staying and you're meeting the pack. Bear in mind that some aren't so open to shadowhunters, but if Maia and I like you, most probably will," Luke said, his smile growing slightly wider at the dazed look in Alec's eyes.

Maia laughed, saying a quick goodbye and good luck to Alec, assuring him that she'd be there for him once her shift finished. Somehow, despite Alec only knowing her for a few minutes at most, it made him feel much better.

The light euphoria in his chest stilled as Luke pulled him rather gently aside to murmur in his ear, "I don't know what you are, Alec, but you definitely aren't a shadowhunter." At the sight of the new tension wrought in Alec's shoulders and back and the quickening of his breathing, Luke pulled away with a bright, wide, genuine smile. Alec's nerves calmed.

"There's no way in hell I'm telling anyone. Don't you worry. As far as I'm concerned, if you've made Maia happy, you're a miracle, kid."

Alec wondered briefly why it seemed like such a feat to make Maia happy considering how easily she had laughed before he was guided over to sit at a semi-crowded table of friendly looking fanged patrons.

"Everyone - this is Alec," Luke announced, his voice loud and foreboding. The werewolves around the table eyed him warily for a moment before glancing up at Luke - Alec swore he wasn't the Alpha of the New York pack, although he certainly looked powerful enough to be - and then finally at Maia, who was none the wiser as she served another lycanthrope at the bar.

“What, is it werewolves only night, or something?” Alec found himself saying and then immediately wanted to take it back. By the Angel, it sounded like something stupid Jace would say. “Not that that’s a bad thing, just maybe it’s bad for business. You all seem like lovely people, though, I’m sure you’re very nice to have a bar full of.”

Shit.

As Alec was contemplating the creation of a rune that would make the ground swallow him whole, a petite woman with muscles that Alec strived for chuckled lightly, patting him comfortingly on the arm. “Oh, you’re just so precious, aren’t you? I’m Marie, by the way.”

Alec smiled and nodded in greeting. “Well, you’re making Maia happy, so you’re good in my books,” another wolf murmured, her stark white hair catching the light as she flicked it away from her face. “My name’s Gretel, precious,” she snarked, obviously not as welcoming to the idea of nice shadowhunters as the rest of her pack were.

“Maia’s freshly turned,” a young man explained, as if sensing Alec’s utter confusion. “It was her first full moon a week ago and she ended up hurting a mundane. She’s pretty messed up about it, but I think she’d already feeling a bit better because she finally has a pack and apparently someone she can laugh with.”

“This is Alaric, he’s one of the most trusted members of the pack,” Luke explained, grinning behind Alec’s shoulder at the sight of the young boy’s bright smile and even brighter hello. He definitely seemed a lot more comfortable with the downworlders than he ever had with the shadowhunters when Luke saw them together in passing.

Introductions carried on for a few more minutes, the group of werewolves, other than perhaps Luke and Marie, rather cold towards Alec as they peered at him over the rim of their beers. Alec was about to suggest he head off after some attempted small talk, but then Maia gracefully slinked down into the seat beside him, bearing a drink for herself and for him.

“It has a little bit more of a kick than water, but less of a burn than straight up vodka. Thought you might like it,” she explained, sipping at her own fruity concoction. Humming his thanks, Alec tentatively tasted the candyfloss pink drink in his hand, feeling a little bit self-conscious considering the other downworlders had beers with overly manly names. Raspberries burst on his tongue and he mumbled happily about the taste to Maia until the conversation at the table turned to something else.

“So, precious. Why’d you come to the Hunter’s Moon tonight?” Gretel asked suddenly, her steely gaze locked in on Alec’s own. He almost bristled at the nickname Gretel had already adopted for him, but resisted the urge, instead smiling in a benevolent sort of way.

“A drink and some good company,” he answered, hoping that that would be the end of the interrogation. It wasn’t.

“Yes, but why here? You must have known it was a downworlder bar by just looking inside. So, tell me, precious, what’s so bad about the shadowhunters that you can’t go home to them?”

Silence fell over the table. It felt like every other werewolf at the bar turned to look at Alec, their glares like hot brands against the back of his neck. He shifted uncomfortably, and a strong-gripped hand came down on his shoulder.

Luke stared down at him, face impassive, but still comforting. Breathing somewhat shakily, Alec turned back to Gretel, who seemed calmer than she had before. The lull of conversation from the other werewolves elsewhere continued, but the table that Alec sat at was quiet. Luke's hand on Alec's back didn't drop, but Gretel's harsh gaze did.

"Welcome to the pack," she murmured, almost inaudible. "Theo, our Alpha, might not like you, but we certainly do. And werewolves are fiercely protective of those they care about." Maia's smile grew wider at Gretel's words and Alec couldn't help but join her in her excitement.

"My kind are also fiercely protective of those they call their friends," Alec replied, meeting Gretel's probing gaze.

"Shadowhunters—"

"I didn't say shadowhunters," Alec interrupted. It would cause a stir of confusion among the werewolves, but as Luke's hand tightened in solidarity against his back, a rather paternal gesture, Alec knew he had made the right decision in alluding to his own demon blood.

"Well...I guess you're a little more than we originally thought you were, Alec. It's good to have you as an ally," Alaric stated matter-of-factly, leaving no room for Alec to disagree about their strange new alliance.

"I'll drink to that," Maia crowed, glad to be the distraction from the all too serious conversation. She giggled and downed her drink, throat convulsing as she swallowed everything in one go. Alec arched an eyebrow before doing the same, followed by the other members of the table.

The toast was followed by raucous laughter as Marie spluttered on her beer, and then the cold stoniness that had permeated the atmosphere was gone. Stories were traded as the moon waned above them, slowly dropping to be replaced by the early morning sun. Alec glanced out the window, startled to see the first rays of sunlight filter in through the dusty windows.

"I really should be going," he murmured reluctantly. Although exhaustion weighed heavy on his bones, he didn't want to leave the pack, or face his sister's wrath at having stayed out incredibly late.

"Wait, let us give you our numbers," Maia said, pleased when Marie and Luke agreed quite loudly. Marie was rather tipsy, which was saying something for a werewolf, but Alec handed over his phone for everyone to input their contacts. Admittedly, they were all stalling, not wanting anyone to leave, but time was dragging on, and Alec was supposed to be on patrol in twenty minutes. He wasn't sure where he was going to fit in some rest, but he figured a stamina rune, however much it hurt, would have to do.

“I’ll make sure to message you,” Alec promised, before turning awkwardly on his heel, reaching the front door of the bar before he stumbled and fell straight into the arms of an impeccably dressed Asian man and holy fuck, Alec could feel his muscles under his shirt and he was ripped.

“Pretty boy?!” Alec cried, recognising the poor man from the bar earlier, the one he had pointed out to Maia. He really was more gorgeous close up. “Wait, no,” he stammered out, “That’s not what I mean. Well, I do, you’re beautiful, it’s just that sounded kinda dickish, I just meant that that’s the name me and Maia gave you cos you’re, you know...pretty.”

This was a losing battle.

Alec braced himself for the hostility of a Straight Dude™, but the man - who was wearing absolutely stunning make-up, by the Angel, Alec wanted to climb him like a tree - only laughed, deep and calm. His eyebrows were slightly pinched together with amusement and his lips, glossy and pink, pressed together in appreciation as he glanced Alec up and down.

“You’re not too bad yourself, shadowhunter,” he mumbled, taking in Alec’s dark clothing and even darker runes. His eyes, when he looked up at Alec again, were critical and crisp...and they were amber cat eyes.

“Oh my God...” Alec mumbled under his breath, something inside his sternum lurching as he took in the man’s face once more with the new addition of really quite brilliant cat eyes.

The warlock chuckled - and yes, of course he would be the type of person that could pick out the lustful neediness in Alec’s voice at the sight of his true eyes, could see the tiny way Alec’s tongue flicked out to wetten his inviting lips.

“Where on earth did the werewolves find you? I’m tempted to just take you home for myself, but...” he sighed, gesturing elegantly with ringed fingers towards the dawn outside. “I do think that you should be heading home to your Institute, don’t you?”

Alec nodded stupidly, barely processing the warlock’s words after ‘take you home for myself’. “Er, yes.”

The downworlder laughed again, smiling in a way that showed off his perfectly formed teeth. “Go do your job, shadowhunter. Perhaps we’ll be meeting again.”

Nodding again, Alec turned briskly on his heel and escaped the bar, crisply cold morning air helping to soothe his bright red face. Meanwhile, back at the Hunter’s Moon, Magnus dropped his smile into a self-satisfied smirk. He hadn’t exactly gone against the rules Catia had decided for him - he hadn’t actively sought Alec out. The Fallen had done just that - fallen into his awaiting arms.

Oh, this was going to be fun.

# Severity Within Saints

## Chapter Notes

I decided on having slightly shorter chapters; (1) because 13,000 words is a lot to digest all at once and (2) because I can write and put out updates a lot quicker that way.

The response to this has been so wonderful and I'm really, really glad people like it. <3 Comments and kudos are much appreciated and if you have any questions, hit me up

A strong friendship was quickly born amongst the pack and Alec. Honesty; Alec found it had been key, as it should have been in his relationship with Catia and Isabelle. It was easy enough to gain the wolves' trust when he answered every single one of their painstaking questions with utter truthfulness.

"You told your parents you're gay, precious?" Gretel had asked once. Alec had told her no. It was simple.

"Is it hard to be...whatever you are?" Maia said once, as they were sitting down to share a meal. Alec had bristled for a moment, thinking back on everything that had happened the years before and decided that things were pretty shit being a valkyrie. He told Maia as much, making sure not to reveal anything of his Fallen nature. Not yet.

"Why can't you just see how much everyone loves you, Alec? Why can't you just accept it?" Luke had asked that. Hissed it to him, in angry tones after the wolf had seen the way Alec still crumpled in on himself whenever someone tried to show affection to him - he despised the fact that Alec was still so terrified and insecure.

Alec had found it one of the hardest questions he'd ever had to answer and for Luke - who he'd only known for a few short months - to ask him it...so he didn't answer. He ran, tail between his legs, out of Jade Wolf and stayed away until Gretel of all people dragged him back to kiss and make up with their pseudo-pack leader.

Speaking of, the rest of the pack weren't as welcoming to the Alec-shaped addition to the restaurant as others. Marie was quite fond of the man, but she was moving to Canada within the week. Alaric was pretty unbiased in terms of Alec.

Matt, the pack leader, was less than pleasant to the valkyrie. Perhaps it was because he was a Shadowhunter - in fact, it was even worse that he was a Lightwood - but Matt had never liked Alec. He'd put up with him, at the very least, possibly to increase the pack's compliance. It was smart, Alec thought, to give his followers what they wanted, in return for what he wanted.

There was a young man called David, around Alec's age, who hated the valkyrie. Maia had told him once, when they were having a quiet movie night together, that she thought David liked her and was jealous of their relationship; judging from the longing looks David had thrown their way, Alec assumed she was correct.

Shockingly, Gretel was almost obsessively protective over Alec. For a while, they were neutral around each other, but Gretel had confessed tiredly to him about a month after he came to know the pack that she missed being a mundane. She missed her friends and the family she had had to leave behind. Alec seemed to have everything. Afterwards, they had become close friends. Gretel was surprisingly affectionate.

"Are you ever going to tell your sister about us?" Gretel murmured softly, burrowing into the heat of Alec's neck. Plastered to his other side was Maia and over on the other battered sofa was Luke, eyes drooping with the rhythm of his accelerated heartbeat. The lull of a movie droned on in the background.

"I already have," Alec soothed, pecking Gretel on the forehead. She smiled, throwing her arms haphazardly around Alec's lean middle. Alec chuckled softly, running his fingers lightly through Gretel's smooth hair. Luke roused suddenly.

"You've told Isabelle about us?" he asked, trepidation creeping into his tone. What did Alec do so wrong that his stoic almost-not-quite father-figure sounded so scared?

"I...yes? Not everything of course, just that I know some people from the Downworld, like she does," Alec tried to reassure him, but Luke's brow furrowed deeply, eyes flashing a

dangerous emerald. Gretel growled beside Alec, though the valkyrie was unsure if it was of protectiveness of him or submission to the older wolf.

“Alec,” Luke stated, cool and sharp. There was a twinge of something in his voice that Maia seemed to pick up on with an aggravating ease, because she wasn’t at all concerned, gently caressing Alec’s knuckled hand.

“Thank you. We didn’t want to be your dirty little secret...and we’re not. So thank you.” Luke’s tone was full of fond gratitude and Alec let out a harsh sob, so utterly relieved to have Luke thankful for what he did. The poor werewolf must have been terrified that Alec had wanted to conceal their relationships.

Luke stalked over with a keen, fatherly type of amble, enwrapping Alec in his muscular arms. Gretel smiled against the flushed flesh of Alec’s quivering neck. Beside him, Maia was still silent and grinning.

“Thank you,” Luke repeated, with a bright grin.

“Yeah,” Alec whispered, “no problem.”

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Alec sighed for what felt like the hundredth time that morning. It was loud and exasperated in a fons sort of way that Simon had gotten used to and no longer felt scared by. The valkyrie had found that the ‘Clary’ Simon always talked about had backwardly complimented him in such a way that it had made Simon feel unworthy of her attention but incapable of existing without it. He hated her already.

“Calm down, Si,” he murmured, leaning back in his chair with a groan. He was exhausted. “She’ll be here soon.”

Simon’s jittering foot - which had been resting against Alec’s and causing the Fallen’s aggravation - paused. He was young, only eighteen, and when he turned to Alec with a

waning smile, he definitely looked it. “But, will she like me?”

“She’ll love you.”

After the praise he’s received from Luke and his other wolf friends for revealing their friendship to Izzy, Alec had gone on a Downworlder craze, frankly. He’d explained his relationship with Jamie, Rory and Adelita and Izzy had met Jamie. It was strange, at first, for her to talk to a gravestone, but she got used to it after a while, just like Alec had.

There wasn’t anyone but Luke, Maia and Gretel who knew Catia was his great-grandmother. Izzy hadn’t been told, despite Alec desperately wanting to, and so now he was on a spree on introducing her to his other friends.

Simon was the most logical of decisions as to who to tell first. They’d grown much closer in the past year, and Alec had been a guest enough in Simon’s home for his mother to no longer be concerned that he was covered in ‘tattoos’ and clad in black leather. In fact, Elaine rather liked Alec.

“Is that her?” Simon’s voice brought Alec out of his reverie and he smiled, bright and sharp, when he saw Catia strolling with a faux-casualness in her gait. She couldn’t conceal her own toothy grin. It seemed that the innocence in her expression brightened Simon’s mood considerably, because he straightened up in attention, a forlorn, but pleased sort of smile residing on his pale lips.

“You look just like my bubbie,” were the first words out of his mouth as Catia took a seat across from them. Catia blanched, receiving the compliment (Alec figured it was a compliment considering the only time he’d met Simon’s grandmother, she’d been almost unbearably sweet and kind) awkwardly, but before she could reply, Simon said, “Sorry. It’s just...”

“She died a few months ago,” he mumbled quietly, nibbling at the loose skin inside his lip with increasing anxiety. It had been rough since Marie had died, Alec knew and he reached across to take Simon’s quivering hand. The poor boy clung on like he was touch-starved, shoulders tensing. “And you reminded me of her, is all. I didn’t mean to sound so weird.”

“Not all all, my boy. I can sense that your grandmother’s soul was a pure one.” Catia had been practicing, along with Alec, on finding a mundane religion that best suited their own valkyrian beliefs. Claiming that they were wiccans or druids seemed the best fit.

“What do you mean?” Simon asked slowly, curious as ever and without a lick of humour at the ‘bat-shit crazy’ grandmother in front of him, as many mundanes would be tempted to feel.

“Well, I’m a wiccan. Have you heard of them?” Simon shook his head. “We’re a modern religion, based on ancient witchcraft. We’re all about harmony and peace and appreciating nature. I believe that I can sense the spirits or the magick of people’s ghosts.”

As Catia spoke, the tight grip Simon had on Alec’s hand loosened until his fingers went limp. He was so enraptured by Catia’s words. Alec hadn’t met a wiccan before and neither had Simon, but he seemed incredibly interested - Alec could see the appeal, but it just seemed like mundanes who were trying to be warlocks. Admittedly, Alec didn’t know much about Wicca, but...

“Really?! That’s so cool!”

But, Simon was ecstatic. Alec didn’t mind what made him so excited.

They spent about two hours in Ewanson’s - Hamish finally smiled at Simon, although it was more like a grimace, and it was probably because of the fondness Catia was showing to the mundane so soon. When they finally left, Alec had tugged Simon into a tight hug that Catia quickly followed with her own.

“You think she likes me?” he asked when Catia disappeared around the corner, her long, loose dress fluttering around her heels. Alec laughed deeply, giving Simon a tap on the back that the mundane had dubbed The Testosterone Pat (trademarked, of course).

“I think she’s practically adopted you now.”

Simon beamed, shuffling shyly against the ground, his trainers scuffing the dusty concrete outside of Ewanson's. There was a perpetual blush, high on his cheekbones. Alec was only glad that Catia didn't just see him as the one who was always red-cheeked.

"Great!" he cried, easy as that. "You wanna go get ice cream?"

"Sure, whatever," Alec grumbled, smiling in secrecy as Simon bounded off.

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It was November when Alec next saw Magnus. He hadn't necessarily thought about the warlock, aside from a few short fantasies - one couldn't risk to 'fantasise' about magicfolk in the Institute, even behind locked doors - but it was pleasant enough to see the man again.

Well...

Alec had been on a standard procedure patrol with Jace when it happened. The other man, already sick of taking advantage of Alec's company, had wandered off somewhere and Alec was on his own, no Izzy by his side to tempt Jace into staying. The man of steel must have been only a few blocks away when Alec heard the scream.

It was high-pitched and girlish but Alec could immediately sense a higher frequency of power on the air. Rosewater scent and freshly cut grass drifted to Alec's nose as he scurried along the alleyway he had been passing on his patrol - which he hadn't just abandoned in search of the nearest bar and nearest girl to defile, like a certain someone, thank you very much.

The valkyrie's chest tightened as he dipped between the never-ending maze of alleyways, passing a good few drunken students along his way to the source of the scream. They didn't seem bothered by it and Alec was unsure if it was because they couldn't hear it or because it was already a rough neighbourhood.

Nevertheless, he persisted, darting through a small Chinese shop, it's two beaded doors the only thing separating Alec from the source of the scream. He called out a quick apology in the limited Mandarin he knew - despite Maryse's attempts, his love for mundane languages had never faded, and as Izzy taught him Spanish, Catia taught him Chinese dialects - and then ploughed on, pulling his bow from his tense shoulder as he neared the woman who had screeched.

The bright blue-green of her wings hit Alec's vision full force before he registered the figure on the ground, along with her...acquaintances.

She was collapsed against the side of the alleyway, cold brick pressing against the sunflower yellow of her dress. It was smattered finely in blood, and Alec could see her ribs, clean and white and fragile, through the gaping wound in her side.

A warlock, judging by the fact she was still alive (and, you know, the massive wings), Alec surmised, before crouching by her side and taking her pulse. It was weak and erratic, but it was still there.

Toeing the corpse of the demon the warlock had probably killed, and been injured by, away from them, Alec knelt by the warlock, casting his mind back to the lessons Catia had attempted with him to teach him to control his natural magic. She was quite brilliant at it, but Alec had received the gift of easy-shifting and not the gift of easy magicking.

However, this warlock was dying, her breath coming out in tiny puffs that coloured the air a pale blue. Alec wasn't the type of man to leave her to die.

He raised his hands slowly, unsteadily and imagined the woman healing in his mind. A sigil came to him, after a few long, precious moments of the warlock choking on her breaths, and her waved into frantically into the air - a curve at the bottom, three dots and then an almost pyramid like feature. It had appeared in his head like...well, like magic, considering that was what it was.

But the sigil he had crafted didn't work. Alec's intent was all wrong, his magic was still concealed within him.

“Come on, come on...” he muttered under his breath, reaching forward to take the warlock’s pulse again. It hadn’t occurred to him that warlock’s bloodstreams could be different, along with their pulses, until that moment. But still, this woman had a massive hole in her side, Alec reasoned with himself frantically, He had to perform the sigil.

Levitating his hands once more, Alec rested them ever so gently against the pulsing, oozing wound in the warlock’s side. The demon besides him had a rather lethal set of fangs.

Slowly, as if caressing the skin of a blind kitten or a terrified pup, Alec traced the sigil in the millimetre of air between his palm and the woman’s drastically paling skin. “It’s all about your intent and your confidence. Your magic won’t speak to you if you don’t treat it like you should,” Catia had said when trying to make him practice or to wear crystals around his neck to resonate and harmonise with his earth magic.

When Alec opened his eyes, he was woozy and tired. A flicker of residual gold from his fingers drifted along his arm, disappearing from his bony, white knuckles to inside his jacket. The stark red of blood covered his fingertips, creeping beneath his fingernails. A shame, Izzy had just filed them, Alec noted deliriously.

“Hey, take it easy,” a voice murmured against his ear. Alec finally registered the bright eyes of the warlock woman in front of him and the pressure on his side, blisteringly hot. Alec groaned as the pinched tightness of magic exhaustion begun to form in his skull.

“He’s certainly powerful,” the woman said, voice sounding hazy to Alec, as if she was bubbling from underwater. “What will you do with him?”

“He may be a Shadowhunter, but he’s healed you almost completely. I’ll take care of him until his magic recuperates. Do him a favour and conceal this, yes?”

“Of course, Magnus. Tell him when he wakes up that I said thank you. I need to portal to Spain, Maria’s been summoning demons here again. I did tell that child not to play with spirits, but she never listens.”

The conversation bounced back and forwards a few more turns, like a game of tennis, and Alec, despite trying desperately, couldn't keep up. Sighing deeply, he snuggled into the heat of the person next to him, golden skin clouding his vision. A neck. Alec was pressing his entire face into some poor warlock's neck and breathing him in as if he was the nicest of roses.

Cold wetness begun to seep into the material of Alec's jeans, and the warlock he was resting - no, collapsed - on seemed to notice. Within a few seconds, Alec had experienced the strange warping sensation of a portal for the first time and he was sprawled, avec golden-skinned, nice-smelling warlock on top of him.

"Not that I wouldn't love to be on top of you some other time, I think we should move this to the bedroom. Where you can rest," the warlock said pointedly and Alec groaned, eyes adjusting to the change in lighting and scenery.

"Wha'?"

"Bedroom, darling," the warlock chuckled, deep and low and...and Alec recognised that voice, finally, from the brief meeting they had had in Hunter's Moon (and the less brief role in Alec's daydreams).

"Mmm, pretty boy," he slurred as Magnus hoisted him up, muscles tensing under his shirt with a mad, staccato rhythm. Alec giggled slightly, a testament to his deliriousness. "Where you takin' me?"

"I've told you, Alexander," Magnus murmured, weary but amused. "My bedroom." When Alec perked up, eyes brightening, he laughed. "No, no, not for that. Get your mind out of the gutter, shadowhunter."

"Am I not good enough for you?" Alec whined, pressing against Magnus' side, firmer than he had been before. The Fallen hadn't experienced magic sickness or fatigue before, but Catia had told him it made everyone react differently - he supposed, somewhere in his logical brain, that this reaction was entirely normal.

“Take me on a date and we’ll find out,” Magnus joked, feeling only a little guilty when Alec nodded excitedly. “Okay, okay. Bed for you,” he persisted. They had reached his bedroom, stumbling and laughing.

Alec smiled as he threw himself onto Magnus’ red velvet bed, burrowing into the residual warmth there. Sighing, Magnus sat on the side of the bed, pulling Alec’s shoes off his feet and tugging off his thick black jacket. The sweater underneath was moth-eaten and charcoal.

Magnus hoped the man would put in a little more effort into his appearance on their date.

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It was becoming typical for Alec to wake up, tired and in someone else’s bed. As his eyelashes fluttered, a groan escaped his pursed lips. The blankets beneath him rustled and a cold gust of wind brushed over his bare arms.

His exhaustion hit him like a ton of bricks as he pushed himself up onto his elbows, feet toppling off the bed and crashing against the hardwood floor; it was far too cold to be bearable. In the distance, there was a clattering of pots and pans and shattering glass.

Despite his Shadowhunter training, Alec wasn’t immediately on alert, relaxing in the heat of the blankets that his body had left behind. Fear didn’t hit him until a little later, when he remembered where he was and how he had gotten there.

His magic muttered restlessly at the tips of his fingers, aching to be released now that Alec had done it before. But there was still the exhaustion was still there, his body weak and fragile - not only had it been the first time Alec had been able to access his magic through his own will, it had been a pretty fucking big piece of magic as well.

Magnus had found him, by another warlock’s bloodied feet, and brought him to his home. And had then proceeded to propose a date - or was it Alec who had proposed one? Either way, he had revealed his magic - even though he was supposed to be a Shadowhunter - and had asked a guy - an incredibly hot warlock guy - on a date.

The date seemed only slightly less terrifying than the concept of someone other than Catia or his friends at Ewanson's knowing about his valkyrian nature.

"Alexander?"

Alec stiffened as the shuffling of feet grew closer to the room he was in, groaning as he shifted so that he wasn't flopped on the bed but rather sitting up. The door opened, a tray of food preceding Magnus. There was a mountain of toast and jam, with a massive mug of coffee and a pile of eggs and bacon. It smelled heavenly and Alec's stomach growled, as if realising how hungry he was.

"Good morning," Magnus said lightly, gliding over to where Alec was sat, positioning himself and the tray of food on the bed. Alec flinched at the close proximity, his fatigue heightening his general fear. Magnus' brow furrowed.

"I didn't notice that last night," he murmured, hand snapping up quickly to brush against a patch of dried blood on Alec's temple. The valkyrie made a noise in the back of his throat that most definitely was not a whimper, angling himself away from the touch and the high concentration of magic Magnus naturally brought. Usually, he would have plastered himself to Magnus' side, revelling in the warmth of his magic, but with exhaustion came the training Maryse had pummelled into him.

"Sorry," Magnus whispered, although his fingers didn't move from Alec's skin. "I know it can be hard for some people to deal with the amount of magic I have." The fingers began to probe slightly, pushing against the wound in Alec's skin. "You probably hit your head when you fell last night," the warlock said carefully, unsure how much Alec remembered of the evening.

The Fallen sighed finally, muscles loosening from their previous tenseness as Magnus' magic washed over him. Blood caked over his temple began to melt away, seeping back into Alec's skin until all that was left was a small graze against Alec's head. Magnus didn't push the boy by introducing more magic to him, moving his fingers away, blue mist following.

"Better?"

“Hmm,” Alec mumbled, hazy and disoriented. Magnus waited until he had scarfed down a decent amount of toast before he begun to ask him any questions. The other man had the mug of boiling coffee in his hand when Magnus asked suddenly, “how long have you known that you were a valkyrie?”

The reaction was instantaneous.

Alec reared up, scrambling off the bed and spilling what must have been at least a litre of black coffee over Magnus’ Persian bedsheets and Turkish carpets. He reached instinctively for his bow and arrow, face flickering with panic before he schooled his features into nonchalance.

“I don’t know w-what you’re talking about,” he whispered, lie sounding fake and blatant even to his own ears.

“As if!” Magnus laughed, standing gracefully from his perch at the end of the bed. Alec winced as the warlock came closer, the look in his gaze almost obsessive in a predatory way. “I know you’re a valkyrie and you know that too. Let’s just both come clean with one another, hmm?”

“S-stop,” Alec whined, caving in on himself only for Magnus to catch him and then his magic was surrounding Alec, trapping him in place so he could only whimper into Magnus’ neck, wave after wave of strength rolling over him.

He came to a little while later, Magnus stroking his hair in concern. “I’m sorry, I’m so sorry. It’s what Catia recommended for you, I didn’t know it would have this effect-”

“W-what?” Alec questioned frantically, his voice raspy and low. Magnus blanched.

“I called Catia after I found you last night. Put you to bed and then told her everything, about how much magic you had used, whether or not you were hurt, et cetera, et cetera.” The warlock was rambling, nervous as he played with Alec’s bird’s nest of hair. “She told be that you would need to replenish your magic, and quickly. It would naturally have come back, in short, quite destructive bursts, over about a year judging by how much you ran yourself dry-”

“What did you do?” Alec asked, nibbling at his bottom lip and stiffening in Magnus’ tight grip. The floor beneath him was cold but Magnus was burning hot.

“I introduced my own magic to your body. It sped up the healing process and also...effectively bound our magic. You can take magic from me and I can take magic from you.”

Alec swore, trying to push away from Magnus, but the warlock’s grip was strong and sure. Muscles tensed under his bright shirt, shifting as Alec writhed. “Calm down, my little angel, calm down,” Magnus soothed, voice soft and almost inaudible. Alec felt utterly compelled to do so, melting back into Magnus’ embrace.

“Why are you still holding me?” he asked quietly, voice cracking on the syllables. Magnus chuckled.

“You going to be this frigid on our date?” he asked, only to hear Alec groan in embarrassment, hiding his red face in his half-trapped hands. Sobering, Magnus explained, “Our magic needs to get to know each other, to mingle. Otherwise the separation between us will damage both of us. Just think of it as our magic are people that need to learn absolutely everything there is to about each other before they part.”

“Okay...so, how do you know about all this? Do valkyries and warlocks do this a lot?”

“Not particularly. Valkyries are almost wiped out, but every so often, warlocks replenish each other’s magic in dire situations - war, for instance, or like last night, when you lent your magic to Sophia. Not to say that every warlock and valkyries’ magic reacts in the way that ours did. Sophia’s magic won’t be bound to yours or vice versa, simply because she wasn’t the right type of warlock for you.”

“This sounds vaguely like a dating app with serious repercussions,” Alec quipped, moving in Magnus’ grip so that he could find a more pleasing position, back pressed half against the wall and half against Magnus. The warlock twitched, throwing his legs over Alec’s and shifting his fingers so that they were once again entwined in Alec’s hair.

“I wouldn’t have thought someone of your calibre would have known what a dating app was,” Magnus teased, tugging gently on Alec’s hair once he realised it was what Alec liked. Chuckling, Alec muttered something about his sister introducing him to them under his breath.

“Will we...be seeing each other again?” Alec whispered some time later, when he was sure Magnus had dozed off, secure in the easy haze surrounding them.

“Of course. Our magic is bound to each other, we can’t actually go for too long periods of time without seeing each other.”

“You mean I’m stuck with you until I die?” Alec joked, arching into Magnus’ embrace so he could watch the warlock carefully through his lashes. Their instant connection, though probably due to the similarities in their style of magic, as Magnus had explained briefly, was surprisingly nice. Alec felt like he could tell Magnus anything, and although there was an underlying attraction in his gestures, their relationship was only just bordering on romantic...and it was nice. It was really nice.

“Haha, very funny,” Magnus replied, rolling his eyes. “Not necessarily. You could store a large amount of your magic in a pendant or in another object and vice versa, and then we’d never have to see each other again, unless the magic ran out.”

Alec’s brow furrowed; Magnus seemed to sense his insecurity because he quickly consoled him, “Not like that, I don’t mean it like that. I just mean that I go abroad often for work and you don’t seem to have much opportunity to come see the high Warlock of Brooklyn.”

“Oh...well, that might be a good idea, yeah,” Alec said finally, a little awkwardly.

“You could also tap into my strength when in battle. Warlocks did it quite often not too long ago; during old wars. Critical blows would incapacitate them for a while, but their bound’s magic would eventually help to heal them.”

“Useful,” Alec agreed, chuckling, “how would I do it?”

“Perhaps not now,” Magnus advised, “you’re still a little weak, darling.” Alec blushed at the pet-name, hiding his face in Magnus’ shirt. It was soft and silky against his burning cheeks. Fingers drifted gently through his hair - it was strange, because whilst Alec naturally had a compulsion to stay in Magnus’ embrace, Magnus’ disposition was to protect Alec and to smother the Fallen with affection.

They stayed there for at least another hour, feeding each other little pieces of toast and bacon that Magnus warmed with a little burst of magic; Alec groaned when he felt the tug just under his heart, that Magnus explained was his own magic entwining with his valkyrian magic.

But, at around three in the afternoon, Alec’s phone buzzed against his side. It was Maryse and after five minutes of her screeching at him through the phone, he figured it was time to call it quits with his peace with Magnus.

“I’m sorry...it’s my mother, she’s...upset that I didn’t tell her where I was,” Alec muttered, shifting to stand up and realising how stiff his bones had gotten. Magnus helped him up, smiling sadly.

“Yes, I’m sure Maryse is very...upset,” he muttered under his breath, seeming to ignore Alec’s flinch. He lead the valkyrie out of his room, snagging Alec’s bow and quiver from his coffee table as he passed it on the way to the front door. Alec took them without comment and then tried to silently leave, quick enough that he didn’t leave any signs of his presence in Magnus’ loft.

“Alec! Alexander, please,” Magnus stopped him, tugging him back by his arm. “I’m sorry. I shouldn’t have said that.”

Alec paused. “I...don’t worry about it. It’s fine.” It didn’t seem to be, Magnus thought, knowing that Alec must be upset either about his comment or- “It’s not your fault. I just didn’t really want to leave to see her.”

“O-oh. Well, in that case,” Magnus muttered, pulling Alec forward gently to press their lips together. It was chaste but warm and pleasant and as soon as Magnus pulled away, Alec leant back in, twisting to fit their mouths together properly.

Alec groaned softly, legs wobbling as he leant forward, almost toppling onto Magnus. Giggling, Magnus pressed harder against his lips, hands finding their way to Alec’s hips. When they did part again, Alec was flushed, lips kiss-bitten and bruised. Magnus couldn’t say he looked much better.

“I’ll...I’ll see you, yeah?” Alec whispered, still half pressed against Magnus. “I do really have to get going.”

Magnus sighed, stalling for time. It was a testament to his will that he didn’t just pull Alec back inside and keep him there for the rest of the day and spoil him. But Alec - Alec’s mother, at least - wanted him back at the Institute.

“You’ll come back?”

Alec grinned. “Yeah. I’ll come back.”

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Maia Roberts had a massive amount of pride in her wolf change. Ever since she had been bitten, she had possessed an innate ability to shift, as if it had been her birthright to be a wolf. Throughout her life, she had had her control ripped away from her on more than a few separate occasions and to finally be allowed it again was something indescribable.

So when she lost control of that change, her heart broke.

It was half nine at night and Alec was walking her home from a late shift at the Hunter’s Moon. They were talking quietly as they passed the shipyard storage crates, Alec about Magnus - who was unnamed at the time, but Maia figured out pretty easily afterwards who

the valkyrie was talking about - and Maia about some dickhead mundane who had tried to chat her up, when she felt the first pangs of her change.

“I...I don’t thi-ink that...A-Alec, I think it’s-” she choked out before her bones began snapping into a rather more arched shape. “Oh my God, it’s...I think it’s full-moon.”

“What?! Since when, it’s not meant to be for another few weeks; I spent your last full moon with you and Gretel, only last week,” Alec muttered, confused as well as concerned - he remembered it quite vividly, watching shitty werewolf movies with Maia and Gretel howling behind him.

“Well, I’m changing, aren’t I?!” she screeched at him, hissing animalistically as her bones began to realign themselves. It was excruciating, and Alec couldn’t really do much to help. “I need to get away from here, you can’t let me hurt mundanes.”

“Fuck, right, okay,” Alec grunted, crouching down by Maia’s crumpled form and hoisting up. She growled, fangs snapping at his face, but Alec didn’t flinch, eyes hard - he was, for once with Maia, a warrior.

It didn’t take long for Maia to be thrown quite bodily into the storage unit she had collapsed against. Alec’s muscles bulged underneath his grey sweater, his face grim and angry. The moon behind him was bright despite being covered by storm clouds; but it wasn’t full.

“Obviously this is something to do with you or some curse on you,” he pondered aloud, stepping into the storage unit after Maia. She cried out, wolf howling protectively inside of her, clawing to get out. Alec ignored her.

“I’ll stay with you tonight. Try and see if there’s anything I can do to help - and I can stop you from leaving and hurting mundanes.”

“No!” Maia screeched, scrambling up, her fangs snapping down on her lips. They bloodied up, dripping onto the floor as she hurled herself at Alec and the door of the storage unit, sobbing as Alec held her close as she shifted, nails shifting into claws and scratching deep gashes into his chest.

“Alec, Ale-e-ec, you have to leave, I’m going to hurt you, I’m going to hurt you-” her pleas lengthened into ragged shouts, bellows that ended up being drowned out by Alec’s own grunts and cries as Maia’s wolf ripped him to absolute shreds.

Luke found them the next morning, following the scent of dried blood and sweat to the storage unit that Alec had thrown them both into. Alec was covered in crimson, his mouth slack and his tattered torso a canvas of blue and black bruises.

Maia wasn’t much better, mentally at least, her eyes bloodshot and terrified as she took in the smell of blood and the suffocating darkness. The dawn breaking on the horizon illuminated the storage unit, only brightening the chaos and carnage there. Luke took one look at Alec’s unconscious, crippled form and ordered sharply, throwing Maia his phone,

“Call Magnus Bane.”

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An issue his friends had always found in Magnus, although it was an endearing issue, they said, was that Magnus felt hard and and fast and far too easily. It had happened with Camille, and it had happened with far too many others; Alec, however, didn’t seem like Camille. Magnus could tell, even just from his magic, that he was pure and soft and good.

They’d seen each other only once after that incident when Alec spent the morning after he healed Sophia, but it only was a half an hour at a coffeeshop - not Ewanson’s, as Alec wanted them to have a little time alone before he introduced Magnus to his friends (and fuck, Magnus was obsessed with the way Alec didn’t want Magnus to be his dirty little secret). They had replenished their magic in each other, giggling against each other’s lips in the back of the cafe, lost in the throes of eager and new love.

It was because of his devotion to Alec already that brought about the pure fear and franticity when he heard that he was bloodied up in the backroom of Jade’s Wolf after a night with one of their new wolves.

“I...I know-ow that y-you’re close, and I h-hurt him, but he needs your he-e-elp,” came the voice from the voice from the other end of the line. Her name was maia, Magnus thought in a blind panic as he formed a portal in his living room, despite promising to himself he would never do it. Portals left a strange smell in the upholstery.

“Tell Luke and Alexander I’m coming over. Keep him safe until I get there,” Magnus ordered shortly, his voice shaking as he hung up.

He was stumbling when he came out the other end of his portal, magic - Lilith, it was Alec’s magic too - clinging to his skin. Almost worried he’d portalled to the wrong place, Magnus glanced around in anxiety, eyes meeting those of a tall, black werewolf with pristine white hair.

“You Magnus?” she asked quickly, eyes wild and red. Her teeth were fangs and her head was set further forward on her head, neck stooping with the tenseness in her muscles. She must have been Alec’s friend.

“Yes,” Magnus choked out, following swiftly as the woman beckoned him through the kitchens, full of about nine or ten werewolves crowding a door at the end. He couldn’t see what was behind it, but Magnus was pretty positive it was Luke, Maia and Alec.

“Marie, Alaric, get the the fuck away!” the white wolf screeched, shouldering her way past a short man who was further away from the door. Magnus kept his limbs neatly tucked against his sides, apologising in his mind, at least, when his elbow collided painfully with someone’s ribs.

Alec was a fucking sight to see after the mess outside.

His face was pasty white, blending into the dirty grey sofa beneath him. A generous soaking of blood coloured his clothes and the concrete floor. Faint sheens of gold coated his skin, proving his lack of control - Catia had always bragged about how fantastic Alec was at shifting into his valkyrian form, but now he was a moment away from spreading his wings.

Three massive gashes lined his stomach, deep and jagged; Magnus could see quite clearly that it was from a werewolf's claws, assumedly Maia's claws. The young woman's skin was a dull brown-grey, completely opposite to the bright rosiness she usually wore when working Hunter's Moon.

"What the hell happened to him?" Magnus cried, dropping to his knees by Alec. Luke growled roughly, protective and needy as Magnus reached out his hand to stroke down Alec's crimson flank. Blue sparked at his fingertips already, magic calling out for Alec's.

"Maia shifted - she had no reason, it was a full moon and she's incredible at controlling her shift. Alec threw her in one of the storage unit for boats we have, and followed her. She couldn't stop herself from hurting him," he explained in a tight voice. Maia sobbed sharply, hand flying to her mouth.

"I'll check the perimeter after I heal him," Magnus muttered, fingers drifting over Alec's gaunt features. He puffed a short breath of air, twitching on the sofa - it was his only movement for a long moment.

Magnus blocked out Luke's response, focusing solely on Alec's tattered stomach. It was a gruelling process to knit his skin back together and Magnus was wavering on his knees by the time he'd sealed together Alec's gut. His inner magic murmured softly every time Magnus' brushed against his own, and it was precious enough that Magnus' concern faded slightly.

Three hours later, when Magnus was light-headed and Maia had sobbed herself to sleep, Alec breathed a deep sigh of life. His breathing was uneven and his heartbeat hammered in his chest but his cheeks were mottled with colour.

"Is...is he okay?" Luke asked quietly, supporting Magnus by his elbows. "He's going to be fine, right?"

Magnus appreciated the anxiety in his voice, the parental fear that Magnus had felt with each other his own 'children'. In the same way Magnus had brought Raphael under his wing, Luke had dragged Alec into his own life and Magnus couldn't be more thankful that Alec had people in his life more supportive than Maryse.

“Yes,” he said harshly, trying to prove that he was right just through his words. Luke seemed to believe it, shuddering out a sigh of relief as he ran his hands over Alec’s bare arm, clenching his fingers over Alec’s pulse.

The valkyrie groaned, arching up against Luke’s touch and waking Maia in the process. His eyes took a moment to flutter open and focus on the faces looming above him. Eyes passed quickly over Maia and Luke, grabbing Maia’s hand to console her as she whimpered; but when he saw Magnus, his gaze ignited with a mixture of fear and longing.

“Y-you healed me?” Alec asked, leaning over the sofa to try and cling to Magnus, fingers searching Magnus’ chest for the cavity beneath his heart that was the root of his magic, trying to determine whether or not Magnus had used too much.

“I did. And I’m fine - you’re fine, too, I hope,” Magnus whispered, a poor attempt at a joke.

Alec smiled, hand snagging Magnus’ hair and bringing him closer. Luke grunted, rolling his eyes as he pulled Maia up and away, allowing Magnus and Alec a moment of privacy as they shuffled out of the backroom.

“I’m okay. A little tired, admittedly, But I’m sure a little sleep will fix that,” Alec murmured, arching his neck up so that his and Magnus’ lips met briefly. His tongue swiped across Magnus’ bottom lip, bolder than Alec had been before.

He parted from the chaste kiss and then chased Magnus for another, whining softly. A mild desperation spurred him on, until Magnus had positively melted against Alec, soft and pliant beneath the valkyrie’s blood hot touch.

When Magnus gasped sharply, Alec took the opportunity to actually deepen the kiss and wow; he didn’t think a kiss could feel this good. Magnus had...experience. He took Alec’s bottom lip in between his teeth and nibbled at it, soothing the sting with a swipe of his tongue, chuckling as a whimper became stuck in the Fallen’s throat. What had started as a reassuring peck had lengthened into something that burned in Alec’s soul.

Magnus broke away first, only for lack of air. “You should come home with me,” he panted, leaning his forehead against Alec’s. Alec giggled a little deliriously, eyelids drooping.

“Yes, please,” he mumbled, “I would like that.”

# Everything is Not What it Seems

## Chapter Notes

This chapter title is legit just the intro of Wizards of Waverly Place, that show was my jam

And oh my fucking God, so much shit happens this chapter, you aren't even ready

I hope you like it, comments and kudos much appreciated <3

Alec realised how tired he was when Magnus portalled them to his loft; it was a while away from the Institute and despite Magnus attempting to romanticise it, it really was just...a warehouse.

They'd tumbled into bed together, exhausted enough to forgo the usual dip in confidence when it came to coming in close contact with one another - it made Alec ponder about their relationship, considering the unsteady, almost frantic pace that they had been progressing. Everything was so new and quick that Alec got whiplash when he thought about it too hard. He fell into a deep slumber before he could do so.

When Alec awoke, he was alone on Magnus' big enough to be obnoxious bed. Having heard shuffling on the floor above, which was the only space overlooking civilisation for Magnus, Alec relaxed back into the covers, groaning softly. He could sense Magnus' own magical fatigue, along with his own aching, though only very faintly, as if Magnus was subdued. Perhaps he was meditating on the roof...

Either way, Alec was tired and disgruntled and in desperate need of a pretty warlock to hug him - it was his insecurities that caused him to hesitate. Magnus had only just begun a relationship with Alec; was it even that?

It could be a fling, Alec reasoned with himself. Magnus could be bored and wanting to try a valkyrie out for size.

But...their natural magics were linked, in the most intimate of ways. Magnus was bound to Alec. They belonged to each other, in a sense and it sent a sick sense of possessive triumph to spur through Alec's soul. Magnus was his and even if the entire Shadow-world wanted him, Magnus was only promised to one person, and that was him.

Maybe jealousy wasn't the route to go down, Alec figured. He didn't want to become emotionally abusive, obviously. He wanted to make sure Magnus felt happy with him - Alec wanted, quite desperately too, to spoil his warlock.

He rolled of the bed, muscles rippling. Grace and beauty was for Magnus, but Alec was secure in the knowledge his thighs could crush a man's head.

The 'loft' smelt like herbs and crystals (they set off a slightly burnt, not entirely unpleasant smell when used correctly) when Alec padded out from the bedroom, in search of Magnus. It was perhaps the first time he had been given the opportunity to sit down and take in the grandeur of Magnus' home. He was maybe only outdone by Catia...or not, Alec decided, fingers brushing over a short silver dagger that he was sure belonged to the Angel Raziel - the tomb built in his honour, at the very least.

The walls were pale beige, but decorated in ornate throws and curtains, along with latticed woodwork separated different sections of the apartment. Only the bathroom and bedroom actually had an opaque door.

As Alec turned on his heel, whistling in awe, a houseplant hit him in the face. Bright green foliage crowded his vision for a moment and he cursed and spluttered over moss for a second before tumbling with a loud thud to the ground.

"Alexander?!" Magnus cried out sharply, footsteps already rattling their way downstairs before Alec could assure the High Warlock that he was perfectly fine.

"I...your houseplant attacked me," Alec said weakly when Magnus came to the bottom of the stairs, incredulity evident on his golden-brown features. The downworlder guffawed, so unlike the usual gentle femininity that Magnus provided that Alec was soon clutching his stomach, cramping with how much he was giggling.

“My-y-y -” Magnus paused, catching his breath, “- my houseplant, huh?”

“I’ve never encountered a more dangerous enemy. I did this to protect you,” Alec deadpanned, anxiety clawing at his stomach as Magnus’ face went blank before breaking out into a pleased smile.

“I must have a good influence on you. You’re even making jokes,” he noted, lifting away from the wall he’d collapsed against when in a laughing fit, and stalking towards Alec. The valkyrie flinched all of a sudden as he drew closer, concern etching his features whilst Magnus helped him up, brushing dirt off his clothes in complete oblivion.

“You’re a lot more exhausted than you let on,” he whispered as Magnus glanced up. His eyebrows were drawn tight together. “Your magic is usually so warm and bright and now it’s...”

“I’ll try harder next time to make sure my magic is up to standards,” the warlock interrupted quickly, cheeks flushed with indignation. Alec rationalised with himself that he was simply upset that he was weaker than usual - he was, after all, the High Warlock of Brooklyn.

Alec reminded him of as much. “I’m not saying you’re inadequate. You’re the High Warlock, for Christ’s sake, you’re the most powerful being I know. It’s not a criticism. I...I’m just concerned.”

The cracks in their relationship had begun to show. Alec had only managed three weeks with Magnus and they were only barely scraping along as it were. They deserved better - Maia had best give Alec at least two novelty gift baskets full of apologies and cookies, considering the mess she’d caused. Alright...that wasn’t necessarily fair, but Alec had to blame someone else who wasn’t himself too, right?

“You know,” Alec purred, or at least attempted to, before Magnus could reply thunderously. The warlock’s face cleared of his offense. “We never actually did get round to finishing that date. Only had half an hour together.”

“Your point being?” Magnus asked, his voice dripping sex. Oh yeah. He knew what was up.

“Perhaps we could finish it off together?” Alec proposed, hands grazing up Magnus’ sides before he boldly slipped his fingertips under the grey tank top the warlock wore, brushing sun-hot skin with the lightest of feather touches. “We don’t have to necessarily do anything big. Could go out for breakfast, I’m sure some place still does it at...at half four in the afternoon,” Alec said slowly, his ideas sounding flimsy even to his own ears. Magnus seemed ready to take over, endeared by Alec’s attempts.

“Or...” he paused for dramatic effect, one finely shaped, deep purple fingernail tracing the pulse in Alec’s neck. It was sensual and intimate without being sexual and Alec pressed forward, craving more of Magnus’ purity. “I could dress you all pretty, do your makeup and doll you up-”

Magnus’ breath ghosted over Alec’s lips as he leaned tantalisingly close, as if Alec wasn’t hanging onto his every word. “-and take you to the Pandemonium. I’d keep you close to me and show you off so everyone knew that-” He paused, tongue flicking out to wetten his bottom lip. One finger crooked to tease the pink flesh of Alec’s own lips. “-you and I were bound. That you were mine and I was - I am - yours.”

Alec swallowed thickly. “That sounds really nice, yeah,” he stammered out, feeling more than a little nervous and more than a little aroused. A spark inside him told him that he was wrong to accept, but he tampered it down, effectively throwing Maryse the middle finger.

“You’re going to look beautiful, angel, by the time I’m done with you. Not that you’re not already - I just think you need a little...glitter. You know?”

Alec did not know. His knowledge of makeup was very limited to what he used to help Izzy with - eyeliner because her hands shook and highlighter, because Izzy could never make it look the way Alec made it look. He hadn’t done Iz’s makeup in a while, but it had been therapeutic and a great time for Izzy to rave about the newest boy she had a crush on. They hadn’t talked like that in so long...

“Come on, Alexander?”

Right. One dramatic relationship at a time. “Hmm? What, you want to get started now? It’s only around five...”

“Who do you think I am, Alexander?” Magnus tutted, taking Alec casually by the hand to pull him into a room Alec hadn’t been in before. It was covered, floor to ceiling, in makeup products, vanities and clothes upon clothes upon clothes.

“This will take a while. I have to find something you’ll look positively incredible in. You’ll be a wonderful little piece of eye candy,” Magnus teased, spinning Alec around to sit him on the chair beside the massive dresser.

“I’m thinking something blue. Nothing too fancy for the clothes, but I’m afraid I’ll have to insist on a smokey eye and some sort of gold tint to your makeup,” Magnus rambled, marching over to one of his wardrobes. It seemed to be full of slightly muted, darker clothing items. Obviously, there were a lot less options than the next wardrobe he flung open, and then the two after that, which were full to the brim of bright, often studded, sequined or sparkled clothing.

“...would you mind if I called Isabelle? To tell her how I am? I usually text her if I won’t be going back to the Institute that day,” Alec ventured cautiously, unsure how Magnus would take that he seemed utterly uninterested in his rant about the pros and cons of glitter powder on darker skin.

“Hmm? Yes, of course, darling. Wasn’t she the one who always had flawless lipstick? Her foundation could use some work, tell her I have a brand she could try. It’s always so hard to find a colour match for her skin tone, though her skin is quite incredible anyways-”

Alec rolled his eyes in good nature, leaning against the back of the vanity as he fished his phone out of his pocket. He dialled Izzy’s number quickly and without mistake - Shadowhunters weren’t meant to keep phone numbers saved on their phones, to ensure utter security, and Izzy’s phone was the first he memorised the number to.

She answered on the second ring. “Alec?!”

“Izzy...hey. How’s it going?” Alec murmured awkwardly, rubbing the flushed skin at the back of his neck.

“How’s it going? I thought you were dying in an alleyway somewhere, but apparently you’re perfectly fine in...where are you, actually?” The fury in Isabelle’s tone quietened due to her curiosity. Alec figured he would, as was his habit, to answer the question...but not answer the question.

“Somewhere safe,” he settled with, ignoring the groan of ‘the Institute is pretty safe for us too’ on the other end of the line. “You know that girl, Maia? The werewolf?” Izzy hummed her assent, fixated on the story. Alec could pick the faint noise of her tapping her nails on glass. “We were out and she was almost to Jade Wolf when something triggered her shift.”

“Isn’t she a new wolf though? It’s pretty common for them to lose control sometimes,” Izzy asked, sighing deeply. Alec could imagine her shifting restlessly from foot to foot. They were meant to be training today, but Alec wasn’t sure he could manage it on top of all the dancing Magnus was going to have him do.

“She’s brilliant with her shift though. There’s barely been any wolves, new or otherwise, like it. We think that something unfamiliar triggered it.”

“Okay...” Izzy replied slowly. “But how does this link to you not being back to the Institute?” They both had a habit of not calling it home.

“She attacked me. But wait, wait! It wasn’t her fault, she was out of control. And I’m fine now, I’m all healed up. Don’t tell mother - she’ll pop a vein,” Alec warned, leaning down to scratch his knee as his sister rampaged on the other end of the phone line.

“I - oof!” A sharp laugh erupted from the other end of the room. Alec slowly tore the dark, slightly shimmery...dress (well, that was certainly an image that Alec wouldn’t mind to see in real life. Magnus in such a tight dress. Mmmhmm.) from its perch on its head, huffing a tiny laugh at Magnus’ hysterics.

“Alec? Alec, you still there?”

“Hmm? Oh, yeah. Sorry, er...I’m at a friend’s place-” Magnus, who had been slowly advancing towards Alec with a predatory grin, paused. “-I mean...my boyfriend’s place. He helped me heal. And now he’s picking out an outfit for me to wear to Pandemonium - oh, hello.”

“Hey,” Magnus whispered, readjusting himself so that he could sit more comfortably in Alec’s lap.

“Sorry, did I hear right? Boyfriend? Alexander Gideon Lightwood, why do you fail to tell me such things? I’m so proud of you!” Izzy cried, excitement evident in the extreme range her voice suddenly squeaked to.

“I...thanks? His name’s-” Magnus daintily took the phone from Alec’s grip, throwing a pointed look towards the man when he stared, mouth agape in faux-offense.

“Isabelle, my dear. How are you? I’ve heard so much about you,” he purred, his smirk carrying as much as his words. Alec pressed a tired kiss to his neck, closing his eyes to breathe in his sandalwood scent. Izzy must have replied, but Alec couldn’t hear her.

“Oh, yes, that Magnus. Magnus Bane. High Warl- oh, yes. I’m so glad when people recognise my work on the Pandemonium. It really is a nice club. Shame I don’t have many people to persuade along anymore.”

There was a pause and Magnus turned thoughtful. “I hadn’t thought of that. It would definitely suit him...you have a sixth sense for this type of thing, don’t you, sweet pea?”

Alec couldn’t hear Izzy’s response, but he could most definitely imagine her bright red blush. Magnus then mumbled on for a while about Izzy’s skin - it was less creepy in person, Alec assumed as he nibbled at Magnus’ earlobe, bored enough to leave a hickey the size of London just below Magnus’ shirt collar. Izzy was left blissfully unaware as the mighty High Warlock came apart in Alec’s lap.

“I’ll pass it on. It was a pleasure to speak with you, Isabelle,” Magnus said finally, when it was most definitely six and the downworlder was a puddle of relaxation in Alec’s arms.

“She said we should set your eyes in gold eyeliner-” Magnus began, most likely about to go on a spiel about what he planned to do with Alec. He really loved the sound of his own voice, but Alec loved it too, so it was a win win situation.

“Just do it. I trust you,” Alec interrupted, triumphant when Magnus finally did so, smiling in that little way that meant he was really pleased.

It took a long while for Magnus to dress Alec all up, but when he looked in the mirror after Magnus had finished, he had to admit, he looked fucking good. The shirt he was wearing was a midnight, sparkling blue with a low, swooping neckline that revealed his runes. Magnus had hung two necklaces around his neck, of pure silver - one of them was a simple moon and the other had a pendant of what seemed like a ruby dragon’s tooth.

His jeans were sinfully tight and dark, with shiny grey buttons and his shoes were plain black and heeled. Magnus had taken half an hour to decorate his face, with gold highlight that shifted colour when he turned his head to catch the light. His eyes were set in dark colours, which brightened his eyes to a diamond. With eyelashes long and sweeping, Alec looked...well, he looked hot.

“You,” Magnus said, “are incredibly sexy.”

Alec laughed shortly, glancing to look at the warlock. He looked as flawless as ever, with a silk purple shirt, black jeans and bright fuschia shoes - there was a streak of silver-white in his hair and his lips were glossy and his eyes were lined in bronze.

“Says you!” Alec giggled, leaning against Magnus’ front as he stared at himself in the mirror. Magnus really had done a good job.

“Are you ready to dance, dear?” Magnus smirked, his hands drifting upwards to trap around Alec’s shoulders, a delicate criss-cross to decorate Alec’s surprisingly plain shirt. He nodded slowly, not failing to miss Magnus’s sly grin. “This is going to be fun.”

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“But was it good?”

Alec rolled his eyes tiredly, stretching out languidly on Izzy’s bed. The cushions beneath his head were soft but smeared with dried makeup - both from Izzy and now, Alec assumed, himself. They had progressed from Izzy fawning over his makeup and the pattern of hickeys on his neck, visible with his long cut shirt but not from any sweater he would usually wear.

“Yes,” he repeated, “it was really good.”

“It’s just,” Izzy went on, seeming dreadfully chirpy - it was half four in the morning and Alec wanted sleep, God damnit - “I never really pegged you for a confident dancer. That tends to be my job.”

Alec glanced down at the teen. She was coming close to twenty, but Alec had always thought she had learnt to seduce her victims far too young. As long as it made her happy, though, he reasoned. “I’m not. Well...I know how. Just in case.”

“In case you meet a pretty boy or in case a pretty boy needs seducing on a mission?”

Alec hesitated and then said cheekily, “Both.” Izzy squealed into the pillow, batting at Alec’s stomach with curled fists. Magnus brought out so much confidence in Alec, in his own sexuality as well as himself in general; admittedly, Izzy hadn’t trusted him at first, given the slight past they shared, but he was proving to be quite a wonderful man. Izzy was only concerned about her brother’s happiness for the moment, although she knew when she met Magnus for the second time (this time with Alec in full control of himself), she’d feel inexplicably protective of him from the second she lay eyes on him.

“Anyways,” Alec continued, “he lead for the majority. And it’s pretty simple once you’ve got everyone pressed up against you and everyone’s having a good time. I met a lot of his friends, danced with this warlock and her girlfriend, Sophia and Em. Magnus made me try vodka. It was horrible.”

“And...?” Izzy asked, leaning up onto her elbows on her bed. They had been laying there together since Alec had thrown himself down when he had stumbled back into the Institute from his night out, trying desperately to miss anybody. He loved the way he looked in Magnus’ clothes (magicked to actually fit him, of course) and makeup, but it didn’t mean he wanted Maryse to know about it.

“And...and we kissed for a little bit. And then he took me home,” Alec said finally, smiling softly at the memory. Magnus had acted like a real gentleman that night - Alec could almost pretend he wasn’t a cross-breed Downworlder that Shadowhunters thought impure and the majority of other Downworlders wanted to keep as a pet.

“That sounds really nice...” Izzy said wistfully.

“You’ve never had that with Meliorn?” Alec questioned, rolling over to face his sister. She smiled a little sadly.

“Not that you particularly want to hear about it, but it’s just sex with Meliorn. It’s pretending to be in love. Not that he doesn’t mean anything to me, but I just want someone who I can cuddle up with on the sofa and watch weird mundane shows in our pyjamas,” she whispered, shrugging a little helplessly.

“I asked Simon,” Alec said to lighten the mood,” and he said that Friends is apparently not weird but actually a cinematic masterpiece. And...I’m sure you’ll find someone like that. Meliorn obviously isn’t it, but maybe some mundane or a werewolf or vampire?”

“Maybe. You should introduce me to your werewolf friends sometime. Maia and Gretel and Luke. You talk about them often - it’s nice, don’t get me wrong but I miss making you smile the way they make you smile,” Izzy muttered glumly.

Frowning, Alec pulled her into a tight but awkward hug. She smiled gently when they parted and shimmied across the bed to be closer to him. “Night, Alec. I love you.”

“I love you, too.”

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The clatter of staffs filled the training room. Inside, the lights were dimmed and the massive hall was practically empty, save for two lone figures sparring.

Izzy was the first, her lithe body dodging and ducking from Jace's attacks with practiced ease. Her staff twirled dangerously in her left hand, before she switched it to her right, easily showing to Jace, who was a little slow on the uptake, that she was going offensive rather than defensive.

Their match was a dance rather than training, their music the rhythm of their panting breath and shuddering shoulders and the twisting movements an art form. After a long while, when Izzy's hair was stuck to her nape with sweat and Jace was red in the face, a darker staff flung out into the air to tumble to the floor with a sharp sound.

"I win," Izzy said benevolently, skipping backwards away from Jace to take a sip of her water. "You want another match?"

"No," Jace replied shortly. Izzy felt her face twist into something ugly before she shifted it into a mask of cool collectiveness. The golden child of the Lightwoods was a bit of a bigot, who manipulated people into following him blindly into danger. The New York Institute had lost three warriors to his fool's escapades.

Izzy didn't like him.

"Hey, did you see Alec last night?" Jace said after a little while, his tone laced with confused humour.

Izzy paused and then nodded silently. Jace's back was turned, so she said, "Yeah. I did. What of it?"

“Well, did you see the way he looked? He had all this makeup on and this sparkly blue shirt. I swear, he just looked like a man slut-”

“Don’t finish that sentence, Wayland,” Izzy hissed sharply, stalking up to him to push her face into his space threateningly. He raised an eyebrow. “You’re a disgusting waste of space, do you know that?”

And then, despite knowing how much of a low blow it was, Izzy growled maliciously, “Perhaps that’s why your precious family home was set on fire. Your father was so sick of you, he just wanted you both dead.”

Before Jace could react, Izzy turned on her heel and marched away, feeling angry tears prickle at her eyes. No-one was a dick to her brother.

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“Are you positive that he’s safe? No-one followed him to the Institute, no-one seemed upset about a Shadowhunter being with you?” Catia asked anxiously, fidgeting with the teacup in her hands. A sigh filtered through on the other line.

“I promise you, Catia. I kept Alec close to me the entire time and the only person who was upset was the bartender because he refused to drink any alcohol. It hurts his throat.”

“Magnus-”

“Catia, you know I care about him. I wouldn’t let anything terrible happen to him. I assure you,” Magnus interrupted, sounding a little irritated at Catia’s pestering. The valkyrie took a deep breath and rationalised. Of course Magnus had kept Alec safe. He was already madly in love with her great-grandson, not that she thought he would tell Alec anytime soon.

“Well...alright. You’ll tell me if anything goes wrong. Oh - I’ll have to hang up now, Alec and Simon are here. Thank you, Magnus,” Catia replied, hastily straightening out her long

skirt and trying to make it seem like she wasn't ringing Alec's boyfriend frantically to ensure his safety.

"Any time," Magnus said quickly, the line cutting off just as Catia opened her front door to greet Alec and his chirpy friend.

---

Java Jones didn't sell coffee as good as Ewanson did, Simon decided as he sipped the brown sludge from his pristine white mug. At least Ewanson's mugs had character - alright, they were stains of what Simon hoped was extremely black coffee and not blood, but Simon had long since grown to love them.

And Hamish was also just an adorable guy once he saw him interacting with his new baby; no one could be terrified of a grown, usually growly man playing peek-a-boo with a three-month year old little girl.

Perhaps he should stop comparing his time with Alec and Catia with what he did with Clary. She was his best friend, after all. And she always got so jealous when Simon hung out with anyone but her...

Even Maureen had been a compromise - Clary didn't like him hanging out with any other girls (which at the time made him think of her a little like his girlfriend, besotted with him in such a way that she couldn't stand to be away from him) and it was aggravating, to be frank.

It had only been a few months since he had met Alec and despite keeping his friendship with the man a secret from Clary, it had made him so much more confident. He finally felt like people liked him, like he deserved the friends he had - Adelita and Catia and Hamish and probably Izzy too, could be classed as his friend, considering how much Alec told him about her.

Simon was interrupted from his inner monologuing by a lithe, muscular body sliding into the booth seat across from him. Immediately, he went to grab his coffee cup, and run, but a sharp-nailed hand reached out to stop him.

Simon's breath quickened in fear and he glanced up.

The man across from him couldn't have been that - a man, that is. His eyes were too cold, too calculating and Simon was sure when he flicked out his tongue to wet his lips, it was forked like a snake's. Plus, his skin was ten times paler than what it should have been and Simon didn't think it was humanly possible for someone to look so daunting.

"Sorry," Simon stuttered quietly, "I'll just get out of your way."

"Nonsense!" the other man trilled. Wow, okay, that voice was too high-pitched compared to what Simon was expecting. Perhaps he was being lulled into a false sense of security.

"I just saw you sitting here all alone and I wondered, " there it was again, the man's forked tongue, flicking out of the corner of his mouth. Simon registered somewhere in the back of his mind that it was blackened, almost as if it had been charred by fire. "Where on earth is that lovely boyfriend of yours?"

"Boyfriend?" Simon asked, releasing his hold on his coffee mug. It was as if something was compelling him to relax into this other man's traps.

"Oh, you know. Dark hair, pretty eyes, dazzling smile. Wears dreadfully dull colours and has these tribal tattoos," the man smiled. It was a strange, unpracticed look for him and Simon felt only more unsettled. His answer didn't make it seem that way, nor did the way he melted into the booth when the other man traced his nails across his erratic pulse.

"You mean Alec? He's not my boyfriend. He's dating someone called Magnus," Simon giggled, smiling deliriously. The man grimaced in disgust at his cheeriness, before masking his features into gentle encouragement.

"Do you know where Alec is now?" he pressed, eyes narrowing in aggravation when Simon fumbled for his answer.

“Mmm...no. I always thought he was some secret agent or something, but he’s too sweet to kill anyone, I think. I mean, we went to a dog shelter together because he’s never actually seen a puppy before - which, like, how? But anyways, he was the most adorable thing when he was confronted by one of them and just picked one up in his massive hands - oh my God! His hands are so big-”

“Stop,” the other man ordered sharply and once again, Simon obeyed without question. His companion’s eyes had grown dark and stormy with anger and his voice was deeper too. “Tell me about important things. Tell me where Alec goes when you leave him. What happens when you leave Ewanson’s?”

Simon’s brow furrowed. When had he told this man about Ewanson? When had he even told him about Alec?

“Simon,” the other man pressed again, and Simon took the opportunity to bolt out of the booth seat, too quick and unexpected for the other man to catch ahold of him again.

“I never told you my name,” Simon said lowly. The other man cursed as if realising his mistake and went to stand, hands reaching out to console Simon. The teenager shook his head. “No! I never told you my name!”

The entirety of Java Jones had paused to stare at the spectacle. Simon flushed brightly, but his terror for himself and for Alec was too overwhelming for him to bother with any embarrassment. He turned on his heel and fled, shoulder ramming into Clary’s when he passed her in the entrance-way.

“Simon!” she cried sharply, offended instantaneously at his crass. “Where the hell are you going?”

“Emergency!” he shouted over his shoulder, already well on his way across the street and closer to Catia’s house already. She needed to be warned that someone was searching for Alec - and judging by the creepy vibes that guy gave off, someone wanted to hurt him.

The old woman opened the door on the second round of Simon's frantic knocking, concern seeming to be permanently ingrained in her face. Simon panted sharply. Running all the way to Catia's house hadn't been the best idea.

"Oh, thank God," he whispered, launching forward to hug Catia in relief. "It's Alec-"

Catia lead him worriedly into the house as he explained what had happened, appearing to brew tea out of thin air. She plucked something - okay, that was definitely out of thin air - brown and shrivelled and then stirred it into the tea, waiting until it had dissolved completely.

"Drink this," she said wearily.

"What?! Catia, Alec is literally being hunted down by these guys - now is not the time for tea!" Simon cried, interrupted by Catia shoving the cup into his hands.

"Simon, I'm going to explain a lot of very scary things to you. But only after you drink that tea," Catia murmured, her eyes dark and soul-searching. Unlike the strange man at Java Jones, Catia didn't make him feel dizzy and lightheaded. He wasn't sure entirely what was going on, but he knew Catia wanted the best for him.

The first sip of tea proved to be surprisingly pleasant and it wasn't long before Simon had downed the entire thing greedily. Catia watched on with a cocktail of amusement and anxiety bubbling in her stomach.

"Alec has been hunted for his entire life," she began suddenly, startling Simon. "And...and for a very long time," her tone had taken on one of confession. Of guilt. "For a very long time, I was one of those people. I was someone who wanted him dead."

"What?!"

Catia coughed. "I don't know how much you'll remember because of the wigworm tendril," she said shakily, messing with her nimble fingers. She was nervous, that much Simon could

tell.

“You put a worm in my tea? That was what that thing was?” Simon said brashly, erupting in sudden antagonised offense. Catia chuckled.

“I suppose you’ll remember it all in time. You’ll be ready then, though. You’ll be like us - you’ll be a demon-blooded creature too. I can sense it in you,” she said it with such conviction that Simon couldn’t help but know it was true.

Catia glanced up at him. “I’ll have to tell you everything, then, won’t I?”

And she did; every excruciating detail of her own life and Alec’s, the lives that she had pried into to hunt him down, the people she had killed. After it all, when the wigworm in Simon’s tea was dipping him in and out of hazy consciousness, he wondered if it had been better to stay with the creepy man at Java Jones.

Because Catia Monteverde wasn’t the kind old woman he had first thought her to be. No...she was a monster.

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It was mid-morning on a Saturday, just after Alec had snuck away from one of his patrols, when Magnus asked him it. They were both wrapped around each other, enjoying the sunshine that vampires couldn’t, on the pretty, plant covered rooftop Magnus had dutifully (magically) maintained.

“Can I groom your wings?”

Alec startled, twitching on his perch, laid out of Magnus’ muscled chest. “What?!”

“Come on,” Magnus pleaded, sitting up slowly so that Alec knew what was going on. They both had a strange addiction to sitting in each other’s laps and Alec took quick advantage of the situation, twisting to straddle his boyfriend. “It feels nice, I promise. So many warlocks groom each others wings.”

“I’m not a warlock, though,” Alec protested weakly, shifting a little uncomfortably in Magnus’ lap. Luckily, Magnus had known Alec for long enough that he knew when he was pushing him too far.

“I just want you to feel good, baby,” Magnus whispered, gently easing his head aside to press his and Alec’s lips together. It was sensual and soft and as Alec gasped, Magnus seized the opportunity to slip his tongue inside Alec’s mouth to taste him.

“And you want to feel my wings,” Alec pointed out when they parted, his eyes dark with lust. Magnus was glad that he was a determined and stubborn man at heart, because otherwise, if Alec kept looking at him like that, he would abandon any idea of stroking Alec’s wings and instead ride him into literal oblivion.

“Is that so wrong?”

“I...no, I guess not. It’s just they’re-” Alec paused, struggling awkwardly to find a word, “-sensitive.”

“I’ll be gentle,” Magnus whispered, watching, completely entranced, as gold dripped away from Alec’s body to create the shape of his wings, black feathers and membrane and blood and bone filling in the space to create two corporeal wings.

It took all of Magnus’ willpower not to ravish Alec right there. His cheeks were flushed with self-conscious colour and his wings fluttered nervously in the air. Knowing the first touch was the worst, Magnus prepared himself for curses and shrieks and pleas for Magnus to kindly fuck off and reached his hand out to trace one of Alec’s sleek, but twisted feathers.

It felt utterly divine, the feathers soft and silky and full of magical potential; seemingly, from Alec’s reaction, it felt utterly divine to him too. The valkyrie collapsed forward with a

delicious whine, hips snapping against Magnus'. Grooming a warlock's wings wasn't usual sexual, but valkyries were probably different. And come on, this was Alec rutting up against his boyfriend with a semi - Magnus would have been insane to turn down such a blatant offer.

After a while of Magnus very simply touching and feeling and rightening certain feathers across Alec's wings, he clicked his fingers and divulged him of his jeans and boxers, playing boldly with Alec's cock and tight hole until the valkyrie was fucking himself back on the small pressure.

When he came, his face was flushed and he had drooled all over Magnus' bruised neck, and four of Magnus' fingers were fucking him deeply, a tiny, dirty squelching sound reaching his ears as he shifted the lube inside of his partner.

Alec regained control of his breathing, whimpering as Magnus carefully removed each of his fingers from Alec's hole.

"Can you groom my wings again sometime?"

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"Happy sixth month anniversary!"

"Thank you. Happy six months," Alec said, rolling his eyes. He wasn't sure what possessed mundanes to practice the silly tradition, but it made Magnus happy and he wasn't about to deprive his boyfriend of the thrill.

"You don't sound nearly as excited as I do," Magnus whined, throwing his legs over Alec's waist and rolling him onto his back. It reminded the valkyrie of the pleasant ache he felt given his and Magnus' activities the night before.

"That's because I have to go to work and you have to let me up so I can get dressed," Alec pointed out, sitting up on his elbows to reach Magnus' lips. The warlock smiled into the kiss.

“You’re sure I don’t have enough time to dishevel you?” he asked playfully, clambering off his partner. Alec arched against the bedsheets, his neck twinging in pain. He must have slept awkwardly.

“You did plenty of dishevelling last night,” Alec commented, sitting up fully and swinging his legs off the bed. Magnus reached over the touch his bare thighs as he passed to pick up his hastily discarded boxers, trailing his fingers over the tender, kiss-bruised skin there until Alec slid his jeans up his legs.

Magnus pouted. He hadn’t been allowed to give Alec hickeys above his collarbone, and now he wasn’t allowed to see the quite outstanding job he had done between Alec’s legs the night before?

“You do torture me, you know,” he complained, but followed Alec out of bed anyways, stalking over to his wardrobe - Alec had convinced him when he moved again that he really didn’t need a room entirely dedicated to his clothes - with a slight shimmy to his hips. Alec watched unabashed as he wrestled his shirt over his head.

Magnus turned, his jeans now plastered to his hips, to say something to Alec, but was interrupted by a sudden hammering at the front door.

“Judging by the pounding my door is getting, I would say that was Raphael,” Magnus said slowly, sighing as he magicked the rest of his clothes on.

“So I should make myself invisible, then,” Alec muttered, throwing his jacket on. Magnus laughed.

“No, no, you won’t. I think it’s high time that you two met,” the warlock grinned innocently, grabbing Alec by the hand and dragging him away from the safety of his - well, it really was theirs - bedroom, and opening the front door without much preamble.

“Raphael! How lovely it is to see you. This is Alec.”

The man behind the door was Spanish, his dark eyes and dark hair marking him probably from around the 1600s. He looked like he had been turned when he was only around twenty, but Raphael Santiago was anything but a timid little boy. Alec had heard far too many myths about his terrifying demeanor and ugly scowl. He was actually quite attractive.

“So this is your boy toy,” Raphael commented gruffly, shouldering his way past a shell-shocked Alec to get into Magnus’ loft. The warlock rolled his eyes, exasperated at his friend’s childish jealousy. “I need some sun-pickled boysenberry.”

“Does Lily have tuberculosis again?” Magnus asked, sashaying over to his cabinets. Alec followed dumbly behind him, watching his and Raphael’s interactions closely. They were like fathers and unruly teens to each other at the same time.

“Yes. We figured it was getting better, since it’s been two-hundred years since she actually died from it, but she came down with it again this morning. I ran here before it could get light outside.”

Alec shivered. The pair were talking about the disease as if were the common cold but Alec had seen vampires that had died because of it and were subsequently turned. They were thin and grey and haggard - the way they spoke of Lily made it seem like she was a perfectly fit young girl.

“Alec, darling, come here for a moment. I can’t find the boysenberry, you used it last on that numbing agent you made for...who was it, Sid?” Magnus asked, waving Alec over. Raphael made a strange face at his friend’s antics.

“Simon,” Alec corrected, stepping around Raphael to glance across the cabinet. Vampire hair - running low - and werewolf claws and rum-soaked apple-tree roots (Magnus said that they were a designated practice in the warlock community, but Alec knew Catarina had given him some to make him drunk and high all at the same time) but no sun-pickled boysenberry.

“Er...”

“Have you lost it?” Raphael asked coldly. Alec shook his head.

“No. Well, yes. But I can find it. Magnus uses it surprisingly often for one of his clients, his magic is all over it,” Alec muttered, touching the pale amethyst pendant around his neck that held his own supply of Magnus’ magic.

A shuddering sensation went through him as he accessed Magnus’ magic, waving his hand in a slow pattern over the entire cabinet until his hand came to rest just above the dragon kidney stones. He opened his eyes, feeling Raphael’s piercing gaze on the back of his neck, and slid his hand behind the jar, coming out with a much smaller vial of dark red paste. A tiny label was pasted on the front and in tinier letters, it read ‘sun-pickled boysenberry’.

Turning on his heel, Alec forewent giving the vial to Magnus, instead handing it straight to Raphael, who extracted a small amount for his own bottle and then tossed it unceremoniously back. Magnus took it from him then, smiling triumphantly as he sensed Raphael’s satisfaction - he had never enjoyed being ignored by Shadowhunters, even if he knew they were part demon too - and set the vial in its rightful place on the second shelf, in front of the clay-thickened lapis dust.

“I’ll update you on Lily’s conditions tomorrow. Magnus...Alec,” he nodded to the valkyrie after a little while, before accepting Magnus’ offer of a portal and disappearing in a haze of blue.

“That went incredibly well,” Magnus stated victoriously.

“No, it didn’t,” Alec replied, bending down to peck Magnus on the lips. The warlock barked a laugh, kissing Alec back before stepping away.

“Have a good day at work. Oh, and keep the beard scruff,” Magnus patted the side of Alec’s face softly. It was covered with little patches of black hair and Alec looked overwhelmingly hot with it. “It’s cute.”

“Alright,” Alec blushed at the compliment, grabbing his bow and quiver from Magnus’ hallway. “I’ll drop by after work. Catarina mentioned that she wanted to throw a party if we

ever got to six months, so I want to rub it in her face.”

Magnus chuckled. Surprisingly, the two most sarcastic people in his life - Catarina and Alec, although Ragnor was a close runner up - had gotten to be close friends within minutes of meeting one another by sharing embarrassing stories about Magnus.

“She’s coming over tonight, probably with a whole barrage of other downworlders. Come home a little early, if you can. I want to dress you up!” Magnus yelled, before realising he was shouting at a closed door.

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The party was in full swing when Alec arrived. He had allowed Izzy to dress him up a little, with a dark shirt with tiny, tortoiseshell buttons and sinfully tight jeans. His cheeks were rouged with a healthy amount of colour and his lashes were dark and lustrous, framed by simple, deep natural tones of eyeshadow.

“The man of honour himself!” came a voice to his left, pausing his progress in admiring the party. Catarina stumbled towards him, a glass of wine sloshing in her hand.

“Alexander!” Magnus cried, throwing himself forward to collide with Alec, giggling as Alec caught him. His kiss was wild and uncoordinated and his lips tasted strongly of alcohol. “Mmm, I’ve missed you.”

“I missed you, too, Mags. How much have you had to drink?” Alec asked seriously, helping Magnus back onto his own two feet. Catarina leaned heavily against his side, her skin a brighter blue than usual. Sweat glistened on her forehead.

“Not that much,” Magnus said, licking his lips slowly. Struggling to not be entranced by the movement of his tongue, Alec turned to Cat for confirmation, knowing the other warlock would sell out her closest friend for her other closest friend.

“He’s actually telling the truth. He’s only had two shots, but one of them was just super strong. It’s a warlock blend - wears off in a few minutes, though. Don’t worry. Go have fun,” Catarina scowled playfully, shoving Alec forward so that he was fully immersed in the party.

It didn’t take long for the slow, chill music to shift to something more sultry, a quick-paced hip hop song that Magnus had been a fan of the past few weeks. Alec was caught in between dancing with him and simple, dirty grinding. His surrounding friends, some new and some old, seemed to be having the same conundrum with their partners - well, Catarina was still going strong on her own, attached by the lips to a wine bottle.

When Alec stumbled from the dancefloor with Magnus to get a drink, he was confronted by Ragnor who didn’t eyeball them with disdain like Alec was expecting, but rather handed him a small glass of a purple, sparkling liquid with a giggle.

It tasted rather fruity, burnt on the way down his throat and made Magnus realise exactly why Alec had never wanted to be drunk in front of him before despite obviously having been off his face before in a minute flat.

Alexander Gideon Lightwood, Shadowhunter warrior extraordinaire, leader in every circumstance, was a giggly drunk.

A giggly drunk.

Catarina took videos, obviously; Alec had thrown himself at Magnus when the alcohol hit him, kissing him noisily and wetly and giggly-y. There was more laughter than mouth action, from Alec as well as everyone who was watching him struggle to comprehend into words how much he loved everyone there.

“-an-and Catarina, Cat, you’re so lovely, and you’re the prettiest blue person I’ve ever met. And I lo-o-o-o-ove you. Oh, and Mags-” he paused, choking on his tongue as he turned in Magnus’ lap to stare at the warlock.

“Mags, you’re also really pretty, and,” he collapsed against Magnus’ chest, laughing into the fabric of his shirt, “I’m not going to say I love you, because it’s gotta be all romantic when I

say it. Like, candlelit dinner kinda romantic.”

Magnus chuckled, pressing kisses into Alec’s messy hair. “Alexander?”

“Mmmhmm?” Alec mumbled, repositioning himself awkwardly in Magnus’ lap so that his legs were flung out over the armrest of the armchair they were sitting in. Catarina giggled, taking a glug of her wine. Hospitals were stressful, she was allowed to get alcohol poisoning if she wanted.

“I love you,” Magnus whispered into Alec’s ear, avoiding the eyes of the small circle of friends around them, talking in their own groups. Ragnor and Catarina - and Alec, obviously - were the only people there to actually hear his confession.

“Magnus!” Alec cried, attacking his boyfriend’s lips with an eagerness that he had only rivalled the night before. “Mmm, I love you too.”

When the alcohol wore off and Alec climbed clumsily out of Magnus’ lap, he had to admit he was a little crestfallen. But, Alec only pulled him up to dance again, refusing to admit he had been drunk against the warm flesh of Magnus’ neck. The warlock laughed, told his boyfriend that he loved him again and then leant up a fraction to kiss him deeply.

The party picked up pace again; it just wasn’t the way Magnus would have liked it to.

Disaster struck and it was in the form of Clary Fray.

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They burst in when Alec was halfway through a rather heady makeout session with Magnus, pressed up against lots of other warlocks - he had long since realised that the older they got the less stingy about touching they were. A 1000 year old warlock named Bartholomew from Wales that Magnus was surprisingly good friends with had once started a conversation with Alec, plastered to his side as Magnus sucked bruises into his neck. It was entirely unsexual but (surprisingly) welcomingly intimate.

Izzy and Jace were there, Izzy in a tight leather combat suit and Jace in his usual jacket and jeans. Her silver whip was coiled around her wrist, the snake head flicking out every so often to taste the air. Its eyes were like rubies.

The other girl with them had fire-red hair, a pale heart-shaped face and startlingly green eyes. Alec was under the immediate impression that it was Clary Fray - Simon had briefly shown him a picture of her, but he couldn't be too sure.

An uproar went up along the crowd when they saw the seraph blades Jace and assumed-Clary had out in front of them; Jace held his with practiced dramaticness but assumed-Clary had hers pointed like a butter knife about to cut a lump of toast. Alec noticed out of the corner of his eye Jovah pull his daughter, Zoe, closer to his side.

"You all need to get out of here. Valentine is on his way," assumed-Clary ordered sharply. Obviously, she was used to having her own way but the room of warlocks only burst into laughter at her accusation. Magnus tightened his grip on Alec, though, sensing the danger. Izzy, who he had only met a few times but already knew literally everything about, wouldn't have looked so troubled if Valentine was just the rumour they had assumed him to be.

Magnus leant away from Alec, but didn't release him and opened his mouth to order his warlocks - and really they were his warlocks, seeing as he was the High Warlock - to retreat if they had brought along their children, but a loud crash and a scream interrupted him.

The crowd split in the panic, at least three or four of the group racing away to the roof - the only place that Magnus' protective wards didn't cover - to portal away. From the ceiling rafters, a body dropped.

His neck was snapped cleanly in two and his horns clearly marked him as a warlock, but Magnus didn't recognise his marred face, mouth open in pain even in death. Zoe screeched as Jovah tried to shield her from the sight, pulling her away to disappear out the door that the Shadowhunters had busted down. It lead out the warehouse that Magnus' home resided in.

Magnus followed Alec's gaze upwards, to where two leather-clad men stood on the wooden ceiling rafters, laughing maniacally. Before anyone could react, they sprinted away, nimbly

dancing across the wooden beams until they had hidden themselves in the shadows. It was likely that men like them had surrounded Magnus' 'loft'.

"Circle members?" Alec asked quietly, his hands brushing over Magnus' own in an attempt to soothe. The room had fell quiet. Their High Warlock nodded and dropped his wards with a flick of his fingers.

"As far as I can tell, we're outnumbered," he called out, demanding attention. Even assumed-Clary was compelled to listen. "I want everybody to portal away. No one is getting hurt on my watch. I can move-"

A loud scream, like the first one they had heard, sounded, followed by more and more and more. Alec cringed at the tortured noises, acting swiftly as the crowd separated, groups portalling away together. Ragnor and Catarina were pushed through a portal by Magnus himself, after saying rather tender goodbyes to Alec. Ragnor even kissed him on the cheek, smiling at him through tear-glistening eyes. Whoever that dead warlock was, they had obviously been Ragnor's friend.

When only about half of the warlocks remained, a five men party sidled down from the stairs. Behind them, on leashes and with their eyes gouged out and warlock marks removed, were the four warlocks that had tried to escape by the roof.

Magnus gathered his magic in his palms, shoving Alec behind him.

The battle began.

Alec had found his bow and quiver by Magnus' front door with his eyes, Izzy throwing them to him for him to catch in one outstretched palm. In the time it had taken, Magnus and three of the more able warlocks in the remaining group - i.e. the ones not paralysed with shock or busy still creating portals - had taken down two of the Circle members.

Zoe raced into the room, almost meeting her end by assumed-Clary's seraph blade. "Alec! Magnus! Please, it's my papa!" She turned on her left foot and sprinted back away, followed closely by Alec.

“Keep her safe, Alexander!” Magnus shouted over his shoulders, a little preoccupied with the Circle members in front of him to deal with Zoe. A couple more arrived through his front door, thankfully appearing in the opposite direction Alec and Zoe had went down.

The warlocks were in the thick of the fray, the tortured four lying in a shivering, terrified, dying pile and the remaining three that had helped Magnus battle swiftly losing energy. The shadowhunters joined in, Izzy scoring a hit or two against the newly joined Circle members, but Jace was unfocussed, assumed-Clary was unexperienced and as three more Circle members flooded into the room, Magnus realised that they were incredibly outnumbered.

After a dragging few minutes, the four tortured warlocks had succumbed to death and two of the remaining three had worn themselves ragged, collapsed on the floor. The battle was dwindling to a close and Magnus knew that he was going to be on the losing side.

“Noah!” Magnus cried across to the young warlock currently shooting yellow and red sparks at two Circle members. “Take Lucy and Peter, portal out of here now!”

Noah flung an explosion of magic into the fight, before rolling away, dragging Lucy and Peter bodily out of the room to do as Magnus asked. For a moment afterwards, the room was filled with the smell of burning flesh. Noah had left, but he had taken two of the Circle members down too.

Their triumph was short lived. Assumed-Clary fell to her knees, Izzy’s whip kept missing her target, wrapping around coat hooks behind Circle member’s heads and Jace raced to assumed-Clary’s side - that boy really couldn’t keep it in his pants - and Magnus was running dangerously low on magic. Alec’s magic thrummed inside him, begging to be let out. The issue was, Magnus knew he could obliterate the standing eight - now seven, thanks to Izzy - Circle members using Alec’s magic, but the valkyrie would probably fall unconscious where he stood if he did. And Alec could be anywhere right then.

Before Magnus could make a decision, the doorway was flung open once more, one of them cracking away from it’s hinges. The battle immediately stopped.

“Look at what I’ve found,” came a ragged, gruff voice. A beefy Circle member, with arms like tree trunks, imprisoned Alec. His wings were revealed, blood-soaked and quivering things that the Circle member held in a painfully tight grip.

Magnus knew from the one time Alec had allowed him to groom his feathers that his wings were extremely fragile and sensitive if handled the wrong way and this Circle member was most definitely handling them the wrong way.

Alec was thrashing in his iron grip, eyes wild and wide and whimpers like that of a terrified, caged animal. Magnus cursed, anger flaring up in red magic at his palms. Only Izzy’s hand at his shoulder paused his march towards the Circle member restraining his beloved.

“You know,” the Circle member murmured, his grip on one of Alec’s wings softening to a gentle, sickening caress. The other Circle members crowed as Alec screamed against the palm that the Circle member had clasped over his mouth, loose wing beating madly in his attempt to flee. His eyes rolled to the back of his head in fear. “I thought all the Fallens were extinct.”

Magnus growled under his breath at the man’s predatory glare. So many people, shadowhunters and downworlders alike, had treat valkyries like collectible pets. It was something that Alec had awoken, screaming in the middle of the night when he dreamt of that for himself. Magnus had always promised he would protect him from anyone wanting to collar him...but it seemed he was failing his lover.

“I might just keep it. Keep it as a pet,” the Circle member said loudly and the he whispered something into Alec’s ear that only made the valkyrie screech louder, wings cracking against the side of his captor’s face. It was a dull victory, but it was a victory.

“Let him the fuck go,” Izzy yelled, whip snapping down with a spark against the floor. The Circle members only laughed at her.

“Give us the Mortal Cup.”

“We don’t have it,” Jace said shortly, his eyes not leaving Alec’s wings for a second. Assumed-Clary was still on the floor, staring up at Alec with an ugly expression.

Magnus glanced towards the other Circle members. If only the one holding Alec released him and stepped back a little, and Magnus could shift the entire room to a completely different location. His eyes met Alec’s - he had, for a split second, calmed. But he read the message in Magnus’ gaze clear enough, fighting with a new vigor to escape.

“Now, now, you pretty little thing. You’ll have to be more obedient when I take you to my bed tonight,” the man grunted sharply. He must have still thought he was in control, because he stepped back, as if to whisk Alec away, giving Alec the chance he needed.

His wings smacked the Circle member fully in the face - Lilith, that must have been painful - and the man released him, shouting in pain. Before anybody else could react, Alec scrambled forward and pushed every ounce of his magic towards Magnus’ spell.

Within a few heart-stopping moments, the room had moved at least half a mile away from Magnus’ warehouse. The decorations everywhere had changed too, as it usually did when Magnus moved; but he wasn’t there to look at the decor.

He dropped to his knees by Alec’s sprawled form in a heartbeat. Jace and assumed-Clary had stayed far away, assumed-Clary obviously not much a fan of valkyries and Izzy not daring to come any closer for fear of terrifying her brother more.

His wings were curled tight around his body, four almost perfectly symmetrical gouges lining the expanses of them. Whoever had captured Alec had beaten him down first.

Magnus didn’t hesitate to rush his energy towards Alec - but his lightheadedness proved that he didn’t have the strength to heal Alec. He threw his phone to Izzy, telling her softly to explain everything to Catarina and placed one cool hand on Alec’s left wing.

The reaction was instantaneous. Alec’s wings unfurled, revealing his tear stained face, and he threw himself bodily at Magnus, short sobs catching in his throat as he cried against Magnus’ shoulder. The grip Alec had on his strained the tired muscles in his shoulders, but

Magnus let Alec cling tighter - he deserved whatever reassurance that he wanted that Magnus was never letting him be put in that type of situation again.

“I love you so, so much, you’re so precious to me, Alexander. My Alexander. No-one’s ever going to hurt you again,” he whispered, tightening his grip on Alec. “No-one’s ever going to touch you again, no-one but me. I love you so much.”

Alec’s shuddery sobs subsided, until his wings were low and trailing on the floor even when Magnus picked him up and set him in the bedroom that must have been already in the loft - an actual loft this time - that the living room had shifted to.

Catarina arrived not long after, able to sedate Alec long enough to heal him. She had never seen his wings, nor any valkyrie before in her life, but she adapted quickly, treated his wounds like she would any one on a warlock’s wings.

After a while, the ministrations of Catarina’s magic had lulled Alec into a fitful sleep. When she was finished, Magnus thanked her tiredly, invited Izzy into the bedroom - Jace and assumed-Clary could fuck off for all he cared - and curled himself protectively around Alec to sleep.

# Ragged

## Chapter Notes

lowkey didn't realise how long this took me to post, y'all, i'm a fuckface. if you ever wanna know where i am with the next chapter, just shoot me a message

this chapter is a lot shorter than my others, and a lot short than i wanted it to be, especially considering how long i took to post it, but eh, what can you do

the next chapter defo won't take two months to post, lmao, as i'm on christmas break soon, so i'll have a bunch of time to write

“I don’t care, Magnus! You were supposed to keep him safe!”

Izzy’s grip on her brother’s hand tightened. Her eyes narrowed infinitesimally at the woman looming above Magnus, too in love with life to face this person’s wrath if she saw Isabelle’s own anger. She’d appeared quite out of the blue, really, marching through the bedroom door as if she owned it and everything within, placing herself quite neatly on the side of the bed that Alec rested in - he hadn’t woken up for hours after Izzy had awoken, and Magnus had reassured her in hushed tones that he would wake once he was ready.

Admittedly, there was a small amount of resentment that Izzy had for her brother’s actions - Magnus had explained the majority of Alec’s valkyrie-ness, delving into detail she didn’t even know was possible, but the fact her own flesh and blood hadn’t bothered to tell her...

“It was fear,” Magnus had said. “He was scared of rejection or hatred; valkyries aren’t the most liked of the Downworlders, nor are they often treat as individuals. The valkyries that didn’t succumb to war in the fourteenth century were kept as captives by vampires and warlocks and shadowhunters alike. They were kept as playthings. As prisoners.”

The worst thing was, Izzy actually understood Alec’s fear, empathised with it to a shocking degree. She hadn’t told Alec about meeting with Downworlders and with Meliorn in

particular until at least two years after meeting the Seelie. Teetering on the edge of his bed, clutching his fingers like a lifeline, Izzy finally understood her brother.

But she didn't understand Catia.

She was an angry woman - a Fallen, rather - and an old one, too. Magnus had sensed her immediately as she stalked through his wards without a second glance, warning Izzy hurriedly before she burst through the door. That had been five minutes ago and already, Izzy's head was pounding.

Shifting on the bed, and ignoring the death glare she received from Catia in response, Izzy made herself comfortable against the headboard. Magnus' magic, previously drained and faint, flickered at his fingertips in anticipation. From the few times she had met the warlock, Izzy knew that his anger was explosive and she wanted to be well away from him when his magic leaked through his carefully crafted defences.

"He's safe now, Catia! He's a Shadowhunter, for Lilith's sake, he's always in danger. I can't ask him not to do his job!" Magnus hissed back at the Fallen, seemingly inattentive to the shadow of wings that were emerging from Catia's back. They were dull and from what Magnus had explained, the mist shrouding the silhouette should have been a gold or silver, blue at the very least...but it was red, a deep, dirty colour that seemed to liquify in the air.

In a split second, Catia was calm and collected once more. The only remnant of her anger was the tremor in her voice, but the mist surrounding her once-wings was gone so quick that Izzy was sure she had imagined it. "I have places to be. The Circle and, it seems, Valentine are back. The remaining valkyries must be warned."

"You're not staying until he wakes up?" Magnus asked incredulously, taking a step back. Alec shuddered on the bed, bones cracking loudly as he moved in pain. Catia's lips became a pressed, tense, white line as she watched.

"I have to warn my people. I am the High Fallen of the North. Alexander needs rest and time to recuperate. I do not wish to burden him with the news of Valentine's return," Catia murmured, and then she was away, long dress whisking behind her as she disappeared out of the bedroom. Magnus didn't breathe properly until she had left the confines of his new wards.

“What the hell? What was that?”

“I think,” Magnus pondered aloud, taking a tentative seat by Alec, who was just shivering awake, “that Catia realised she was getting to be too angry. She obviously didn’t want to make such a bad first impression on you. Or to reveal her wings...”

“Does that happen when... valkyries,” Izzy began, stumbling over her words, “are in high points of stress?”

“Yes,” Magnus answered thickly, hand brushing Alec’s matted hair of his damp forehead. He was freezing. “If they’re particularly angry or scared. Sometimes when they’re in high points of pleasure, too.”

Izzy’s mouth twisted a little as she thought about her brother in ‘a high point of pleasure’. Noticing, Magnus rolled his eyes, casting a silent diagnosis spell before Alec woke. Blue glistened over his features for a hot moment and then his eyes were flickering open and he was gasping awake.

“Good morning, Alexander,” Magnus grinned, bringing his hand away from Alec’s hair to trace down his hollow cheekbone. “How are you feeling?”

Alec groaned in answer, turning on his side to burrow into the warmth of the blankets. Izzy smiled fondly, hand dropping down to ruffle Alec’s sweat-soaked hair; she didn’t even move her hand away when it became damp and a little disgusting. “Iz,” Alec slurred, taking his sister’s fingers in between his own.

Magnus, as if sensing a conversation that was going to be private and emotional, leant down to kiss Alec’s forehead softly, and then departed with a slow and easy smile. Once the door was firmly shut behind him, Alec breathed an unconscious sigh of relief. He hadn’t wanted to face Izzy with his boyfriend towering over him.

“I’m sorry.”

Izzy was silent, but her hand didn't move from Alec's grasp. From his position on the bed, the valkyrie couldn't see Izzy, although he was too exhausted to actually sit up. Instead, he leant his head up and curled his body just so, catching Isabelle's eyes for a moment before she turned her gaze away.

"I am sorry," he tried again, tightening his grip on Izzy's palm. "I'm sorry I didn't tell you what I am."

Izzy laughed a little bitterly. There was a tiredness to her voice that Alec despised immediately. "You told your boyfriend before your own sister. You owned up to being a Fallen within days of meeting him--"

"It's not like I meant to!" Alec protested, ignoring the sickness in his stomach and the lightness in his head to scramble up the bed and finally meet Izzy's glare head on. She wasn't necessarily angry, just;

"I'm resigned to the fact that you don't trust me. That if Catia tells you not to tell me something, you'll take her word for it," Izzy hissed, irritation leaving as soon as it had appeared. Tears suddenly filled the corners of her eyes, and she twisted away to wipe them.

She sighed, still turned away from Alec. "I love you, you know that? I really, really love you and I r-really, really miss you."

Alec broke, leaning his face against Izzy's shaking shoulder and holding her tight until her quiet, barely-there sobs subsided. They stayed like that, wrapped around each other until at least half an hour had passed and Izzy was ready to speak again. Despite their close contact, she sounded cold and distant.

"We've tried to fix our mess of a relationship before. It didn't work - not really."

"Izzy--" Alec whispered, terror stricken as her tone took on something harsher, something more cynical. Izzy ignored his interruption, shying away from his attempts to console her. Her mouth was a harsh, dark red line across her face, downturned sternly. Alec was reminded of Maryse.

“No. No,” she repeated, sighing. “This isn’t working. I can’t be your sister if you’re not going to be my brother.”

Silence followed her statement; Alec moved gingerly away from her, biting his lip roughly. The pain helped him concentrate on the wave of shame and guilt he felt. It was a frankly disgusting habit but Alec thrived on pain; Maryse had helped him to thrive on pain.

“I...I’m sorry,” Alec repeatedly dumbly, exhausted and drained. He shifted down the mattress, the ache in his wings growing immense. He realised suddenly that Izzy hadn’t actually commented of the black mass of feathers sprouting from his back. The blood that had caked there the night before was gone, cleaned away by Magnus’ magic. “I can be your brother. I know I can. It’s just...”

There was a long pause as Alec tried to figure out how to put his mind into words and not incriminate his great-grandmother. “Catia,” he said slowly and carefully, “always taught me to conceal my true nature. At first, I didn’t tell you because I didn’t understand and then it was because I was almost ashamed. And then because I was being controlled by some warlock.”

“What I mean to say,” Alec continued quickly, sensing Izzy’s urge to flee, “is that there were so many reasons not to tell you but the biggest one was that I wanted to protect you. The less people knew, the better.” Even to Alec, his argument sounded flimsy. He just honestly didn’t know why he was scared to tell his own sister.

“That’s bullshit, and you and I both know it, Alec,” Izzy grunted. Then, she sighed, throwing her legs over the side of the bed and standing. Alec didn’t try to stop her as she strode in unsure steps to the door but once Izzy had reached it she hesitated and turned to him. “I’m always going to be your sister. And I’m always going to love you. But sometimes...sometimes you’re a little hard to trust.”

She left then and Alec was alone. It didn’t quite hurt, not really; to Alec, his heartache felt as if he was trapped under water, not quite aware of his own pain. It felt like the moment between drowning and dying and when Magnus stepped cautiously into the room, it was the first breath of relief.

“Oh, Alexander...what have you done, my sweet?”

Alec sighed deeply and leant back, unsurprised by the hug Magnus landed him in. The contact felt easy and pleasant and it was soothing to be so close to a magical concentration. Without words, Magnus twisted them over so they were both lying on their sides, Magnus wrapping himself around Alec in a tight embrace.

“They’re set up makeshift beds next door so they can stay with you,” Magnus commented carefully, knowing fine well that-

“Jace and his new friend won’t be. So just Izzy, then,” Alec muttered under his breath, pressing into the warmth of Magnus’ body. He was cocooned by heat but the contact helped him and Alec craved everything he could get from Magnus.

“No, actually. I mean, yes, Jace and Clary have gone, but Catarina and Ragnor are here from when they were helping to heal you. And Luke said he would be coming over, with Maia and Gretel probably.” There was a pause in his speech as he thought, which Alec filled with a self-deprecating phrase in a huffed breath. “You are cared for, you know. We wouldn’t be here if we didn’t love you.”

Alec didn’t reply for a while, but he did pull away from Magnus slightly. “Can we...can we go see them? Stay with them?” His words were hesitant and unsure, but Magnus figured he actually did mean it. He was someone who craved affection, more so because of how much Alec had been deprived of it as a child.

“Of course we can,” Magnus answered, pecking him on the forehead softly. Alec shuddered, dipping his head to curl around Magnus. His wings twitched behind him as Magnus gently coaxed him off the bed, a little unsteady as he hobbled away, feathers trailing on the floor - the vertebrae arching from his spine was lax and trembling and Alec struggled to hold himself up. Magnus was in turmoil; he could have helped his boyfriend, but he stood by instead, knowing Alec would rather hold some semblance of strength.

Three heads swung to face them as Magnus toed open the door for Alec who hobbled into the main living space. Before he could fully assimilate to the change, the front door was swung open and Luke’s massive form forebodingly filled the doorway. His eyes were a

swirling, angry mass of emerald and behind him, Maia and Gretel were facing the same issue of controlling themselves.

Magnus caught Alec as he faltered in his steps, his senses assaulted by the sudden onslaught of new entities. By the door that the werewolves still hadn't come through, Luke's nostrils flared in anxiety and he nervously (it was a strange sight to see such a muscular, dangerous man look *nervous*, but Magnus supposed Alec had that effect on many people) danced between the front room and the threshold. Maia, growing frustrated, pushed gently past him, mindful in her panic only because Luke was practically her Alpha.

"Alec?" she asked quietly, but Alec didn't look up at her or Gretel and Luke, who had closed the door behind them and had shuffled over to perch on the edge of the sofa, until Magnus had helped him to settle on the ground beneath the chair where Catarina had generously magicked a thick blanket and some cushions. His drooping wings meant Alec couldn't have sat comfortably on the armchair without aggravating the sharp gashes in his wing membrane (despite the frankly brilliant job Cat had done on the aesthetics of his appendages, internally, Alec's wings were a sore, fragile mess).

Magnus gingerly placed himself in the armchair behind Alec, allowing the valkyrie to rest against his legs, his fingers carding tenderly through Alec's dark hair. Across from them, Catarina and Ragnor were sitting on the other sofa, with Luke and Gretel on the plush velvetiness opposite. Beneath the werewolves, Maia and Izzy were sat on the floor, putting them at eye level with Alec. The Fallen barely noticed the way Izzy instinctively leant against Maia, the Downworlder accepting the contact quite readily.

"So..." Alec croaked and *God*, it was like setting off a bomb suddenly, questions flying left, right and centre at him like debris from a collapsing building. At Magnus' warning look, they all fell silent once more, although Maia was the first to tentatively speak, her voice unnaturally soft.

"Are you alright?" she asked and Alec smiled. He was expecting something with more weight to it - the nature of his being perhaps, the state of his wings, his relationship with Magnus at a stretch (considering everyone knew and Izzy had already accepted it) - but the simplicity was welcome as headache-relief.

"I will be," Alec murmured, and that should have been the end of it, but he found the words pouring out of his mouth. A full recount of the aftermath of the party twisted out from his vocal chords before Alec fell back, relaxing again against the fond movements of Magnus' fingers through his hair. Throughout his impromptu speech, Magnus, Ragnor and Catarina

had supplied their own knowledge of what happened afterwards and how the warlocks were dealing with their casualties.

Alec realised suddenly that he hadn't asked Magnus how he was - it was selfish, but he'd only been thinking of what he had gone through. It had barely registered to him that his boyfriend could have lost friends that day, family. Comrades. The pendant against his neck flickered to life, Magnus' glowing faintly in response - it was enough for then, for Magnus to know how Alec was thinking, as the valkyrie hadn't wished to put the warlock in a situation where he had to speak his feelings aloud.

Leaning down slightly, Magnus pressed a kiss to the back of Alec's head, smoothing the flesh of his neck down possessively. Alec was distracted from it by Gretel's question, who was as quiet and hesitant as Maia had been.

"I..." - she glanced once at Luke for reassurance, who smiled gently at her - "I...what are you? Why...why do you have wings? I thought you were a shadowhunter." Luke mumbled the same sentiment, the piercing green of his eyes fading as he registered that Alec was safe, Gretel and Maia following suit, in tandem with their not-quite-Alpha.

"I'm a valkyrie - a Fallen," he added, glancing down at his hands and fidgeting. Nervousness crept up inside of his heart and clung there like a parasite. "There was a small chance I would be born as a valkyrie. I did some research and despite popular belief, the valkyrian gene doesn't just skip a generation." Alec's voice was getting high-pitched and reedy; it wasn't quite unpleasant to hear, as Alec's voice was like natural sex-dipped silk, but the anxiety ridden set of the man's shoulders and the worried twitch of his features was concerning. "The angelic gene is dominant whereas the mundane gene is recessive. If a shadowhunter and a mundane had children, there would be a chance for either a mundane child or an angelic child - if you added the demonic gene into that equation, the likelihood of a child carrying all three genes is incredibly rare. It's why I'm valkyrian and Iz and Max aren't."

There was a pause in which Alec held his breath tight in his throat.

"Fair enough," Gretel replied lightly, and it was like it was the key to Alec breathing. "You're still our Alec."

"As far as I'm aware," Alec murmured, playfulness mildly shy. The werewolf only smiled brightly, flinging himself off the sofa to hug Alec, overly soft at first until Alec squeezed her harshly, spurring her into a tighter embrace. Luke and Maia followed swiftly in Gretel's example, both of them warm and relieving to having holding him. Alec glanced furtively at Catarina and Ragnor, who didn't waste time in pressing messy kisses to his cheeks, drowning him in affection. At last it was Izzy's turn. Alec expected a nod or a slight smile of some sort,

but his sister simply marched over and dropped down into his lap, mindful of his midnight wings.

“You got any good movies, Magnus?” she asked nonchalantly, picking up the TV remote and turning it on. “I’m thinking Twilight...”

Everyone protested at the same time, and the decision seemed made until Izzy bullied (with her *eyes*, Goddamn it, she had mean eyes) Alec into agreeing with her. It was fair enough, considering the lies Alec had been feeding his sister for much too long. The punishment was in place.

They watched Twilight.

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Holy shit.

Clary was a *shadowhunter*. An angel, human hybrid.

Simon was going to have an aneurysm. His head was in agony just thinking about the fact Clary was related to angels and that she could draw runes on herself and that she seemed suddenly in love with blond buff man, Jace Wayland. Admittedly, the last point didn’t hurt him as much as it would have only months ago. After meeting Alec, Simon had gained more confidence in his relationships with people - he had more friends than just Clary now.

He didn’t know why he was thinking about Clary though, not now, not now that Camille’s lips were against his and his neck was seeping crimson and he was delirious and lost. Vampires were real. That would have been cool had Simon literally not been dying at the hands - the teeth - of one.

Mind racing, Simon allowed Camille to tip his head back, teeth piercing his neck again. A sharp burst of pain fizzled there before her pheromones coated him, spreading a drunkenness

over his entire limp body. Bright light pressed insistently against his closed eyelids, but Simon ignored it in favour of arching into the sweet-tinged ache against his flesh.

Camille wasn't the one to have captured him; Simon remembered that much at least. Jace and Clary had disappeared into the cavern that was the City of Bones (which Simon was seriously considering as a new edgy band name) and Simon was left alone, shivering by the vats of fire, strategically placed to make the place seem as insane and horrible as possible.

Then he was upside down, with teeth snapping by his ear. The man that had grabbed him was devastatingly attractive, looking like someone who belonged in a model magazine. Simon's newly discovered pansexuality stirred and yelped within his chest at the sight of the man and then the striking woman next to him. God, did every supernatural being have to be so damn pretty?

Simon spotted Jace and Clary easily, hanging upside down with Pretty Vampire Uno (not that he knew they were vampires at the time) grasping tightly onto his leg and Pretty Vampire Dos glaring down menacingly. The mundane half expected to wake up halfway through Underworld, to be frank.

"Simon!" Clary screeched and even upside down, craning his neck to see his friend, Simon cringed at her voice. Pretty Vampire Uno grinned with sharp fangs nicking his lips. Beside him, Pretty Vampire Dos ran a careful hand down his trapped legs, pausing at the strip of skin revealed by his t-shirt, which had fallen down from being held upside down.

Blood rushing to his head, Simon was woozy enough to barely hear what Pretty Vampire Uno said, instead choosing to focus his attention on the figures racing down to where they were, to join Clary and Jace. One of them was tall, a bow arching up from his back and the other had long, dark hair. Other than that, he couldn't see much, not until their forms were illuminated by the fires dotted around the clearing.

"I'm afraid Simon's coming with us," Pretty Vampire Uno murmured, voice husky and delicious, and yeah, Stockholm Syndrome was setting in early for Simon.

"No! He's not a part of this!" Clary yelled, eyes furrowing to such a degree that Simon noticed it fifteen foot up. The two figures in the distance were rapidly approaching and a spark of interest raced through Simon as he spotted the taller one's face, light flashing over it

for a moment as he passed a roaring fire. Fuck, if that didn't look like the exact double of Alec...but it wasn't him. It couldn't have been. Could it?

"It'll be my pleasure to kill you unless you return him," Jace called up, readying his glowing seraph blade. Simon tried to shake his head - no, no, thank you, no killing today - but he was numb now, limp in Pretty Vampire Uno's strong grip.

"Oh? And why would that be? The Night Children are breaking no laws. We're just negotiating. The mundane in return for the Mortal Cup," the Latino man spoke, voice lilting and melodic. Jesus, Simon was sick of hearing about the bloody Mortal Cup. "And the clock is ticking. Tick tock, people!"

Finally, the two Hunters in the background darted forward, the taller man's bow loaded and ready to fire. The woman by his side had the same jet-black hair, falling in waves around her starkly beautiful face. Both of them seemed vaguely unprepared and Jace recoiled at the sight of the man.

Simon didn't.

"Alec!" he shouted, the name wrenching from his throat in a tight gasp before he was whisked away, the world a blur of noise and colour until he was barely conscious of New York, until he was barely conscious of himself. The only thing that seemed to matter was *Alec*. Something instinctively told him that it was Alec he could trust. It was Alec that would save him.

But Alec wasn't there yet, and Simon's eyelids were drooping as Camille drank more and more blood, licking her lips greedily every few gulps. There was no point reminiscing about the past, or thinking of too pretty vampires (and stabbing them and ruining their suits) or of Alexander frickin' I'm-not-going-to-tell-you-my-real-surname.

Simon's eyes slipped closed again as he lost himself to the delirium of blood-loss. Camille wasn't stopping, wouldn't stop; by the time Pretty Vampire Uno (who Simon had learnt was called Raphael) dragged the woman away with a ragged snarl, Simon was exhausted and twitching. Hands surrounded him, pulling him to his feet, smoothing over his flushed skin. It took a while, but eventually, he was encased in blinding light.

When he turned, Raphael was cowering in the shadows behind him, Clary was crowding him and *Alec wasn't there*.

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“What the hell were you thinking?!” Alec snarled, fingers clenching around his bow tightly. His face was a mask of exhausted fury, and his magic, thrumming inside his chest, was aggravated and painful. “You left a mundane alone?”

“I had to find out the truth! I have to find my mother!” Clary snapped back, Jace by her arm, obviously portraying who’s side he was on. Considering Simon was meant to be her best friend, Clary seemed a little self-centred, Alec thought, and he expressed as much. “What? Simon is my best friend, of course I want him to be safe.”

“You certainly have a strange way of showing it,” Izzy murmured, turning to Alec with a strained smile. “Call Magnus. He’ll know what to do.”

Alec nodded slowly, pulling his phone from his pocket and dialling Magnus’ number from memory. Strolling a few strides away for sake of privacy, Alec brought the device up to his ear. “Hello?” Magnus’ voice filtered through phone, raspy and tired. Alec suddenly remembered that when he had left Magnus’ apartment, it had been well past one o’clock and Magnus had been up for way longer than he should have been.

“Mags?” Alec asked tentatively. The response was immediate, the pendant of Magnus’ magic against his chest purring with excitement.

“Alexander,” Magnus said, and Alec could practically taste his smile. “How can I help you?” Heat crawled up Alec’s spine, half from the flame at his back and half at the delicious depth of Magnus’ tone.

“I...it’s Simon. The mundane? He...some vampires took him. We’re by the City of Bones. I was wondering if you could come by?” It struck him like a sledgehammer that it was *Raphael* that had taken Simon. There was no doubt in his mind that Raphael was doing it for

malicious purposes - he never had trusted the vampire - but Alec wasn't sure his boyfriend would see it that way.

He didn't.

When Magnus arrived via portal, his face was stony and cold. Obviously, he had somehow figured out it was Raphael that had kidnapped Simon, though Alec wasn't sure....oh. Izzy guiltily shoved her phone back in her pocket, shuffling her feet nervously as Alec turned his gaze to Magnus.

"You really thing Raphael, *Raphael*, could have done something so stupid?" Magnus hissed, pulling Alec off to the side. The valkyrie stumbled, alarmed at the fury behind his words. Hesitantly, Alec went to reply, but Magnus cut him off. "No, no. *No*. Don't even answer that. Of course you believe that, it's written all over your face."

"Magnus, please," Alec pleaded, "It's not like I would accuse him of something like this if I didn't see it with my own eyes. Raphael took Simon, no one controlling him, no one casting magic over him. It was all him."

"I've told you, Alec," the valkyrie flinched, unused to Magnus speaking with such harshness to him. The other man softened slightly, but Alec knew he was still angry. "He's loyal to a fault to his leader. Camille isn't the type to forgo manipulating someone with the Cup via their mundie friends. You should know this."

"I-"

"Raphael is important to me. I know him and I know him well. He isn't going to let Simon get hurt, not if he can stop it. He'll betray Camille to keep the peace," Magnus sighed. His ringed fingers gently eased Alec's chin up so they were looking each other in the eyes. "I love you. But I'm not going to help you if I know you don't need it."

Alec pursed his lips, irritated both at Magnus' actions and also at the fact he completely understood. "Yeah. Yeah, okay." His voice came out harder than he intended it to.

"Oh, Alexander. Don't be like this. Please," Magnus frowned, hand cupping Alec's face softly. Leaning into the touch, the Fallen sighed, not expected Magnus to lean up ever so

slightly to plant a kiss on his lips, tender and chaste. "I'm not narrow-minded, darling. I can change my mind on Raphael if I have the proof of his actions."

"I get it. I do," Alec muttered against Magnus' lips, tilting his head to deepen the kiss before a cough interrupted them. They both glanced around to see Clary, impatient and stressed. It was fair enough; they needed to find Simon.

"I'll see you at home?" Magnus asked quickly, pleased with the heady blush painted across Alec's cheeks. Nodding, Alec pecked him on the cheek and then joined his fellow Hunters in the cluster by where Simon was taken. With a concerned frown, Magnus turned on his heel, disappearing in the portal he had conjured.

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Adelita bit her lip sharply, aggravation tinging her words. "No. Below the pipes, the keys are there. Yes. Yes...what the hell are you talking about?"

"I told you, they won't open the door," Alec repeated over the phone, cursing loudly. Hearing a loud crash on the other end of the line, Adelita rolled her eyes. Obviously, the valkyrie had tried to force the side door open to the DuMort and found that yes, the keys did actually open the door.

"You in?"

Alec murmured his answer quietly, but Adelita could hear several swear words in it. Her tiny hands clenched tighter around the phone in her palm as she growled in frustration. "Alec, you've gotta be quick. I can only stay on the phone for so long, you get that?"

"Geez, what's with all my friends hating me right now?" Alec said, almost silently, but loud enough that Adelita's vampiric ears could pick it up. She was desperate for the gossip but now wasn't the time. "Okay, we've reached, like...I don't know, a massive door of some kind. Couple of boxes around, lots of piping."

"We?" Adelita snapped, stiffening. Her childish, high-pitched voice didn't sound too threatening but she knew Alec was used to the slight intones in her usually monotone voice

which betrayed her emotions. He knew from one word that Adelita didn't want anyone else smuggled in the DuMort, not because of her; Camille would have her head.

"Izzy and I. Jace and Clary are coming in from the roof, they're waiting for our signal," Alec said, a feminine voice shuddering out from who Adelita assumed was Izzy, simply saying 'hello'.

"What do you...you know what, it doesn't matter. If you find a way through that door, you'll arrive in a larger basement. They'll be stairs on the far right side, into one of the training rooms. This time of night...yeah, this time of night, most vamps will be out."

A clanging noise came over the line, followed by a feral snarling that Adelita felt in her chest. "Alexander!" A pause followed, the phone falling to the ground and Alec shouting in pain. Izzy screamed, the sound of a thin slip of metal hitting another leading. Her whip had bounced off the door as Alec tried to force it closed against several hissing vampires.

"We're alright," Alec gasped, snatching the phone from the floor as Izzy lodged a half-pipe in the latch of the door. "We're fine," he repeated, but he didn't sound it. "We just need to keep these vampires distracted long enough for Jace and Clary to get to Simon."

"That wasn't the plan..." Adelita mumbled; surely they'd have a better chance of leaving alive if they were all together?

"I know. But we can't risk losing Simon by taking too long. Look," there was a pause, Alec struggling to find a way to carry his phone and ready his bow at the same time. Simultaneously, he and his sister stepped back, weapons in front of them and poised to strike. "I have to call Jace, or text him at least. Keep safe, okay?"

Adelita scowled as she was hung up on, pulling her phone down from her ear and shoving it in her pocket. There was a moment of silence before she stood from her bed, fully intending to leave and to nonchalantly fill herself full of blood before the obvious impending fight between the four hunters and an entire clan of vampires.

The instant she touched her doorknob, the entire frame of it shook. Terror stabbed at her core and she flinched away, suddenly aware that *vampires had literal super-human hearing* and half of Camille's followers knew that she was affectionate towards Alec - not that her liking Alec had anything to do with the fact she was helping him to get into the DuMort and the others were able to hear.

"Well, well, well," Miller grinned, "how are we going to deal with you?" The vamp was concerningly tall and aggressive and Adelita's neck twitched as she strained to look up at him. Two more vampires crowded the door that Miller had kicked open, fangs dropping down past their lips. Both of them were male, dressed in pressed, clean suits.

Adelita, for all her training and all her effort, didn't stand a chance against three aged vamps. She was out, Miller's hand around her throat, squeezing tighter and tighter and tighter until Adelita was gasping for the breath she didn't need and the world was getting dark and Adelita was sure that she was finally, finally, dying. *Again.*

"Oh? Is that so, little Adelita?" Miller purred, rolling his sleeves up to show the dark muscle along his arms. "Cos I don't think you're going to win this fight. I don't think there's anyone here to help you. Not anymore.."

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Raphael didn't like Camille (understatement of the year) and he really couldn't give less of a shit about Simon. But Alec...Alec was another thing, another person. Maybe it was because of Magnus, the fact he was practically Raphael's father even though he sometimes acted like a child. That Alec had Magnus wrapped around his little finger - Magnus trusted Alec, so surely he was to be trusted?

It was complicated. It was very complicated.

Perhaps it was his confusion over seeing the relationship between Alec and Simon and the fact Simon kept muttering to himself that Alec would come, Alec would save him, instead of the red-headed girl, Clary, that had convinced him to drag Simon out. It was also maybe due to the fact Clary was an annoying bitch and Raphael wanted her out of his home.

Camille disappeared after kidnapping Simon and draining him and her followers were left in a disarray, leading Raphael to sidle easily enough through the DuMort, uninterrupted on his way to his own room. A vamp was shuffling outside of his door but Raphael hissed at her, sending her racing away in a flurry of limbs.

The scent of pain hit him in a harsh wave and Raphael stumbled back, coughing raggedly. God, he could *taste* the blood in the air, an age before he saw Adelita prone on the bed. Crimson coated her pale skin and maybe it would have been, maybe Raphael could have dealt with it.

But Alec was there. Alec was there and he was crying and it was the first time for a long time that Raphael wanted to help a hunter. "Please," Alec gasped, breath shuddering out in a heartbreaking way. "Please, I don't know how to help her..."

"Alright," Raphael swallowed thickly. He moved closer, pausing. Anxiety wasn't something he was used to. "I've got you, Alexander. I've got you..."

# Possessed

## Chapter Notes

last chapter was a mess, and this chapter is a mess because I wrote it when very sick  
sad times

so, kinda to fix the mess that was last chapter and Alec's constantly changing emotions,  
and also kinda because i was planning on it anyways:  
Alec's magic is corrupted and he's lowkey, like, possessed, idk man

yeah, i'm a bad writer, lmaoooo

(there is slight dubcon in this chapter, but idk if i would class it as dubcon, idk. it starts  
the paragraph after magnus says something about him being a weird father. essentially,  
malec are gonna have the sexy times [lmao, i'm asexual, i understand none of the sexy  
times] and then alec's magic flares up cos it's all diseased and shit and he thinks his  
wings are rotting, whatevs, and he does not want the sexy times, so magnus stops)

Usually, the other members of the New York clan were surprised by how bright eyed and rosy cheeked Adelita was (Raphael was no exception - although he didn't much interact with Adelita, she always made his day), the plucky vampire a shining light in a sea of bitter black. She wore colourful, typically childish clothes and adapted well to the majority of things. When she was told she was a vampire, she didn't much care that she'd stay as a preteen for the rest of her long life - in fact, Adelita relished it.

But if any member of the clan saw Adelita now, as she was laid out on Raphael's bed, hair fanning out behind her and neck dark with crimson blood, a literal war would begin between the woman's supporters and Camille's. No one could ever possibly want to see Adelita covered in deep scratches and teeth marks dotted around her thin wrists to drain her of her stolen blood.

Well...no one but Miller. Apparently, Alec had found Adelita half conscious and it was the only thing she said to him - and continued to say, over and over - groggy and disoriented and terrified. She'd drifted in a state of unconsciousness by the time Raphael had shouldered his way through the door.

Together, Alec and Raphael had helped to clean the blood crusted around Adelita's neck and wrists, Raphael growling deeply when Alec had tried to approach the subject of getting Adelita helped; they ended up talking about it anyways, and in a civilised manner, too.

“So, Adelita helped you to get into the DuMort?” Raphael asked slowly, his voice bordering on irritated. There wasn’t anything he could do for Adelita - Miller couldn’t find out she was

still 'alive', so Raphael couldn't bring her downstairs and with the sun up, they couldn't take Adelita to Magnus' or another warlock's for them to heal her.

"What if I asked Magnus for a portal?" Alec had asked, but Raphael muttered something about Magnus never actually having visited his bedroom (and it wasn't like he could walk up to the front door), so the idea was abandoned quite quickly.

"And then when you and your sister were busy fighting my vampires," Raphael continued, his tone possessive, "the other two infiltrated from the roof and pulled Simon out?"

"As far as I'm aware..." Alec muttered, stiffening from his perch on the edge of Raphael's bed. He looked awkward and ill-fitting there, but Raphael didn't take as much offence to it as he thought he would. Alec smelt so much like Magnus that even Raphael's surprisingly weak sense of smell picked up on it, and it was comforting. Alec's presence was comforting.

"I ended up being dragged into it when I bumped into them. I was...I was planning on leaving," Raphael admitted. "The DuMort, I mean," he added, glaring down at the bed sheets. Adelita lay in between him and Alec, stunningly silent and still. "Or New York entirely. Camille is...well, she's insane."

Alec laughed humorlessly. "That's a fucking understatement." Glancing up, Raphael arched his brow, considering the not-quite shadowhunter beside him. Magnus had never revealed what Alec actually was, telling the vampire it wasn't his secret to tell, no matter how curious Raphael was.

"Indeed..." he conceded, in the end, long enough after Alec's initial statement it wasn't even relevant anymore. Alec didn't seem to mind. "Admittedly, getting Simon out of the DuMort gave me some emotional satisfaction."

"Hmm?" Alec asked without words, shifting so that he was actually sat on the bed, rather than almost falling off it. His fingers automatically landed in Adelita's hair, carding through the lustrous black depth systematically. Raphael didn't even feel the territorial hiss building in his throat that he usually would when another person touched one of his own - a vampire that saw Raphael as the Clan Leader, rather than Camille.

"Well, I'm sure you would have a lot more animosity towards me if I hadn't saved your mundie friend," Raphael sighed, realising that he was essentially saying that Alec's opinion on him mattered. He didn't dwell on it, and neither did Alec. "And, I got to piss off Camille. She does hate to lose her pets," the vampire spat, anger sparking in his dead heart at the thought of how the mundane had looked, eyes wide and terrified, neck covered in his own blood as Camille latched onto the tendons like a leech.

Alec barked out a sharp laugh, leaning his head back. "Of course you'd say that..." he smiled, shaking his head in an almost fond way.

A comfortable quiet followed, the first tiny smile Raphael had conjured up in a long while lingering on the edges of his lips. The first time Raphael had met Alec, he didn't quite dislike him - no, it was a certain mistrust, Raphael unsure of who Alec was and his affiliation to

Magnus (despite the fact it was rather obvious, considering both men's state of undress), but it wasn't quite disliking him.

Now, Raphael could safely say he trusted Alec. The young supernatural had done nothing but help his clan-mate and it was soothing because Alec didn't have any ulterior motives. He just wanted to help.

Minutes dragged into hours, the silence only broken by Raphael occasionally checking on Adelita and talking in low, dulcet vowels to Alec about her state. If he was ever still concerned, his fingers would brush over the small punctures in her flesh and other the clammy paleness of her cheeks. From his vigil by Adelita's flank, Raphael could spot three different sets of fangs imprinted across her flesh. It was sickening.

"How did you and Magnus meet?"

Raphael spluttered at the suddenness of the question, almost unaware that Alec was still there. When he looked up, the man's eyes were wide with inquisition. "Question for a question: what the hell are you?" It wasn't that Raphael needed any push or shove to tell Alec how he met his best friend, but it was something that had been plaguing him for too long and he wanted answers.

"I asked you first," Alec countered with an arched brow. Raphael rolled his eyes but gave in easily, staring at Adelita's prone form as he spoke. Alec's face was too vulnerable, with too much innocent curiosity; curious about a monster.

"As a young boy, I was raised Catholic. Being turned obviously wasn't the best option...at first, I couldn't visit any church, I couldn't wear crosses and I couldn't pray to God because I couldn't say His name. I didn't understand what I was, and I didn't tell anyone at the time that I had been attacked - not by a woman," Raphael began, sighing deeply as he leant his head back, landing it against the wall.

"What did you do?"

Raphael, confused by Alec's bizarre wonder, turned to look at the not-shadowhunter. "Why are you..." For a moment, Raphael truly considered asking Alec why he was being remotely kind to a vampire, the scum of the shadow-world according to most hunters, especially a vampire that had kidnapped his friend, but he found he didn't want the answer, for fear of it being a worse one than what he was imagining.

"I began to slip into a frenzy...a bloodlust. It made me a monster, the fact I'd stopped providing my body with the sustenance it needed, even though I didn't know that sustenance meant blood. I started to feed on mundanes - innocent people," Raphael snarled, glaring up at Alec with fire in his gaze. The other man stared back, level-headed as he faced down the stare that would have wilted flowers.

"Did you repent?" Alec asked quietly, sure of his intention but unsure of his terminology; he admittedly wasn't all that knowledgeable on Catholicism seventy years ago.

Raphael's head shot up, eyes wide and white. After a moment, he calmed. "I did. Magnus helped me too...we met at the height of my addiction. He helped me to regain my faith in God, in myself. In the world. He just took me in, shielded me from the world because he knew I needed protection. He's just like that."

"He is," Alec agreed, smiling softly. Raphael must have forgotten he was talking to the man who might love Magnus almost as much as he did. A long pause tailed before Alec slid off the bed. "I suppose it's my turn," he murmured and before the vampire could reply, his spine was trembling and gold was arching from his back.

Awe coloured Raphael's sight and he couldn't help but gasp as wings dripped down from dazzling gold. When Alec opened his eyes again, they were a swirling pool of the same liquid sheen, gold shimmering along his fingers too. His breath pooled in the air, flecks of light escaping from the confines of his lungs.

"To be fair," Alec whispered, his voice rough and smooth all at the same strange time, "the gold is new. Wings, not so much."

"This really doesn't clear up any of my initial queries," Raphael hummed, noticing with amazement how incredibly similar Alec's eyes were to Magnus' when he allowed his glamour to drop. The other man smiled, giggling as he folded his dark, magnificent wings back and set himself gingerly back on the bed. Several feathers across his wings were twisted and a painful looking graze marred the finesse of them.

"Don't worry," Alec grinned, the gold in his irises pulsing and twirling. "I've healed a lot considering where it was."

Alec pursed his lips, running a newly gold - there was a shit ton of gold - hand through his raven hair. "I'm a valkyrie. First male one in about five or six hundred years and the first one to be born in around twelve decades."

Raphael cursed under his breath, leaning back slightly to get a better look at the nonchalant meant-to-be-extinct- Valkyrie sitting quite happily on the edge of his bed. There was a dragging moment of silence, where Alec wanted the floor to swallow him, and then Raphael, voicing his previous opinion, stated, "Shit ton of gold."

Shaking his head, Alec coughed out a deep laugh, affection tinting his voice. "Yeah, yeah it is. Admittedly, it's not what I was expecting, but I suppose it has been creeping up for a little while." Raphael furrowed his brow in confusion. "Oh, er...valkyries are able to shift into winged forms but after a while, our forms mature. Their eye colour might change, they may develop rune-work over their bodies. I suppose I didn't develop those because of my hunter runes; they fade after I shift."

Raphael opened his mouth to reply but stopped himself as Adelita made a small noise in the back of her throat. Alec was alert in a split second, hands dancing over Adelita's form, magic purring at his fingertips. He didn't exactly touch Adelita, but the black ghostliness dancing over his fingers seeped into Adelita's skin.

“She’s not brilliant...” Alec whispered, voice cracking in his anxiety. “I think we need to get her to Magnus’ now. I don’t know much about vampire biology, but her aura is all wrong. It’s like she doesn’t even exist, like she’s not on this plane of reality. You’re not like that. Vampires aren’t like that.”

“Serious or not?” Raphael asked quickly, his fangs dropping down against his lips. Aggravation crept up again, fiery and red-hot in his stomach. Before Alec responded, the valkyrie was grasping Adelita, pulling her up from beneath her knees and against her back.

“Serious,” Alec muttered mechanically, cradling Adelita closer. She didn’t make a sound, or move; perhaps her stillness for the past hours should have tempted Raphael into a further sense of terror, but it hadn’t. Raphael sped his way to the door across the room, holding it open for Alec to shoulder past. They worked like robots, coded to one another; it was pathetic, how much Raphael clung to the fact he and Alec worked well together.

“We’re going through the basement,” Raphael tugged Alec close to the wall, shielding him from any possible vampire ambling through the halls during twilight. He didn’t offer an explanation because he knew Alec would understand why they couldn’t go through the bleeding front door and Alec didn’t ask. “Any way of shifting your wings back?”

Alec didn’t miss a beat, tightening his hold on Adelita’s limp form and snapping his wings back inside his flesh with a ferocity that almost scared Raphael. They continued along the silent halls of the DuMort swiftly, Raphael listening as other vampires stirred awake, some clicking their nails against the metal of their doorknobs, considering whether or not it was dark enough to leave the safety of their rooms.

It was nerve-wracking and irritatingly exhilarating to Raphael, but he pushed the emotion away, increasing his speed. Beside him, Alec lengthened his stride to match Raphael’s pace, until they were in the heart of the basement, dodging their way through the piping down there, feet skittering on the dust-laden floor. “Is it dark enough for you two?”

“It’ll have to be. I’ll try ringing Magnus again,” Raphael muttered. When Alec had fallen into a restless sleep less than an hour ago, Raphael had found it in himself to want to ask for help, to be ready to beg for help from Magnus, but the warlock hadn’t picked up. He didn’t pick up the second time either - Raphael hadn’t expected him to.

“Okay...okay,” Raphael said under his breath, steeling himself for the possible shine of the dim sun outside. They had reached a door at the far end of the basement, where Alec had come in first (obviously without Adelita unconscious in his arms that first time) and barely thinking about what he was doing, Raphael shoved the door open and stumbled through it.

“No sun?” Alec asked, yelping as Raphael sped towards him in the blink of an eye, hoisting him up into his arms. With 180 pounds of pure muscle and a sprightly, tiny twelve year old in his arms, Raphael was straining, but it was a short distance to Magnus’ loft. They needed to be there quickly, if Adelita’s injuries were as serious as Alec thought, and carrying them was the best option.

Alec almost fell when Raphael dropped him by the door to Magnus’ loft, only steadied by the wall he stumbled against; Adelita jolted in his arms, but his attention was suddenly focused

on Raphael. The side of his face was marred with a bright, flaking scarlet, burns from the even incredibly dull sun. His fangs had torn into his bottom lip as he howled in pain, throwing himself bodily against Magnus' front door.

It opened quickly and by the time Magnus had taken in the scene in front of him, Alec's wings had arched back out to hook under Raphael's arm to support him and Adelita was bursting awake in his arms. A low scream dragged out from the back of his throat and as she began to thrash, Alec began to struggle to hold her.

"Alexander-"

"Help," Alec coughed out harshly as Raphael buckled under the stress of exhaustion, Alec's still weak wings struggling valiantly to continue to hold him up. Magnus reached for Adelita, stilling her with a spark of magic as he pulled her into his arms. Alec gasped with relief, arms immediately wrapping around Raphael, who was writhing with pain.

Magnus was a mixture of professionalism and frantic worry for all three of them, but his magic was focused on Adelita, who had become more sedated but no less in pain. Her face was contorted with agony, and it was a mess, it was a fucking mess, but Raphael needed his support and Magnus had vines of his spells wrapped around Adelita's body. She floated in the air, about half a metre off the ground until Magnus had levitated her high enough to place her gently on the sofa.

The coffee table was far enough away from the sofa for Magnus to kneel by Adelita's twitching form. A selection of his herbs were spread on the table, along with a mortar and pestle and several sharp-bladed knives. Meanwhile, Alec had pulled Raphael over to the opposite sofa, the vampire flung himself down. The burns spread across the side of his face and the bare skin of his knuckles were dark and red but healing fast.

"Is he okay?" Magnus asked sharply, satisfied for a short moment when Alec confirmed it, before he was questioning Alec's safety. "And you?" he murmured, softer, despite the snapping movements of his hands as he worked. "Are you okay?"

Alec dropped to his knees by Magnus, gripping his hand without replying to pour his strength into Magnus' spell; Magnus didn't push him, instead gripping him under the arm as he spread magic over Adelita, making her skin sheen with blue. "She's not as bad as you must have thought. Not too bad that I can't heal her. That we can't," Magnus mumbled, lips somehow finding their way to Alec's forehead.

"A cracked rib had lodged against her lung," Magnus would explain to them later, when Raphael was conscious, "she was used to breathing, so it aggravated her a lot more than it would any other vampire. She was struggling to heal, is all."

His magic retreating from Adelita, Magnus leant back on his haunches, breathing deep. "She's asleep," he stated for lack of anything else to say. It was then that he turned to Raphael and Alec. The vampire was just stirring to consciousness, and Alec was bleary-eyed and pale.

"I thought..." Magnus began, fully intending to question Alec about his change in attitude towards Raphael - Alec interrupted him with a kiss, chest pounding with anxiety for no particular reason at all. Magnus seemed to sense his strange state of panic, because he didn't press his boyfriend any further, instead wrapping him up in his arms as their lips continued to move against each other, terror fueling Alec's excitement.

"I love you," Magnus murmured, his tone almost like he was reassuring Alec; reassuring him that he was loved, that Magnus was still, that he was home. "I love you," he repeated, pulling away from Alec long enough to stare into Alec's eyes as if trying to unlock his very soul. Alec sobbed sharply, dipping his head to rest against Magnus' shoulder. His wings, forgotten, creaked ominously as they tried to curl into a tighter shape, afraid of spreading out and disturbing Adelita or the potions on either side of them.

Inasmuch time that his anxiety had taken to overpower him, Alec had recovered, the hazy glow of his eyes causing Magnus' heart to skip a beat. He was finally given a moment where he could lose himself in the swirl of Alec's eyes; he must have had an active glamour rune because every time they caught the light, Alec's eyes were gold.

"I can't have active runes when I've shifted," Alec reminded Magnus gently, blinking slowly. "The gold is new. My eyes," he glanced down at his fingers, which Magnus finally noticed too, "and my hands. I don't know if they're permanent or not. Raphael said something about how sometimes it's gold and sometimes it's not. White, he said, when I shifted for him the second time. Sometimes just brown, like they usually are."

"We'll ask Catia," Magnus muttered, half to himself. Quietly, they stood, still wrapped up in each other. Raphael spluttered awake to the side of them, drawing their attention. Releasing Alec reluctantly, Magnus relayed everything he knew about Adelita's condition to him, raising an incredulous brow when Raphael huffed.

"I burned off half my face for something so anticlimactic?" he grunted, pulling himself up by the side of the sofa. "Dios, I'll know not to hang around valkyries anymore - it's boring."

"Not like you hung around valkyries before," Alec snarked, throwing himself on the sofa beside Raphael. He knew instinctively that Raphael was exhausted to his core, but was going to be the last person to say it; instead, the vampire mustered his dignity (no one was going to fucking hear he'd passed out on a warlock's sofa) and grace and stood, with much less finesse than usual.

"Magnus," he nodded at the High Warlock, who had turned back to Adelita, levitating her easily into Raphael's awaiting arms. The half-demon murmured something about her sleeping for a few more hours, but there'd not be any more issues with her rib. Then, shockingly, Raphael turned to Alec and enveloped him in a not-as-awkward-as-expected one armed hug. Before the valkyrie or warlock could say anything, the vampire had sped away in a flurry of limbs.

"Alexander..." Magnus began in a slightly too serious voice, "are you courting Raphael?"

Much to his concern, Alec didn't immediately deny the claims, instead blushing brightly and murmuring with a smile, "Evidently. I think it's probably something to do with the wild gay sex we had at the DuMort."

"What?!" Magnus yelped, sighing when Alec shook his head, laughing. Of course he didn't think Alec would have cheated, it was just...God, it was good to hear Alec make a joke. They seemed to have been on such rocky terms lately, Magnus constantly terrified that one wrong move would turn Alec away and Alec terrified that one wrong move would result in Magnus' death. It was so good to hear Alec laugh.

"God, no. Mags, it's just you; it's only ever been you," Alec smiled fondly, pulling Magnus closer by his wrist. His previous anxiety seemed to have vanished into thin air - it wasn't normal. "Besides," he whispered, closing the gap between them, "I'm pretty sure Raphael's ace."

Magnus wasn't given a chance to respond; but it was alright. Being swept away into the gentle ministrations of Alec's mouth and hands was a much better place to be in than questioning his pseudo-son's sexuality.

He was a weird father.

-

The ended up stumbling to the bedroom not long after Raphael had left with Adelita. Alec felt like he was floating on clouds, unsure of anything else in the world but Magnus and his skin and his lips and his hands, the weight of his wings against his back and the gold swirling in his gaze. For a split second he wondered where his terror over the state of Simon's wellbeing or how Adelita was or if Raphael was going to be okay had disappeared to, but then Magnus' lips were latching onto his neck and his was being pushed back against the bed.

"What are you okay with?" Magnus asked, climbing on the bed after his partner, mindful of the wings splayed out beneath him. His eyes were dark with arousal and his hands felt like fire as they caressed Alec's skin, but nothing else happened before Alec answered him. The warlock knew that he was still nervous about sex; they had gone 'all the way' before, and instance which had left Alec delightfully sore, but every so often Alec dipped back into feeling terrified of having that commitment with someone and sex was just off the table.

"I..." Alec paused, fidgeting underneath Magnus, who had straddled his thighs. He was hard, straining against his jeans, and so was Magnus, and although they were both horny little shits, Alec just didn't know. Whining, he bucked against Magnus' hips, desperate and helpless and unsure. "Don't know," he managed to gasp out before he was tugging Magnus back down for a kiss.

It was chaste and sweet and too simple. Alec wanted more, he knew he did, it was just...

"My hands? Hmm? Can I touch you, baby?" Magnus asked in a husky voice which dripped sex. He leant back, forcing Alec up with him, so that Magnus was sprawled across his lap,

ignoring his hard-on, and Alec was sitting up. The valkyrie swore under his breath, squeezing his eyes shut as Magnus rocked his hips down, grinding their crotches together.

Shivering, Alec nodded, whimpering in relief as Magnus' hands came down to stroke over his clothed erection torturously slowly. He coaxed him back down to lie on the bed, fingers brushing against the too sensitive feathers of his wings. "Nnng," Alec choked, shaking his head. "Not there." Magnus' hands retreated immediately.

Opening his eyes, Alec fixed his boyfriend with his golden stare, lust oozing from his pores. His fingers played with the hem of Magnus' shirt - a deep red material, draped across Magnus' sculpted chest like art - asking silently to remove it. Sex, he understood, was a give and take. And he wanted to give Magnus so much.

But then he didn't.

It was a split second kind of thing, like everything had been since the DuMort, since everything had been for a while longer beforehand than Alec wanted to admit. There was something deeply unsettling about the entire thing, about Magnus' hands on his skin; suddenly it wasn't arousal but instead disgust that Alec was feeling and he wanted Magnus away.

Black tendrils of smoke built in his palms, burning him until his skin was peeling and everything in his bones was screeching to be left alone; why was Magnus still there?

The warlock stopped, moving slowly as if not to spook his partner. Their lust fizzled out and Alec continued to lay there, breathing harsh and heavy. Distantly, Alec was aware of Magnus speaking, whispering his name and attempting to console him. He tried to move, he really, really did, but his limbs weren't cooperating - out of the corner of his eyes, he could see his hands washing through with poisoned black.

It took a while for Alec to come back to himself and for the darkness to stop clouding his vision; Magnus was tentative and soft as he coaxed him out of his lull of insanity. "Mags," he coughed, neck arching finally from its strained position. It was strange to be able to move properly after so long. "Magnus, something's wrong."

"I know, my darling," Magnus replied in a low tone, fingers brushing gently over Alec's cheek. He settled on the bed besides Alec's wings, careful not to touch them. Alec, confused by Magnus' hypervigilance, turned his head slightly to look at them and screamed.

He didn't know how he couldn't feel it, because it looked like his wings were rotting off at the shoulder. His feathers were greasy with blood and sharp white fluid and it was terrifying. Breathing quickened, Alec tried to scramble away from the bed, away from his own wings and of course it didn't fucking work.

"Magnus, Mags, please," Alec sobbed, ashamed to find tears at his eyes, yelping as Magnus grabbed him by the hip, preventing his tumble to the floor.

"Alec, it's not real. It's not real, my love, you're okay-" Magnus tried to calm him, gold flickering at the edges of his vision - it was hard to keep his cool when his lover was twisting

and screaming as if he was dying. Crying about something that wasn't there, that only he could see.

There was a process to it; the almost bipolar-like tendencies for days beforehand, then the sudden immobilisation and after the fear of things most precious to him being destroyed. It continued like that, for hours and hours until Magnus or someone else was able to calm him. After months of it happening, Magnus had begun to pick up of the start of it as they worked to find out what was causing it, but this was just the first time. Magnus knew nothing.

Two hours passed before Alec stopped yelling, and even then, he didn't calm, only making hoarse wheezing sounds - his vocal chords had blown out. His mouth made words that Magnus couldn't hear, but his terrified eyes always strayed to his wings, reaching out to tear huge chunks of feathers out once or twice before Magnus was able to restrain him. It only seemed to distress him more.

They were both exhausted by the time the black that had begun to coat every inch of Alec skin started to recede back into pale, ivory gold. Alec was barely conscious, but it didn't stop him for a moment from asking, "did I hurt you?"

Magnus choked up, tears welling up at the corner of his eyes; he shook his head briefly before he bent down to press meaningful kisses to Alec's red cheeks. "No, you didn't hurt me. You hurt yourself a little, though, with all your thrashing...Alec? Do you know what's wrong, dear?"

Numbly, Alec shook his head. "Everything was black. I couldn't see anything and then I couldn't move...and then, an-and then my wings, oh fuck, my wings," Alec's voice reached something that could quite easily be deemed hysteria. "They looked like they were burning and rotting," he cried, "and I couldn't stop seeing them, even when I tried to shift back. My magic just wasn't responding to me."

Flinching, Magnus nodded slowly. "Do you know what's happening to me, Mags?" Alec asked quickly, picking up immediately on the silence from his partner. The warlock breathed deeply, four inhales, three exhales, before he spoke.

"Do you know how our magic is bound to one another? Because you were too weak to sustain such power on your own?" Alec nodded, dumbfounded and confused. "I can always feel it. At the edges of my heart and I can always feel how weak or strong it is. Sometimes I just get these instincts; like, if you're in danger, sometimes I just know. Because your magic is telling me."

He paused, fiddling with the pendant at his chest, where the physical embodiment of Alec's magic - some of it, at least, to keep the bond alive - was stored. It usually was a deep gold or purple, swirling and warping around the edges of the pendant. But now, it was dark, muddy grey, sluggishly rolling around the charm. It was sickening to watch, even more so because Alec knew that it was his magic.

"Magnus," Alec began, needing him to confirm it, needing him to say it aloud, "is that my magic?" he asked, voice thick and throat full of tears.

“Yeah,” Magnus replied, dropping the pendant back behind his shirt. “It feels corrupted. Like someone is twisting it into something it’s not.” Alec shuddered, scrambling up to sit against the headboard as sweat dripped down his body. It was disgusting to think about, someone violating him on such a base level, someone manipulating his own magic. His breathing was deeper and slower than usual, and his entire demeanour purred that he was calm; distantly, Alec registered that his mind didn’t match his movements, as it had been for days before he’d seized in Magnus’ bed.

“How could someone do that?”

“If they had part of your magic, some physicality of it, or some remnant of a spell you’ve performed...they could change you that way. It’s a stretch, but a powerful warlock could probably do it remotely; they could create a spell or a ritual which makes you act a certain way which changes your magic, or they could affect your magic directly, which would determine your actions.”

Alec nodded briefly, rolling off the bed. Tight across his chest, Alec’s shirt was suffocating, so he tore it off, unmindful of his delicate wings. The fabric ripped loudly and it was in tatters by the time Alec had it over his head. “It was a horrible shirt anyways,” Magnus murmured lightheartedly, following Alec off the bed and toeing his way to the massive wardrobe at the far left side of the room. “I can give you a shirt, if you want,” he offered quietly, already perusing the baggier shirts he owned.

“Would any of your shirts even fit?” Alec asked cheekily, his flippancy about his corrupted magic concerning and a complete turnabout to his terror barely minutes ago. Magnus turned with a plain burgundy red shirt in hand, eyebrows furrowed together with worry. Gently, he pressed his hand up against Alec’s cheek, cupping his face and leaning in to kiss him tenderly.

“We’re practically the same size,” Magnus pointed out, sighing. “I love you.” It was unexpected - affection wasn’t something Magnus was afraid to express, but the L word was something still foreign and unfamiliar in their relationship, and Alec was usually the first to tell him so.

“Yeah, I love you, too,” Alec replied, taking the shirt from Magnus. It was almost unbearably soft and the valkyrie had the sudden impulse to press his face against the fabric and breathe Magnus’ scent in. Instead, he ignored the urge and pushed his wings back, breath shuddering as his feathers dissolved against his spine, and pulled the shirt over his head.

“Alec,” Magnus started, catching him by the wrist as the Fallen tried to turn away. “You know we have to find some way to stop this person, whoever’s doing this to you-”

“We don’t have to do anything. I can track the bastard down by myself, but I’m not putting you in danger because of m-mph!” Alec spluttered as Magnus dragged him forward into a

harsh kiss, fingers tangling roughly in his hair. It was over quickly, but it had the effect Magnus wanted.

Alec was silent as Magnus spoke. "We're in this together, you and I. You're my entire world, Alexander; do you understand? You're everything to me, and I can't let you deal with this on your own. Besides," he continued more playfully, "I can look after myself."

"I know you can," Alec whispered, leaning his forehead against Magnus'. "I know, it's just..."

"It's just?" Magnus probed gently, hands smoothing down over Alec's borrowed shirt. Alec's head dropped down to his shoulder, burrowing his nose into the warmth there. "Come on, lovely," Magnus murmured when Alec stayed silent, bathing in his lover's embrace, "tell me?"

"I just...I don't want you to be hurt. I couldn't bear it. And I can't bear that my magic is hurting you, even if I don't mean it to." Pleasantly, Alec's breath ghosted over Magnus' neck, a heat that Magnus arched into. He was about to say something when he heard a rapid knocking at the door. He mustn't have felt them approaching through his wards because of the way Alec's magic was twisting his own.

Before Magnus could make his way out of his bedroom and to the front door, Alec tugged the pendant of his magic from around his neck. "I'm sure our bond can survive without this for a little while." Magnus didn't reply, agreeing with Alec but hating that he did as he strode outside, easily maneuvering through the utter mess of potions and the beginnings of spells that was his sitting room.

The sight behind his door surprised him, and considering the startled gasp that came from Alec behind him, it surprised him too. In front of them was Izzy, lips painted ruby and dressed impeccably as always, but her right arm, usually wrapped in her whip, was around a deathly pale and frantic mundane.

"Simon?!"

"Alec?!" the mundane garbled, stumbling forward as he wrenched himself from Izzy to collide with Alec - the valkyrie easily caught him, dragging him close to his chest and burrowing his face in the crook of the younger boy's shoulder. As fast as the mundane had tackled him with a hug, Simon stepped back and slapped Alec across the cheek. Hard.

"Where the hell were you? All your sister has told me was that you had something else to sort out, which, dude, fair enough; the least you could do was return my calls though. I've been worried!" Simon ranted, stepping back with a sheepish look, as if he was surprised by his own behaviour.

"I...I think maybe you should both hear this," Alec murmured eventually, nodding to Simon and Izzy as he gently pulled Magnus from behind him to the sofa in the middle of the room. It was large enough for all of them to fit quite comfortably but Alec was unsure how he would react to so much physical contact, so took a place on the arm of the chair opposite it. Magnus' lips pursed briefly in concern at how uncomfortable Alec seemed in what was

practically their home, not just his, but he followed Alec's lead and sat on the sofa opposite Izzy and Simon.

"I...okay, so," Alec began awkwardly, deeply unsure of himself. "I've been acting strange for a while now, I know-"

"That's a fucking understatement," Izzy muttered under her breath. Magnus shot her a look which quelled her frustrations and coaxed Alec back into talking. The Fallen did so, but tentatively. There was a smattering of anxious gold across his cheeks, like freckles painted in sunshine.

"I'm a valkyrie," Alec explained to Simon, quickly running through the process of telling him the bare basics. Simon took to it like a fish to water; perhaps being kidnapped by vampires did that to a person. "And my magic...well, it's bound to Magnus and his is bound to me. We each have physical embodiments of each other's magic, so we can gain strength from it." He pulled the necklace from his pocket, dangling it in the air for Izzy and Simon to see.

It hadn't improved in any way, the transparent jewel full with murky thickness that struggled to slosh up and outside the confines of the enchanted glass. "What the fuck...?" Simon whispered incredulously, leaning forward to get a better look at the pendant.

Izzy stayed silent for a moment as Alec returned the necklace to his jean pocket. "Is that your magic?" she asked slowly, relaxing against the cushion behind her back. Alec nodded reluctantly and Magnus took over the speaking role.

"We think an external force is corrupting Alec's magic - obviously, this affects his entire body, his mind. Everything about him. So, it's not just his spellwork or his shifting ability that has been crippled, it's everything, which is why it's so important that we try and fix it. Find whoever's doing this," Magnus ventured, scowling when Alec interrupted him.

"Not we-"

"Yes, we," Magnus snapped, backed up immediately by Simon and Izzy. "We all love you and we all want you safe. So, yes. We are going to help you."

Alec blushed angrily before shuddering, nodding. His magic curled in his chest, the darkness that had settled there dissipating for a moment; it was a sudden moment of relief that switched something in Alec's gaze until his eyes were emblazoned with gold. Another shiver and the muddiness of corruption settled to his heart again, the metal fading from his glare.

"Thank you," he said finally, sick of having the argument with Magnus.

"Second issue of the day..." Izzy began tentatively, aware of the tension between the couple. "I think Simon is at risk of turning into a vampire." The mundane by her side flinched

harshly at her words, glancing at her in shock. His eyes were riddled with tired red and his cheeks were pasty and sickly.

“What?” he whispered, voice barely there. Izzy turned to him, gripping his hands tightly in an attempt to console him. His cheeks would have flushed with colour because Izzy was, quite frankly, a stunning woman, but he was too surprised and anguished to respond.

“It’s the most logical outcome of Camille’s attacks. They shared blood,” Izzy told Alec and Magnus, still holding onto Simon’s fragile fingers. Magnus swore darkly under his breath. “So he’s most likely to turn. Which is why I think we need to look over him for a little while.”

“He can stay here,” Magnus replied immediately, arching an eyebrow at the shock on everyone else’s faces. “What? I’m fond already of Sybil.”

“Simon,” the boy corrected lightly, seeming to relax under Magnus’ warm amber gaze. Izzy smiled at the sight but Alec remained impassive at Magnus’ side.

“That’s what I said.”

“We should settle you in, then,” Alec murmured, grabbing Magnus’ hand and pulling him up quickly. Simon scrambled up to follow them to the spare bedroom across the apartment from Magnus’ (and Alec’s). He attempted to be nonchalant as he surveyed the room, but the massive space excited him. The bound in his step betrayed him as Simon walked further into the bedroom, smoothing his hand over the white bedsheets.

“This is really nice,” Simon muttered, “Thanks for letting me stay here.”

“Maybe you should get some rest. I’ll call your mom and let her know that you’re doing a big project or something - you should be back home soon, though,” Alec explained kindly, opening his arms wide for a hug that Simon seemed to desperately need. Simon ran to him, burying himself in Alec’s embrace.

The valkyrie sighed deeply. “I know I’m acting like a bit of a bipolar dick,” Alec coughed, uncomfortable with his emission. “And it’s selfish of me to ask you to forgive me for anything that I say or do, but I know that I’m going to be stuck like this until we fix me; so I’m going to ask you to not take anything that I say seriously.”

“We know,” Simon murmured into Alec’s chest - behind him, Magnus chose not to engulf them in a hug but instead ran his hand down Alec’s spine, between where his wings would usually pronounce. “We’re not gonna hold it against you if you’re a shithead.”

“And we’ll all be there to guide you through,” Magnus reminded Alec tenderly, thumb stroking against Alec’s back. “Simon,” he spoke louder to the mundane, who looked up from the muscles of Alec’s chest a little blearily. “I can magick some things here for you, but if you want anything specific from your room or house, I’ll need you to tell me right now. It requires a slightly larger spell if it is something with ownership over it already.”

“I have my phone on me, but...I mean, if you can manage it, I have some school work on my laptop, so I might need that?” Simon asked nervously, pushing away from Alec and fidgeting slightly.

“Of course I can manage it,” Magnus smiled, “I’m the High Warlock of Brooklyn, for Lilith’s sake.” He leant up to peck Alec on the cheek and then turned to saunter away, passing Izzy with a grin. The girl smiled pleasantly back and paused at Alec’s side, running her hand down his side in a similar way that Magnus had.

“You wanna take first watch?” she asked, trying to grin at Simon in a non-threatening way. He didn’t seem as consoled as Izzy had hoped. Alec nodded and pressed a kiss to her forehead, pleased when she accepted the contact comfortably - she left as quickly as she had arrived.

“First watch?” Simon asked anxiously, fidgeting as Alec guided him into the bedroom, shutting the door behind them.

“The last time we thought a Shadowhunter was going to turn, we took shifts for a few days, watching them. We don’t understand as much as we’d like about vampire changing or fledglings, but taking turns to watch over the person seems to work relatively well to keep everyone safe.”

“Oh...” Simon breathed out, his voice shuddering with worry. A panic attack crept up at the edges of his vision, but he pushed the terror away. “Thanks. For looking out for me, I mean. It’s nice to have someone that cares, you know?”

“Yeah,” Alec murmured, smiling as he thought about how much kindness Magnus was showing him, even when he wasn’t physically able to think straight. “Yeah, I do know.” Snapping out of his thoughts, Alec looked up at Simon, who was perched awkwardly on the edge of the bed. “Try to get some sleep. I’ll be here when you wake up.”

Simon coughed, rubbing the back of his neck as he attempted to scrounge up something to say, before he nodded and rolled over onto his side, facing away from Alec. Tension was wrought in his figure, but (as had been typical of him for the past few days) Alec’s concern was placed elsewhere.

Body detached from his mind in a strange numbing sensation, Alec placed himself daintily on the edge of Simon’s bed, hand brushing over the clothed calf of the not-quite-vampire. His eyes flashed darkly and then Simon was gone.

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