



The Mortal Instruments 05. City of Lost Souls

Cassandra Clare

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544 pages

Extrait

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THE LAST COUNCIL

“How much longer will the verdict take, do you think?” Clary asked. She had no idea how long they’d been waiting, but it felt like ten hours. There were no clocks in Isabelle’s black and hot-pink powder-puff bedroom, just piles of clothes, heaps of books, stacks of weapons, a vanity overflowing with sparkling makeup, used brushes, and open drawers spilling lacy slips, sheer tights, and feather boas. It had a certain backstage-at-La-Cage-aux-Folles design aesthetic, but over the past two weeks Clary had spent enough time among the glittering mess to have begun to find it comforting.

Isabelle, standing over by the window with Church in her arms, stroked the cat’s head absently. Church regarded her with baleful yellow eyes. Outside the window a November storm was in full bloom, rain streaking the windows like clear paint. “Not much longer,” she said slowly. “Five minutes, probably.”

Clary, sitting on Izzy’s bed between a pile of magazines and a rattling stack of seraph blades, swallowed hard against the bitter taste in her throat. I’ll be back. Five minutes.

That had been the last thing she had said to the boy she loved more than anything else in the world. Now she thought it might be the last thing she would ever get to say to him.

Clary remembered the moment perfectly. The roof garden. The crystalline October night, the stars burning icy white against a cloudless black sky. The paving stones smeared with black runes, spattered with ichor and blood. Jace’s mouth on hers, the only warm thing in a shivering world. Clasp the Morgenstern ring around her neck. The love that moves the sun and all the other stars. Turning to look for him as the elevator took her away, sucking her back down into the shadows of the building. She had joined the others in the lobby, hugging her mother, Luke, Simon, but some part of her, as it always was, had still been with Jace, floating above the city on that rooftop, the two of them alone in the cold and brilliant electric city.

Maryse and Kadir had been the ones to get into the elevator to join Jace on the roof and to see the remains of Lilith’s ritual. It was another ten minutes before Maryse returned, alone. When the doors had opened and Clary had seen her face—white and set and frantic—she had known.

What had happened next had been like a dream. The crowd of Shadowhunters in the lobby had surged toward Maryse; Alec had broken away from Magnus, and Isabelle had leaped to her feet. White bursts of light cut through the darkness like the soft explosions of camera flashes at a crime scene as, one after another, seraph blades lit the shadows. Pushing her way forward, Clary heard the story in broken pieces—the rooftop garden was empty; Jace was gone. The glass coffin that had held Sebastian had been smashed open; glass was lying everywhere in fragments. Blood, still fresh, dripped down the pedestal on which the coffin had sat.

The Shadowhunters were making plans quickly, to spread out in a radius and search the area around the building. Magnus was there, his hands sparking blue, turning to Clary to ask if she had something of Jace’s they could track him with. Numbly, she gave him the Morgenstern ring and retreated into a corner to call Simon. She had only just closed the phone when the voice of a Shadowhunter rang out above the rest. “Tracking? That’ll work only if he’s still alive. With that much blood it’s not very likely—”

Somehow that was the last straw. Prolonged hypothermia, exhaustion, and shock took their toll, and she felt her knees give. Her mother caught her before she hit the ground. There was a dark blur after that. She woke up the next morning in her bed at Luke's, sitting bolt upright with her heart going like a trip-hammer, sure she had had a nightmare.

As she struggled out of bed, the fading bruises on her arms and legs told a different story, as did the absence of her ring. Throwing on jeans and a hoodie, she staggered out into the living room to find Jocelyn, Luke, and Simon seated there with somber expressions on their faces. She didn't even need to ask, but she did anyway: "Did they find him? Is he back?"

Jocelyn stood up. "Sweetheart, he's still missing—"

"But not dead? They haven't found a body?" She collapsed onto the couch next to Simon. "No—he's not dead. I'd know."

She remembered Simon holding her hand while Luke told her what they did know: that Jace was still gone, and so was Sebastian. The bad news was that the blood on the pedestal had been identified as Jace's. The good news was that there was less of it than they had thought; it had mixed with the water from the coffin to give the impression of a greater volume of blood than there had really been. They now thought it was quite possible he had survived whatever had happened.

"But what happened?" she demanded.

Luke shook his head, blue eyes somber. "Nobody knows, Clary."

Her veins felt as if her blood had been replaced with ice water. "I want to help. I want to do something. I don't want to just sit here while Jace is missing."

"I wouldn't worry about that," Jocelyn said grimly. "The Clave wants to see you."

Invisible ice cracked in Clary's joints and tendons as she stood up. "Fine. Whatever. I'll tell them anything they want if they'll find Jace."

"You'll tell them anything they want because they have the Mortal Sword." There was despair in Jocelyn's voice. "Oh, baby. I'm so sorry."

And now, after two weeks of repetitive testimony, after scores of witnesses had been called, after she had held the Mortal Sword a dozen times, Clary sat in Isabelle's bedroom and waited for the Council to rule on her fate. She couldn't help but remember what it had felt like to hold the Mortal Sword. It was like tiny fishhooks embedded in your skin, pulling the truth out of you. She had knelt, holding it, in the circle of the Speaking Stars and had heard her own voice telling the Council everything: how Valentine had raised the Angel Raziel, and how she had taken the power of controlling the Angel from him by erasing his name in the sand and writing hers over it. She had told them how the Angel had offered her one wish, and she had used it to raise Jace from the dead; she told them how Lilith had possessed Jace and Lilith had planned to use Simon's blood to resurrect Sebastian, Clary's brother, whom Lilith regarded as a son. How Simon's Mark of Cain had ended Lilith, and they had thought Sebastian had been ended too, no longer a threat.

Clary sighed and flipped her phone open to check the time. "They've been in there for an hour," she said. "Is that normal? Is it a bad sign?"

Isabelle dropped Church, who let out a yowl. She came over to the bed and sat down beside Clary. Isabelle looked even more slender than usual—like Clary, she'd lost weight in the past two weeks—but elegant as always, in black cigarette pants and a fitted gray velvet top. Mascara was smudged all around Izzy's eyes, which should have made her look like a raccoon but just made her look like a French film star instead. She stretched her arms out, and her electrum bracelets with their rune charms jingled musically. "No, it's not a bad sign," she said. "It just means they have a lot to talk over." She twisted the Lightwood ring on her finger. "You'll be fine. You didn't break the Law. That's the important thing."

Clary sighed. Even the warmth of Isabelle's shoulder next to hers couldn't melt the ice in her veins. She knew that technically she had broken no Laws, but she also knew the Clave was furious at her. It was illegal for a Shadowhunter to raise the dead, but not for the Angel to do it; nevertheless it was such an enormous thing she had done in asking for Jace's life back that she and Jace had agreed to tell no one about it.

Now it was out, and it had rocked the Clave. Clary knew they wanted to punish her, if only because her choice had had such disastrous consequences. In some way she wished they would punish her. Break her bones, pull her fingernails out, let the Silent Brothers root through her brain with their bladed thoughts. A sort of devil's bargain—her own pain for Jace's safe return. It would have helped her guilt over having left Jace behind on that rooftop, even though Isabelle and the others had told her a hundred times she was being ridiculous—that they had all thought he was perfectly safe there, and that if Clary had stayed, she would probably now be missing too.

"Quit it," Isabelle said. For a moment Clary wasn't sure if Isabelle was talking to her or to the cat. Church was doing what he often did when dropped—lying on his back with all four legs in the air, pretending to be dead in order to induce guilt in his owners. But then Isabelle swept her black hair aside, glaring, and Clary realized she was the one being told off, not the cat.

"Quit what?"

"Morbidly thinking about all the horrible things that are going to happen to you, or that you wish would happen to you because you're alive and Jace is... missing." Isabelle's voice jumped, like a record skipping a groove. She never spoke of Jace as being dead or even gone—she and Alec refused to entertain the possibility. And Isabelle had never reproached Clary once for keeping such an enormous secret. Throughout everything, in fact, Isabelle had been her staunchest defender. Meeting her every day at the door to the Council Hall, she had held Clary firmly by the arm as she'd marched her past clumps of glaring, muttering Shadowhunters. She had waited through endless Council interrogations, shooting dagger glances at anyone who dared look at Clary sideways. Clary had been astonished. She and Isabelle had never been enormously close, both of them being the sort of girls who were more comfortable with boys than other female companionship. But Isabelle didn't leave her side. Clary was as bewildered as she was grateful.

"I can't help it," Clary said. "If I were allowed to patrol—if I were allowed to do anything—I think it wouldn't be so bad."

"I don't know." Isabelle sounded weary. For the past two weeks she and Alec had been exhausted and gray-faced from sixteen-hour patrols and searches. When Clary had found out she was banned from patrolling or searching for Jace in any way until the Council decided what to do about the fact that she had brought him back from the dead, she had kicked a hole in her bedroom door. "Sometimes it feels so futile," Isabelle added.

Ice crackled up and down Clary's bones. "You mean you think he's dead?"

“No, I don’t. I mean I think there’s no way they’re still in New York.”

“But they’re patrolling in other cities, right?” Clary put a hand to her throat, forgetting that the Morgenstern ring no longer hung there. Magnus was still trying to track Jace, though no tracking had yet worked.

“Of course they are.” Isabelle reached out curiously and touched the delicate silver bell that hung around Clary’s neck now, in place of the ring. “What’s that?”

Clary hesitated. The bell had been a gift from the Seelie Queen. No, that wasn’t quite right. The Queen of the faeries didn’t give gifts. The bell was meant to signal the Seelie Queen that Clary wanted her help. Clary had found her hand wandering to it more and more often as the days dragged on with no sign of Jace. The only thing that stopped Clary was the knowledge that the Seelie Queen never gave anything without the expectation of something terrible in return.

Before Clary could reply to Isabelle, the door opened. Both girls sat up ramrod straight, Clary clutching one of Izzy’s pink pillows so hard that the rhinestones on it dug into the skin of her palms.

“Hey.” A slim figure stepped into the room and shut the door. Alec, Isabelle’s older brother, was dressed in Council wear—a black robe figured with silver runes, open now over jeans and a long-sleeved black T-shirt. All the black made his pale skin look paler, his crystal-blue eyes bluer. His hair was black and straight like his sister’s, but shorter, cut just above his jawline. His mouth was set in a thin line.

Clary’s heart started to pound. Alec didn’t look happy. Whatever the news was, it couldn’t be good.

It was Isabelle who spoke. “How did it go?” she said quietly. “What’s the verdict?”

Alec sat down at the vanity table, swinging himself around the chair to face Izzy and Clary over the back. At another time it would have been comical—Alec was very tall, with long legs like a dancer, and the way he folded himself awkwardly around the chair made it look like dollhouse furniture.

“Clary,” he said. “Jia Penhallow handed down the verdict. You’re cleared of any wrongdoing. You broke no Laws, and Jia feels that you’ve been punished enough.”

Isabelle exhaled an audible breath and smiled. For just a moment a feeling of relief broke through the layer of ice over all of Clary’s emotions. She wasn’t going to be punished, locked up in the Silent City, trapped somewhere where she couldn’t help Jace. Luke, who as the representative of the werewolves on the Council had been present for the verdict, had promised to call Jocelyn as soon as the meeting ended, but Clary reached for her phone anyway; the prospect of giving her mother good news for a change was too tempting.

“Clary,” Alec said as she flipped her phone open. “Wait.”

She looked at him. His expression was still as serious as an undertaker’s. With a sudden sense of foreboding, Clary put her phone back down on the bed. “Alec—what is it?”

“It wasn’t your verdict that took the Council so long,” said Alec. “There was another matter under discussion.”

The ice was back. Clary shivered. “Jace?”

“Not exactly.” Alec leaned forward, folding his hands along the back of the chair. “A report came in early this morning from the Moscow Institute. The wardings over Wrangel Island were smashed through yesterday. They’ve sent a repair team, but having such important wards down for so long—that’s a Council priority.”

Wards—which served, as Clary understood it, as a sort of magical fence system—surrounded Earth, put there by the first generation of Shadowhunters. They could be bypassed by demons but not easily, and kept out the vast majority of them, preventing the world from being flooded by a massive demon invasion. She remembered something that Jace had said to her, what felt like years ago: There used to be only small demon invasions into this world, easily contained. But even in my lifetime more and more of them have spilled in through the wardings.

“Well, that’s bad,” Clary said. “But I don’t see what it has to do with—”

“The Clave has its priorities,” Alec interrupted. “Searching for Jace and Sebastian has been top priority for the past two weeks. But they’ve scoured everything, and there’s no sign of either of them in any Downworld haunt. None of Magnus’s tracking spells have worked. Elodie, the woman who brought up the real Sebastian Verlac, confirmed that no one’s tried to get in touch with her. That was a long shot, anyway. No spies have reported any unusual activity among the known members of Valentine’s old Circle. And the Silent Brothers haven’t been able to figure out exactly what the ritual Lilith performed was supposed to do, or whether it succeeded. The general consensus is that Sebastian—of course, they call him Jonathan when they talk about him—kidnapped Jace, but that’s not anything we didn’t know.”

“So?” Isabelle said. “What does that mean? More searching? More patrolling?”

Alec shook his head. “They’re not discussing expanding the search,” he said quietly. “They’re de-prioritizing it. It’s been two weeks and they haven’t found anything. The specially commissioned groups brought over from Idris are going to be sent home. The situation with the wards is taking priority now. Not to mention that the Council has been in the middle of delicate negotiations, updating the Laws to allow for the new makeup of the Council, appointing a new Consul and Inquisitor, determining different treatment of Downworlders—they don’t want to be thrown completely off track.”

Clary stared. “They don’t want Jace’s disappearance to throw them off the track of changing a bunch of stupid old Laws? They’re giving up?”

“They’re not giving up—”

“Alec,” Isabelle said sharply.

Alec took a breath and put his hands up to cover his face. He had long fingers, like Jace’s, scarred like Jace’s were as well. The eye Mark of the Shadowhunters decorated the back of his right hand. “Clary, for you—for us—this has always been about searching for Jace. For the Clave it’s about searching for Sebastian. Jace as well, but primarily Sebastian. He’s the danger. He destroyed the wards of Alicante. He’s a mass murderer. Jace is...”

“Just another Shadowhunter,” said Isabelle. “We die and go missing all the time.”

“He gets a little extra for being a hero of the Mortal War,” said Alec. “But in the end the Clave was clear: The search will be kept up, but right now it’s a waiting game. They expect Sebastian to make the next move.”

In the meantime it's third priority for the Clave. If that. They expect us to go back to normal life."

Normal life? Clary couldn't believe it. A normal life without Jace?

"That's what they told us after Max died," said Izzy, her black eyes tearless but burning with anger. "That we'd get over our grief faster if we just went back to normal life."

"It's supposed to be good advice," said Alec from behind his fingers.

"Tell that to Dad. Did he even come back from Idris for the meeting?"

Alec shook his head, dropping his hands. "No. If it's any consolation, there were a lot of people at the meeting speaking out angrily on behalf of keeping the search for Jace up at full strength. Magnus, obviously, Luke, Consul Penhallow, even Brother Zachariah. But at the end of the day it wasn't enough."

Clary looked at him steadily. "Alec," she said. "Don't you feel anything?"

Alec's eyes widened, their blue darkening, and for a moment Clary remembered the boy who had hated her when she'd first arrived at the Institute, the boy with bitten nails and holes in his sweaters and a chip on his shoulder that had seemed immovable. "I know you're upset, Clary," he said, his voice sharp, "but if you're suggesting that Iz and I care less about Jace than you do—"

"I'm not," Clary said. "I'm talking about your parabatai connection. I was reading about the ceremony in the Codex. I know being parabatai ties the two of you together. You can sense things about Jace. Things that will help you when you're fighting. So I guess I mean... can you sense if he's still alive?"

"Clary." Isabelle sounded worried. "I thought you didn't..."

"He's alive," Alec said cautiously. "You think I'd be this functional if he weren't alive? There's definitely something fundamentally wrong. I can feel that much. But he's still breathing."

"Could the 'wrong' thing be that he's being held prisoner?" said Clary in a small voice.

Alec looked toward the windows, the sheeting gray rain. "Maybe. I can't explain it. I've never felt anything like it before."

"But he's alive."

Alec looked at her directly then. "I'm sure of it."

"Then screw the Council. We'll find him ourselves," Clary said.

"Clary... if that were possible... don't you think we already would have—," Alec began.

"We were doing what the Clave wanted us to do before," said Isabelle. "Patrols, searches. There are other ways."

"Ways that break the Law, you mean," said Alec. He sounded hesitant. Clary hoped he wasn't going to repeat the Shadowhunters' motto when it came to the Law: *Sed lex, dura lex*. "The Law is harsh, but it is the

Law.” She didn’t think she could take it.

“The Seelie Queen offered me a favor,” Clary said. “At the fireworks party in Idris.” The memory of that night, how happy she’d been, made her heart contract for a moment, and she had to stop and regain her breath. “And a way to contact her.”

“The Queen of the Fair Folk gives nothing for free.”

“I know that. I’ll take whatever debt it is on my shoulders.” Clary remembered the words of the faerie girl who had handed her the bell. You would do anything to save him, whatever it cost you, whatever you might owe to Hell or Heaven, would you not? “I just want one of you to come with me. I’m not good with translating faerie-speak. At least if you’re with me you can limit whatever the damage is. But if there’s anything she can do—”

“I’ll go with you,” Isabelle said immediately.

Alec looked at his sister darkly. “We already talked to the Fair Folk. The Council questioned them extensively. And they can’t lie.”

“The Council asked them if they knew where Jace and Sebastian were,” Clary said. “Not if they’d be willing to look for them. The Seelie Queen knew about my father, knew about the angel he summoned and trapped, knew the truth about my blood and Jace’s. I think there’s not much that happens in this world that she doesn’t know about.”

“It’s true,” said Isabelle, a little animation entering into her voice. “You know you have to ask faeries the exact right things to get useful information out of them, Alec. They’re very hard to question, even if they do have to tell the truth. A favor, though, is different.”

“And its potential for danger is literally unlimited,” said Alec. “If Jace knew I let Clary go to the Seelie Queen, he’d—”

“I don’t care,” Clary said. “He’d do it for me. Tell me he wouldn’t. If I were missing—”

“He’d burn the whole world down till he could dig you out of the ashes. I know,” Alec said, sounding exhausted. “Hell, you think I don’t want to burn down the world right now? I’m just trying to be...”

“An older brother,” said Isabelle. “I get it.”

Alec looked as if he were fighting for control. “If something happened to you, Isabelle—after Max, and Jace—”

Izzy got to her feet, went across the room, and put her arms around Alec. Their dark hair, precisely the same color, mixed together as Isabelle whispered something into her brother’s ear; Clary watched them with not a little envy. She had always wanted a brother. And she had one now. Sebastian. It was like always wanting a puppy for a pet and being handed a hellhound instead. She watched as Alec tugged his sister’s hair affectionately, nodded, and released her. “We should all go,” he said. “But I have to tell Magnus, at least, what we’re doing. It wouldn’t be fair not to.”

“Do you want to use my phone?” Isabelle asked, offering the battered pink object to him.

Alec shook his head. “He’s waiting downstairs with the others. You’ll have to give Luke some kind of excuse too, Clary. I’m sure he’s expecting you to go home with him. And he says your mother’s been pretty sick about this whole thing.”

“She blames herself for Sebastian’s existence.” Clary got to her feet. “Even though she thought he was dead all those years.”

“It’s not her fault.” Isabelle pulled her golden whip down from where it hung on the wall and wrapped it around her wrist so that it looked like a ladder of shining bracelets. “No one blames her.”

“That never matters,” said Alec. “Not when you blame yourself.”

In silence, the three of them made their way through the corridors of the Institute, oddly crowded now with other Shadowhunters, some of whom were part of the special commissions that had been sent out from Idris to deal with the situation. None of them really looked at Isabelle, Alec, or Clary with much curiosity. Initially Clary had felt so much as if she were being stared at—and had heard the whispered words “Valentine’s daughter” so many times—that she’d started to dread coming to the Institute, but she’d stood up in front of the Council enough times now that the novelty had worn off.

They took the elevator downstairs; the nave of the Institute was brightly lit with witchlight as well as the usual tapers and was filled with Council members and their families. Luke and Magnus were sitting in a pew, talking to each other; beside Luke was a tall, blue-eyed woman who looked just like him. She had curled her hair and dyed the gray brown, but Clary still recognized her—Luke’s sister, Amatis.

Magnus got up at the sight of Alec and came over to talk to him; Izzy appeared to recognize someone else across the pews and darted away in her usual manner, without pausing to say where she was going. Clary went to greet Luke and Amatis; both of them looked tired, and Amatis was patting Luke’s shoulder sympathetically. Luke rose to his feet and hugged Clary when he saw her. Amatis congratulated Clary on being cleared by the Council, and she nodded; she felt only half-there, most of her numb and the rest of her responding on autopilot.

She could see Magnus and Alec out of the corner of her eye. They were talking, Alec leaning in close to Magnus, the way couples often seemed to curve into each other when they spoke, in their own contained universe. She was happy to see them happy, but it hurt, too. She wondered if she would ever have that again, or ever even want it again. She remembered Jace’s voice: I don’t even want to want anyone but you.

“Earth to Clary,” said Luke. “Do you want to head home? Your mother is dying to see you, and she’d love to catch up with Amatis before she goes back to Idris tomorrow. I thought we could have dinner. You pick the restaurant.” He was trying to hide the concern in his voice, but Clary could hear it. She hadn’t been eating much lately, and her clothes had started to hang more loosely on her frame.

“I don’t really feel like celebrating,” she said. “Not with the Council de-prioritizing the search for Jace.”

“Clary, it doesn’t mean they’re going to stop,” said Luke.

“I know. It’s just—It’s like when they say a search and rescue mission is now a search for bodies. That’s what it sounds like.” She swallowed. “Anyway, I was thinking of going to Taki’s for dinner with Isabelle and Alec,” she said. “Just... to do something normal.”

Amatis squinted toward the door. "It's raining pretty hard out there."

Clary felt her lips stretch into a smile. She wondered if it looked as false as it felt. "I won't melt."

Luke folded some money into her hand, clearly relieved she was doing something as normal as going out with friends. "Just promise to eat something."

"Okay." Through the twinge of guilt, she managed a real half smile in his direction before she turned away.



Magnus and Alec were no longer where they had been a moment ago. Glancing around, Clary saw Izzy's familiar long black hair through the crowd. She was standing by the Institute's large double doors, talking to someone Clary couldn't see. Clary headed toward Isabelle; as she drew closer, she recognized one of the group, with a slight shock of surprise, as Aline Penhallow. Her glossy black hair had been cut stylishly just above her shoulders. Standing next to Aline was a slim girl with pale white-gold hair that curled in ringlets; it was drawn back from her face, showing that the tips of her ears were slightly pointed. She wore Council robes, and as Clary came closer she saw that the girl's eyes were a brilliant and unusual blue-green, a color that made Clary's fingers yearn for her Prismacolor pencils for the first time in two weeks.

"It must be weird, with your mother being the new Consul," Isabelle was saying to Aline as Clary joined them. "Not that Jia isn't much better than—Hey, Clary. Aline, you remember Clary."

The two girls exchanged nods. Clary had once walked in on Aline kissing Jace. It had been awful at the time, but the memory held no sting now. She'd be relieved to walk in on Jace kissing someone else at this point. At least it would mean he was alive.

"And this is Aline's girlfriend, Helen Blackthorn." Isabelle said with heavy emphasis. Clary shot her a glare. Did Isabelle think she was an idiot? Besides, she remembered Aline telling her that she'd kissed Jace only as an experiment to see if any guy were her type. Apparently the answer had been no. "Helen's family runs the Los Angeles Institute. Helen, this is Clary Fray."

"Valentine's daughter," Helen said. She looked surprised and a little impressed.

Clary winced. "I try not to think about that too much."

"Sorry. I can see why you wouldn't." Helen flushed. Her skin was very pale, with a slight sheen to it, like a pearl. "I voted for the Council to keep prioritizing the search for Jace, by the way. I'm sorry we were overruled."

"Thanks." Not wanting to talk about it, Clary turned to Aline. "Congratulations on your mother being made Consul. That must be pretty exciting."

Aline shrugged. "She's busy a lot more now." She turned to Isabelle. "Did you know your dad put his name in for the Inquisitor position?"

Clary felt Isabelle freeze beside her. "No. No, I didn't know that."

"I was surprised," Aline added. "I thought he was pretty committed to running the Institute here—" She

broke off, looking past Clary. “Helen, I think your brother is trying to make the world’s biggest puddle of melted wax over there. You might want to stop him.”

Helen blew out an exasperated breath, muttered something about twelve-year-old boys, and vanished into the crowd just as Alec pushed his way forward. He greeted Aline with a hug—Clary forgot, sometimes, that the Penhallows and the Lightwoods had known each other for years—and looked at Helen in the crowd. “Is that your girlfriend?”

Aline nodded. “Helen Blackthorn.”

“I heard there’s some faerie blood in that family,” said Alec.

Ah, Clary thought. That explained the pointed ears. Nephilim blood was dominant, and the child of a faerie and a Shadowhunter would be a Shadowhunter as well, but sometimes the faerie blood could express itself in odd ways, even generations down the line.

“A little,” said Aline. “Look, I wanted to thank you, Alec.”

Alec looked bewildered. “What for?”

“What you did in the Hall of Accords,” Aline said. “Kissing Magnus like that. It gave me the push I needed to tell my parents... to come out to them. And if I hadn’t done that, I don’t think, when I met Helen, I would have had the nerve to say anything.”

“Oh.” Alec looked startled, as if he’d never considered what impact his actions might have had on anyone outside his immediate family. “And your parents—were they good about it?”

Aline rolled her eyes. “They’re sort of ignoring it, like it might go away if they don’t talk about it.” Clary remembered what Isabelle had said about the Clave’s attitude toward its gay members. If it happens, you don’t talk about it. “But it could be worse.”

“It could definitely be worse,” said Alec, and there was a grim edge to his voice that made Clary look at him sharply.

Aline’s face melted into a look of sympathy. “I’m sorry,” she said. “If your parents aren’t—”

“They’re fine with it,” Isabelle said, a little too sharply.

“Well, either way. I shouldn’t have said anything right now. Not with Jace missing. You must all be so worried.” She took a deep breath. “I know people have probably said all sorts of stupid things to you about him. The way they do when they don’t really know what to say. I just—I wanted to tell you something.” She ducked away from a passer-by with impatience and moved closer to the Lightwoods and Clary, lowering her voice. “Alec, Izzy—I remember once when you guys came to see us in Idris. I was thirteen and Jace was—I think he was twelve. He wanted to see Brocelind Forest, so we borrowed some horses and rode there one day. Of course, we got lost. Brocelind’s impenetrable. It got darker and the woods got thicker and I was terrified. I thought we’d die there. But Jace was never scared. He was never anything but sure we’d find our way out. It took hours, but he did it. He got us out of there. I was so grateful but he just looked at me like I was crazy. Like of course he’d get us out. Failing wasn’t an option. I’m just saying—he’ll find his way back to you. I know it.”

Clary had rarely ever seen Izzy cry, and she was clearly trying not to now. Her eyes were suspiciously wide and shining. Alec was looking at his shoes. Clary felt a wellspring of misery wanting to leap up inside her but forced it down; she couldn't think about Jace when he was twelve, couldn't think about him lost in the darkness, or she'd think about him now, lost somewhere, trapped somewhere, needing her help, expecting her to come, and she'd break. "Aline," she said, seeing that neither Isabelle nor Alec could speak. "Thank you."

Aline flashed a shy smile. "I mean it."

"Aline!" It was Helen, her hand firmly clamped around the wrist of a younger boy whose hands were covered with blue wax. He must have been playing with the tapers in the huge candelabras that decorated the sides of the nave. He looked about twelve, with an impish grin and the same shocking blue-green eyes as his sister, though his hair was dark brown. "We're back. We should probably go before Jules destroys the whole place. Not to mention that I have no idea where Ty and Livvy have gone."

"They were eating wax," the boy—Jules—supplied helpfully.

"Oh, God," Helen groaned, and then looked apologetic. "Never mind me. I've got six younger brothers and sisters. It's always a zoo."

Jules looked from Alec to Isabelle and then at Clary. "How many brothers and sisters have you got?" he asked.

Helen paled. Isabelle said, in a remarkably steady voice, "There are three of us."

Jules's eyes stayed on Clary. "You don't look alike."

"I'm not related to them," Clary said. "I don't have any brothers or sisters."

"None?" Disbelief registered in the boy's tone, as if she'd told him she had webbed feet. "Is that why you look so sad?"

Clary thought of Sebastian, with his ice-white hair and black eyes. If only, she thought. If only I didn't have a brother, none of this would have happened. A little throb of hatred went through her, warming her icy blood. "Yes," she said softly. "That's why I'm sad." *Revue de presse*
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