

Copyrighted material by Walker Books. Not for Distribution



Chain of Thorns

THE LAST HOURS BOOK THREE

CASSANDRA
CLARE

SHADOWHUNTERS

Chain of Thorns

Also by Cassandra Clare

THE MORTAL INSTRUMENTS

City of Bones

City of Ashes

City of Glass

City of Fallen Angels

City of Lost Souls

City of Heavenly Fire

THE INFERNAL DEVICES

Clockwork Angel

Clockwork Prince

Clockwork Princess

THE DARK ARTIFICES

Lady Midnight

Lord of Shadows

Queen of Air and Darkness

THE LAST HOURS

Chain of Gold

Chain of Iron

Chain of Thorns

THE ELDEST CURSES

With Wesley Chu

The Red Scrolls of Magic

The Lost Book of the White

The Shadowhunter's Codex

With Joshua Lewis

The Bane Chronicles

With Sarah Rees Brennan

and Maureen Johnson

Tales from the Shadowhunter Academy

With Sarah Rees Brennan, Maureen Johnson,

and Robin Wasserman

Ghosts of the Shadow Market

With Sarah Rees Brennan, Maureen Johnson,

Kelly Link, and Robin Wasserman

THE LAST HOURS

BOOK THREE

Chain of Thorns

CASSANDRA CLARE

WALKER
BOOKS

This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places and incidents are either the product of the author's imagination or, if real, used fictitiously. All statements, activities, stunts, descriptions, information and material of any other kind contained herein are included for entertainment purposes only and should not be relied on for accuracy or replicated as they may result in injury.

First published in Great Britain 2023 by Walker Books Ltd
87 Vauxhall Walk, London SE11 5HJ

2 4 6 8 10 9 7 5 3

Text © 2023 Cassandra Clare, LLC
Jacket photo-illustration © 2023 Cliff Nielsen

The right of Cassandra Clare to be identified as author of this work has been asserted in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988

This book has been typeset in Dolly and Pterra

Printed and bound by CPI Group (UK) Ltd, Croydon CR0 4YY

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, transmitted or stored in an information retrieval system in any form or by any means, graphic, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, taping and recording, without prior written permission from the publisher.

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data:
a catalogue record for this book is
available from the British Library

ISBN 978-1-4063-5811-7

ISBN 978-1-5295-1633-3 (Australian HB)

ISBN 978-1-5295-1067-6 (Export/Airside PB)

ISBN 978-1-5295-1636-4 (Illumicrate)

ISBN 978-1-5295-1635-7 (FairyLoot)

Cover artwork for Illumicrate and FairyLoot editions © 2023 Dan Funderburgh

www.walker.co.uk



For Emily and Jed.
I'm glad you finally got married.



We must learn to suffer what we cannot evade; our life, like the harmony of the world, is composed of contrary things—of diverse tones, sweet and harsh, sharp and flat, sprightly and solemn: the musician who should only affect some of these, what would he be able to do? he must know how to make use of them all, and to mix them; and so we should mingle the goods and evils which are consubstantial with our life; our being cannot subsist without this mixture, and the one part is no less necessary to it than the other.

—Michel de Montaigne, *Essays*

PROLOGUE

Later James could only remember the sound of the wind. A metallic scream, like a knife drawn across a shard of glass, and far below that the sound of howling, desperate and hungry.

He was walking upon a long and trackless road: it seemed no one had come before him, for there were no marks on the ground. The sky above was equally blank. James could not have said if it was night or day, winter or summer. Only the bare brown land stretching before him, and the pavement-colored sky above.

That was when he heard it. The wind, kicking up, scattering dead leaves and loose gravel around his ankles. Growing in intensity, the sound of it nearly covered the oncoming tread of marching feet.

James whirled and looked behind him. Dust devils spun in the air where the wind had caught them. Sand stung his eyes as he stared. Hurling through the sandstorm blur were a dozen—no, a hundred, more than a hundred—dark figures. They were not human, he knew that much; though they did not quite fly, they seemed to be part of the rushing wind, shadows furling around them like wings.

The wind howled in his ears as they shot past overhead, an interlocking clutch of shadowy creatures, bringing with them not just a physical chill but a sense of cold menace. Under and through the sound of their passage, like thread weaving through a loom, came a whispered voice.

“They wake,” Belial said. “Do you hear that, grandson? They wake.”

James jerked upright, gasping. He couldn’t breathe. He clawed his way up, out of the sand and shadows, to find himself in an unfamiliar room. He closed his eyes, opened them again. Not unfamiliar: he knew where he was now. The coaching inn room he shared with his father. Will was asleep in the other bed; Magnus was somewhere down the hall.

He slid out of the bed, wincing as his bare feet made contact with the cold floor. He crossed the room silently to the window, gazing out at the moonlit, snowy fields that covered the ground as far as the eye could see.

Dreams. They terrified him: Belial had come to him through dreams as long as he could remember. He had seen the bleak kingdoms of the demons in his dreams, had seen Belial kill in his dreams. He did not know, even now, when a dream was just that, a dream, and when it was some terrible truth.

The black-and-white world outside reflected back only the desolation of winter. They were somewhere near the frozen River Tamar; they’d stopped last night when the snow had gotten too thick to ride through. It had not been a pretty, flurrying shower either, or even a chaotic, blowing squall. This snow had direction and purpose, beating down at a sharp angle against the bare slate-brown ground, like an unending volley of arrows.

Despite having done nothing but sit in a carriage all day, James had felt exhausted. He’d barely managed to force down some hot soup before making his way upstairs to collapse into bed. Magnus and Will had remained in the saloon, in armchairs near the fire, talking in low voices. James guessed that they were discussing him. Let them. He didn’t care.

It was the third night since they’d left London, on a mission to find James’s sister, Lucie, who had gone off with the warlock Malcolm Fade and the preserved corpse of Jesse Blackthorn, for a purpose dark and frightening enough that none of them wished to speak the word they all dreaded.

Necromancy.

The important thing, Magnus stressed, was to get to Lucie as soon as possible. Which was not as easy as it sounded. Magnus knew that Malcolm had a house in Cornwall, but not exactly where, and

Malcolm had blocked any attempt at Tracking the fugitives. They'd had to fall back on a more old-fashioned approach: they stopped often at various Downworld watering holes along the route. Magnus would chat with the locals while James and Will were relegated to waiting in the carriage, keeping their Shadowhunter selves well hidden.

"None of them will tell me anything if they think I'm traveling with Nephilim," Magnus had said. "Your time will come when we arrive at Malcolm's and must deal with him and Lucie."

This evening he'd told James and Will that he thought he might have found the house, that they could easily make it there with a few hours' journey the next morning. If it was not the right place, they'd journey on.

James was desperate to find Lucie. Not just because he was worried about her, although he was. But because of everything else happening in his life. Everything that he had put aside, told himself not to think about, until he found his sister and knew she was safe.

"James?" The sleepy voice cut into his thoughts. James turned away from the window to see his father sitting up in bed. "Jamie *bach*, what's the trouble?"

James gazed at his father. Will looked tired, his mane of black hair disarrayed. People often told James that he was like Will, which he knew was a compliment. All his life, his father had seemed the strongest man he knew, the most principled, the most fierce with his love. Will did not question himself. No, James was nothing like Will Herondale.

Resting his back against the cold window, he said, "Just a bad dream."

"Mmm." Will looked thoughtful. "You had one of those last night too. And the night before. Is there something you'd like to talk about, Jamie?"

For a moment, James imagined unburdening himself to his father. Belial, Grace, the bracelet, Cordelia, Lilith. All of it.

But the picture in his mind did not hold. He could not imagine his father's reaction. He could not imagine speaking the words. He had held it all inside so long, he did not know how to do anything but hold on further, tighter, protecting himself the only way he knew how.

"I'm just worried about Lucie," James said. "About what she might have gotten herself into."

Will's expression changed—James thought he saw a flicker of disappointment cross his father's face, though it was hard to tell in the half dark. "Then go back to bed," he said. "We're likely to find her tomorrow, Magnus says, and it would be better to be rested. She might not be pleased to see us."

I

TWILIGHT DAYS

*My Paris is a land where twilight days
Merge into violent nights of black and gold;
Where, it may be, the flower of dawn is cold:
Ah, but the gold nights, and the scented ways!*

—Arthur Symons, “Paris”

The gold floor tiles gleamed under the lights of the magnificent chandelier, which scattered droplets of light like snowflakes shaken from a tree branch. The music was low and sweet, rising as James stepped out from the crowd of dancers and held out his hand to Cordelia.

“Dance with me,” he said. He was beautiful in his black frock coat, the darkness of the cloth accentuating the gold of his eyes, the sharpness of his cheekbones. Black hair tumbled over his forehead. “You look beautiful, Daisy.”

Cordelia took his hand. She turned her head as he drew her out onto the floor, catching a glimpse of the two of them in the mirror at the far end of the ballroom, James in black and she beside him, in a daring dress of ruby-red velvet. James was looking down at her—no—he was gazing across the room, where a pale girl in an ivory dress, her hair the color of creamy-white rose petals, was looking back at him.

Grace.

“Cordelia!” Matthew’s voice made her eyes snap open. Cordelia, feeling dizzy, put a hand against the wall of the changing room for

a moment to brace herself. The daydream—daymare? It hadn't turned out to be that pleasant—had been awfully vivid. “Madame Beausoleil wants to know if you require any aid. Of course,” he added, his voice full of mischief, “I would render the help myself, but that would be scandalous.”

Cordelia smiled. Men did not usually accompany even wives or sisters into a dressmaker's shop. When they had arrived for their first visit, two days ago, Matthew had deployed the Smile and charmed Madame Beausoleil into allowing him to remain in the store with Cordelia. “She does not speak French,” he had lied, “and will require my assistance.”

But letting him into the shop was one thing. Letting him into the trying-on closet, where Cordelia had just finished donning an intimidatingly stylish red velvet dress, would indeed be *un affront et un scandale!*—especially in an establishment as exclusive as Madame Beausoleil's.

Cordelia called back that she was all right, but a moment later there was a knock on the door and one of the *modistes* appeared, wielding a buttonhook. She attacked the closures at the back of Cordelia's dress without requiring any instruction—clearly she had done this before—and pushed and pulled at Cordelia as if she was a stuffed mannequin. A moment later—her dress fastened, her bust lifted, and her skirts adjusted—Cordelia was decanted into the main room of the dressmaker's salon.

It was a confection of a place, all pale blue and gold like a mundane Easter egg. On their first visit Cordelia had been both startled and oddly charmed to see how they displayed their wares: models—tall, slender, and chemically blond—promenaded up and down the room, wearing numbered black ribbons around their throats to show that they were displaying a particular style. Behind a lace-curtained door was a wealth of fabrics one could choose from: silks and velvets, satin and organza. Cordelia, upon being presented with the trove, had silently thanked Anna for instructing her on fashion: she had waved away the lace and pastels and moved quickly to select what she knew would suit her. In only a couple of days the dressmakers had whipped up what she had ordered, and now she'd returned to try on the final products.

And if Matthew's face was anything to go by, she had chosen well. He had settled himself into a black-and-white-striped gilt chair, a book—the scandalously daring *Claudine à Paris*—open on his knee. As Cordelia left the cupboard and came to check the fit in the triple mirror, he looked up, and his green eyes darkened.

“You look beautiful.”

For a moment, she almost closed her eyes. *You look beautiful, Daisy.* But she would not think about James. Not now. Not when Matthew was being so kind, and loaning her the money to purchase these clothes (she had fled London with only one dress and was desperate for something clean to wear). They had both made promises, after all—Matthew, that he would not drink to excess while they were in Paris; Cordelia, that she would not punish herself with dark thoughts of her failures: thoughts of Lucie, of her father, of her marriage. And since they'd arrived, Matthew had not so much as touched a wineglass or a bottle.

Pushing aside her melancholy, she smiled at Matthew and turned her attention to the mirror. She looked almost a stranger to herself. The dress had been made to measure, and the neckline dipped daringly low, while the skirt clung about her hips before flaring out, like the stem and petals of a lily. The sleeves were short and ruched, baring her arms. Her Marks stood out stark and black against her light brown skin, though her glammers would prevent any mundane eyes from noting them.

Madame Beausoleil, who kept her salon on the Rue de la Paix, where the most famous dressmakers in the world—the House of Worth, Jeanne Paquin—were situated, was, according to Matthew, well acquainted with the Shadow World. “Hypatia Vex won't shop anywhere else,” he'd told Cordelia over breakfast. Madame's own past was shrouded in deep mystery, which Cordelia found to be very French of her.

There was very little under the dress—it was apparently the mode in France for dresses to skim the shape of the body. Here, slim stays were worked into the fabric of the bodice. The dress gathered at the bust with a rosette of silk flowers; the skirt flared out at the bottom in a ruffle of gold lace. The back dipped low, showing the curve of her spine. It was a work of art, the dress, which she told Madame (in English, Matthew translating) when she bustled over, pincushion in hand, to see the results of her work.

Madame chuckled. “My job is very easy,” she said. “I only must enhance the great beauty already possessed by your wife.”

“Oh, she’s not my wife,” Matthew said, green eyes sparkling. Matthew loved nothing more than the appearance of scandal. Cordelia made a face at him.

To her credit—or perhaps it was just that they were in France—Madame did not even blink. “*Alors*,” she said. “It is rare I get to dress such a natural and unusual beauty. Here, the fashion is all for blondes, blondes, but blondes cannot wear such a color. It is blood and fire, too intense for pallid skin and hair. They are suited by lace and pastel, but Miss . . . ?”

“Miss Carstairs,” Cordelia said.

“Miss Carstairs has chosen perfectly for her coloring. When you step into a room, *mademoiselle*, you will appear as the flame of a candle, drawing eyes to you like moths.”

Miss Carstairs. Cordelia had not been Mrs. Cordelia Herondale very long. She knew she should not be attached to the name. It hurt to lose it, but that was self-pity, she told herself firmly. She was a Carstairs, a Jahanshah. The blood of Rostam ran in her veins. She would dress in fire if she liked.

“Such a dress deserves adornment,” said Madame thoughtfully. “A necklace of ruby and gold. This is a pretty bauble, but much too tiny.” She flicked at the small gold pendant around Cordelia’s neck. A tiny globe on a strand of gold chain.

It had been a gift from James. Cordelia knew she should take it off, but she was not ready yet. Somehow it seemed a gesture more final than the slashing through of her marriage rune.

“I would buy her rubies willingly, if she let me,” said Matthew. “Alas, she refuses.”

Madame looked puzzled. If Cordelia was Matthew’s mistress, as she’d clearly concluded, what was she doing turning down necklaces? She patted Cordelia on the shoulder, pitying her terrible business sense. “There are some wonderful jewelers on the Rue de la Paix,” she said. “Perhaps if you glance in their windows, you will change your mind.”

“Perhaps,” said Cordelia, fighting the urge to stick her tongue out at Matthew. “At the moment, I must concentrate upon clothing. As my

friend explained, my valise was lost on the journey. Would you be able to deliver these outfits to Le Meurice by this evening?”

“Of course, of course.” Madame nodded and retreated to the counter at the opposite end of the room, where she began doing figures with a pencil on a bill of sale.

“Now she thinks I’m your mistress,” Cordelia said to Matthew, hands on her hips.

He shrugged. “This is Paris. Mistresses are more common than croissants or needlessly tiny cups of coffee.”

Cordelia humphed and disappeared back into the changing room. She tried not to think about the cost of the outfits she’d ordered—the red velvet for cold evenings, and four more: a black-and-white-striped walking dress with a matching jacket, an emerald satin trimmed in eau de Nil, a daring black satin evening gown, and a coffee silk with gold-ribbon trim. Anna would be pleased, but it would take all Cordelia’s savings to pay Matthew back. He had offered to take on the cost, arguing that it would be no issue for him—it seemed his grandparents on his father’s side had left a great deal of money to Henry—but Cordelia couldn’t allow herself to accept it. She’d taken enough from Matthew already.

Having put her old dress back on, Cordelia rejoined Matthew in the salon. He’d already paid, and Madame had confirmed delivery of the dresses by that evening. One of the models winked at Matthew as he escorted Cordelia out of the shop and into the crowded Paris streets.

It was a clear, blue-sky day—it had not snowed in Paris this winter, though it had in London, and the streets were chilly but bright. Cordelia happily agreed to make the walk back to the hotel with Matthew rather than flag down a *fiacre* (the Parisian equivalent of a hansom cab). Matthew, his book tucked into the pocket of his overcoat, was still on the subject of her red dress.

“You will simply shine at the cabarets.” Matthew clearly felt that he had scored a victory. “No one will be looking at the performers. Well, to be fair, the performers will be painted bright red and wearing false devil horns, so they might still attract some notice.”

He smiled at her—the Smile, the one that turned the sternest curmudgeons to butter and made strong men and women weep. Cordelia herself was not immune. She grinned back.

“You see?” said Matthew, waving an arm expansively at the view before them—the wide Parisian boulevard, the colorful awnings of shops, the cafés where women in splendid hats and men in extraordinarily striped trousers warmed themselves with cups of thick hot chocolate. “I promised you would have a good time.”

Had she been having a good time? Cordelia wondered. Perhaps she had. So far, she’d been mostly able to keep her mind off the ways she’d horrifically failed everyone she cared about. And that, after all, was the very purpose of the journey. Once you had lost everything, she reasoned, there was no reason not to embrace whatever small happinesses you could. Wasn’t that, after all, Matthew’s philosophy? Wasn’t that why she had come here with him?

A woman seated at a nearby café, wearing a hat laden with ostrich plumes and silk roses, glanced from Matthew to Cordelia and smiled—approving, Cordelia assumed, of young love. Months ago, Cordelia would have blushed; now she simply smiled. What did it matter if people thought the wrong things about her? Any girl would be happy to have Matthew as a suitor, so let passersby imagine whatever they wanted. That was how Matthew managed things, after all—not caring at all what others thought, simply being himself, and it was astonishing how it allowed him to move easily through the world.

Without him, she doubted she could have managed the journey to Paris in the state she’d been in. He’d gotten them—sleep-deprived, yawning—from the train station to Le Meurice, where he’d been all smiles, sunny and joking with the bellman. One would have thought he’d rested in a featherbed that night.

They’d slept into the afternoon, that first night (in the two separate bedrooms of Matthew’s suite, which shared a common living room), and she’d dreamt that she’d poured out all her sins to the Meurice desk clerk. *You see, my mother is about to have a baby, and I might not be there when she does because I am too busy gallivanting with my husband’s best friend. I used to carry the mythical sword Cortana—perhaps you know of it from La Chanson de Roland? Yes, well, I turned out to be unworthy of wielding it and gave it to my brother, which also, by the way, puts him in potentially mortal peril from not one but two very powerful demons. I was supposed to become my closest friend’s parabatai, but now that can never*

happen. And I allowed myself to think that the man I love might have loved me, and not Grace Blackthorn, though he was always direct and honest about his love for her.

When she'd finished, she looked up and saw that the clerk had Lilith's face, his eyes each a tangle of writhing black snakes.

You've done well by me, at least, dearie, Lilith said, and Cordelia had woken up with a scream that echoed in her head for minutes after.

When she woke again later to the sound of a maid throwing the curtains back, she had gazed out in wonder on the bright day, the roofs of Paris marching away to the horizon like obedient soldiers. In the distance, the Eiffel Tower, rising defiant against a storm-blue sky. And in the next room, Matthew, waiting for her to join him in an adventure.

For the next two days, they had eaten together—once at the gorgeous Le Train Bleu inside the Gare de Lyon, which had amazed Cordelia: so pretty, like dining inside a cut sapphire!—and walked together in the parks, and shopped together: shirts and suits for Matthew at Charvet, where Baudelaire and Verlaine had bought their clothes, and dresses and shoes and a coat for Cordelia. She had stopped short of allowing Matthew to buy her hats. Surely, she told him, there must be some limits. He suggested that the limit should be umbrellas, which were essential to a proper outfit and doubled as a useful weapon. She'd giggled, and wondered then at how nice it was to laugh.

Perhaps most surprising, Matthew had more than kept to his promise: he consumed not a drop of alcohol. He even withstood the disapproving frowns of waiters when he declined wine at their meals. Based on her experience of her father's drinking, Cordelia had expected him to be sick with the lack of it, but to the contrary, he had been clear-eyed and energetic, dragging her all over central Paris to the sites, the museums, the monuments, the gardens. It all felt very mature and worldly, which was surely the point.

Now she looked at Matthew and thought, *He looks happy*. Honestly, plainly happy. And if this trip to Paris might not be her salvation, she could at least make sure it was his.

He took her arm to guide her past a broken bit of pavement. Cordelia thought of the woman at the café, how she had smiled at them, thinking them a couple in love. If only she knew that Matthew

hadn't so much as tried to kiss Cordelia once. He had been the model of a restrained gentleman. Once or twice, as they bid each other good night in the hotel suite, she had thought she caught a look in his eyes, but perhaps she was imagining it? She wasn't entirely sure what she had expected, nor was she sure how she felt about—well, anything.

"I am having a good time," she said now, and meant it. She knew she was happier here than she would have been in London, where she would have retreated to her family home in Cornwall Gardens. Alastair would have tried to be kind, and her mother would have been shocked and grieving, and the weight of trying to bear up under it all would have made her want to die.

This was better. She'd sent a quick note home to her family from the hotel's telegraph service, letting them know she was shopping for her spring wardrobe in Paris, chaperoned by Matthew. She suspected they would find this odd, but at least, one hoped, not alarming.

"I'm just curious," she added as they approached the hotel, with its massive facade, all wrought-iron balconies and lights shining from its windows, casting their glow over the wintry streets. "You mentioned that I would shine at a cabaret? What cabaret, and when are we going?"

"As a matter of fact, tonight," Matthew said, opening the hotel door for her. "We will be journeying to the heart of Hell together. Are you worried?"

"Not at all. I am only glad I chose a red dress. It will be thematic."

Matthew laughed, but Cordelia couldn't help but wonder: journeying into the heart of Hell together? What on earth did he mean?

They did not find Lucie the next day.

The snow had not stuck, and the roads at least were clear. Balios and Xanthos trudged along between bare walls of hedges, their breath puffing white in the air. They came to Lostwithiel, a small village inland, in the middle of the day, and Magnus headed into a public house called the Wolf's Bane to make inquiries. He came out shaking his head, and though they made their way regardless to the address he'd been given earlier, it turned out to be an abandoned farmhouse, the old roof falling in on itself.

“There is another possibility,” Magnus said, clambering back into the carriage. Flakes of fine snow, which had likely flurried off the remains of the roof, were caught in his black eyebrows. “Sometime last century, a mysterious gentleman from London purchased an old ruined chapel on Peak Rock, in a fishing village called Polperro. He restored the place but rarely leaves it. Local Downworld gossip is he’s a warlock—apparently purple flames sometimes leak from the chimney at night.”

“I thought a warlock was supposed to live *here*,” Will said, indicating the burned-out farmhouse.

“Not all rumors are true, Herondale, but they all must be investigated,” said Magnus serenely. “We ought to be able to get to Polperro in a few hours, anyway.”

James sighed inwardly. More hours, more waiting. More worrying—about Lucie, about Matthew and Daisy. About his dream.

They wake.

“I shall amuse you with a tale, then,” said Will. “The tale of my hellride with Balios from London to Cadair Idris, in Wales. Your mother, James, was missing—kidnapped by the miscreant Mortmain. I leaped into Balios’s saddle. ‘If ever you loved me, Balios,’ I cried, ‘let your feet now be swift, and carry me to my dear Tessa before harm befalls her.’ It was a stormy night, though the storm that raged inside my breast was fiercer still—”

“I can’t believe you haven’t heard this story before, James,” said Magnus mildly. The two of them were sharing one side of the carriage, as it had become quickly apparent on the first day of their journey that Will needed the entire other side for dramatic gesturing.

It was very strange to have heard tales of Magnus all James’s life, and now to be traveling in close quarters with him. What he’d learned in their days of travel was that despite his elaborate costumes and theatrical airs, which had alarmed several innkeepers, Magnus was surprisingly calm and practical.

“I haven’t,” said James. “Not since last Thursday.”

He did not say that it was actually rather comforting to hear it again. It was a tale that had been told often to himself and Lucie, who had adored it when she was young—Will, following his heart, dashing

to the rescue of their mother, who he did not yet know loved him, too.

James leaned his head against the carriage window. The scenery had turned dramatic—cliffs fell away to their left, and below was the uproar of pounding surf, waves of gunmetal ocean smashing against the rocks that reached knobbled fingers far out into the gray-blue sea. In the distance, he saw a church atop a promontory, silhouetted against the sky, its gray steeple seeming somehow terribly lonely, terribly far from everything.

His father's voice was singsong in his ears, the words of the story as familiar as a lullaby. James could not help but think of Cordelia, reading to him from Ganjavi. Her favorite poem, about the doomed lovers Layla and Majnun. Her voice, soft as velvet. *And when her cheek the moon revealed, a thousand hearts were won: no pride, no shield, could check her power. Layla, she was called.*

Cordelia smiled at him over the table in the study. The chess game had been set out, and she held an ivory knight in her graceful hand. The light from the fire illuminated her hair, a halo of flame and gold. "Chess is a Persian game," she told him. "*Bia ba man bazi kon.* Play with me, James."

"*Kheili khoshgeli,*" he said. He found the words easily: they were the first thing he'd taught himself to say in Persian, though he had never said them to his wife before. *You are so beautiful.*

She blushed. Her lips trembled, red and full. Her eyes were so dark, they shimmered—they were black snakes, moving and darting, snapping at him with their teeth—

"James! Wake up!" Magnus's hand was on his shoulder, shaking him. James came awake, retching dryly, his fist jammed into his stomach. He was in the carriage, though the sky outside had darkened. How much time had passed? He had been dreaming again. This time Cordelia had been dragged into his nightmares. He sank back against the cushioned seat, feeling sick to his stomach.

He glanced at his father. Will was looking at him with a rare stern expression, his eyes very blue. He said, "James, you must tell us what is wrong."

"Nothing." There was a bitter taste in James's mouth. "I fell asleep—another dream—I told you, I'm worried about Lucie."

“You were calling for Cordelia,” Will said. “I have never heard anyone sound as if they were in such pain. Jamie, you must talk to us.”

Magnus glanced between James and Will. His hand was on James’s shoulder, heavy with its weight of rings. He said, “You cried out another name too. And a word. One that makes me quite nervous.”

No, James thought. No. Out the window, the sun was setting, and the rolling farms tucked between the hills glowed dark red. “I’m sure it was nonsense.”

Magnus said, “You cried out the name Lilith.” He regarded James levelly. “There is much chatter in Downworld about the recent happenings in London. The story as I have been told it has never quite sat well with me. There are rumors, too, of the Mother of Demons. James, you don’t need to tell us what you know. But we will put it together, regardless.” He glanced at Will. “Well, I shall; I can’t promise anything for your father. He’s always been slow.”

“But I have never worn a Russian hat with fur earflaps,” said Will, “unlike some individuals currently present.”

“Mistakes have been made on all sides,” said Magnus. “James?”

“I do not own an earflap hat,” James said.

The two men glared at him.

“I can’t say it all now,” James said, and felt his heartbeat skip: for the first time he had admitted there was something to say. “Not if we’re going to find Lucie—”

Magnus shook his head. “It’s already dark, and starting to rain, and the way up Chapel Cliff to Peak Rock is said to be a precarious one. Safer to stop tonight and go tomorrow morning.”

Will nodded; it was clear he and Magnus had discussed their plans while James was asleep.

“Very well,” Magnus said. “We will stop at the next decent inn. I’ll book us a saloon room where we can talk privately. And James—whatever it is, we can sort it out.”

James doubted that very much, but it seemed pointless to say so. He watched the sun vanish through the window instead, reaching his hand into his pocket as he did so. Cordelia’s gloves, the pair he had taken from their house, were still there, the kidskin soft as flower petals. He closed his hand around one.

* * *

In a small white room near the ocean, Lucie Herondale was drifting in and out of sleep.

When she'd first awakened, here in the strange bed that smelled like old straw, she'd heard a voice—Jesse's voice—and she had tried to call out, to let him know she was conscious. But before she could, exhaustion had swept over her like a cold gray wave. An exhaustion she had never felt before, or even imagined, deep as a knife wound. Her fingertip grip on alertness had slipped, tumbling her into the darkness of her own mind, where time swayed and lurched like a ship in a storm, and she could hardly tell whether she was awake or asleep.

In the moments of lucidity, she had pieced together only a few details. The room was small, painted the color of an eggshell; there was a single window through which she could see the ocean as its waves rolled in and out, a dark gunmetal gray tipped with white. She could hear the ocean too, she thought, but its distant roar often came mixed with much less pleasant noises, and she could not tell what of her perception was real.

There were two people who came into the room from time to time to check on her. One was Jesse. The other was Malcolm, a more diffident presence; she knew somehow that they were in his house, the one in Cornwall, with the Cornish sea pounding the rocks outside.

She hadn't yet been able to speak to either of them; when she tried, it was as though her mind could form the words, but her body would not respond to its commands. She could not even twitch a finger to call attention to the fact that she was awake, and all her efforts only sent her back into the darkness.

The darkness was not only the interior of her mind. She had thought it was, at first—the familiar darkness that came before sleep brought the vivid colors of dreams. But this darkness was a *place*.

And in that place, she was not alone. Though it seemed an emptiness through which she drifted without purpose, she could sense the presence of others, not alive but not dead: bodiless, their souls whirling through the void but never meeting her or one another. They were unhappy, these souls. They did not understand what was

happening to them. They kept up a constant wailing, a wordless cry of pain and sorrow that burrowed under her flesh.

She felt something brush against her cheek. It brought her back to her body. She was in the white bedroom again. The touch on her cheek was Jesse's hand; she knew it without being able to open her eyes, or move to respond.

"She's crying," he said.

His *voice*. There was a depth to it, a texture it had not possessed when he had been a ghost.

"She might be having a nightmare." Malcolm's voice. "Jesse, she's fine. She used up a great deal of her energy bringing you back. She needs to rest."

"But don't you see—it's *because* she brought me back." Jesse's voice caught. "If she doesn't heal . . . I could never forgive myself."

"This gift of hers. This ability to reach through the veil that separates the living and the dead. She has had it all her life. It is not your fault; if it is anyone's, it is Belial's." Malcolm sighed. "We know so little about the shadow realms beyond the end of everything. And she went quite far into them, to pull you back out. It is taking her some time to return."

"But what if she's trapped somewhere awful?" The light touch came again, Jesse's hand cupping her face. Lucie wanted to turn her cheek into his palm so badly it hurt. "What if she needs me to pull her out, somehow?"

When Malcolm spoke again, his voice was more gentle. "It's been two days. If by tomorrow she is not awake, I may attempt to reach her with magic. I will look into it, *if*, in the meantime, you stop standing over her, fretting. If you really want to make yourself useful, you can go into the village and bring back some things we need . . ."

His voice wavered, fading into silence. Lucie was in the dark place again. She could hear Jesse, his voice a far-off whisper, barely audible. "*Lucie, if you can hear me—I'm here. I'm taking care of you.*"

I am here, she tried to say. *I can hear you*. But like the time before and the time before that, the words were swallowed up in shadow, and she fell back into the void.

“Who’s a pretty bird?” Ariadne Bridgestock said.

Winston the parrot narrowed his eyes at her. He offered no opinion on who might or might not be a pretty bird. His focus, she was sure, was on the handful of Brazil nuts in her hand.

“I thought we could have a chat,” she told him, tempting him with a nut. “Parrots are meant to talk. Why don’t you ask me how my day has been so far?”

Winston glowered. He had been a gift from her parents, long ago, when she had first arrived in London and was longing for something colorful to offset what she found to be the dreary grayness of the city. Winston had a green body, a plum-colored head, and a scoundrel’s disposition.

His glare made it clear that there would be no conversation until she provided a Brazil nut. *Outmaneuvered by a parrot*, Ariadne thought, and handed him a treat through the bars. Matthew Fairchild had a gorgeous golden dog as a pet, and here she was, stuck with the moody Lord Byron of fowl.

Winston swallowed the nut and extended a claw, wrapping it around one of the bars of his cage. “Pretty bird,” he chortled. “Pretty bird.”

Good enough, Ariadne thought. “My day’s been rotten, thanks for asking,” she said, feeding Winston another nut through the bars. “The house is so empty and lonely. Mother just rattles about, looking woebegone and worrying about Father. He’s been gone for five whole days now. And—I never thought I’d miss *Grace*, but at least she’d be company.”

She didn’t mention Anna. Some things were none of Winston’s business.

“Grace,” he croaked. He tapped at the bars of his cage in a meaningful manner. “Silent City.”

“Indeed,” Ariadne murmured. Her father and Grace had left on the same night, and their departures must have been connected, although Ariadne wasn’t sure exactly how. Her father had rushed off to the Adamant Citadel, intending to question Tatiana Blackthorn. The next morning Ariadne and her mother had discovered that Grace was gone too, having packed her meager things and left in the dead of night. Only at lunch did a runner bring a note from Charlotte, letting them

know that Grace was in the custody of the Silent Brothers, speaking with them about her mother's crimes.

Ariadne's mother had swooned with agitation over this. "Oh, to have unknowingly sheltered a criminal under our roof!" To this Ariadne had rolled her eyes and pointed out that Grace had gone of her own volition, not been dragged out by the Silent Brothers, and that it was Tatiana Blackthorn who was the criminal. Tatiana had already caused a great deal of trouble and pain, and if Grace wished to give the Silent Brothers more information about her illegal activities, well, that was just good citizenship.

She knew it was ridiculous to miss Grace. They had rarely spoken. But the feeling of loneliness was so intense, Ariadne thought, that just having someone *there* would surely alleviate it. There were people she actively wished to talk to, of course, but she was doing her best not to think about those people. They were not her friends, not really. They were Anna's, and Anna—

Her reverie was interrupted by the harsh jingle of the doorbell. Winston, she saw, had fallen asleep, hanging upside down. Hastily she dumped the remainder of the nuts into his food dish and hurried from the conservatory toward the front of the house, hoping for news.

But her mother had gotten to the door first. Ariadne paused at the top of the stairs when she heard her voice. "Consul Fairchild, hello. And Mr. Lightwood. How kind of you to call." She paused. "Do you perhaps come with—news of Maurice?"

Ariadne could hear the fear in Flora Bridgestock's voice, and it rooted her to the floor. At least she was around the bend of the stairwell, out of sight of the door. If Charlotte Fairchild had brought news—bad news—she would be more willing to tell her mother without Ariadne there.

She waited, gripping the newel post on the landing, until she heard Gideon Lightwood's gentle voice. "No, Flora. We've heard nothing since he left for Iceland. We were rather hoping that—well, that *you* had."

"No," her mother said. She sounded remote, distant; Ariadne knew she was struggling not to show her fear. "I assumed that if he was in touch with anybody, he would be in touch with the office of the Consul."

There was an awkward silence. Ariadne, feeling dizzy, suspected Gideon and Charlotte were wishing they'd never come.

"You've heard nothing from the Citadel?" her mother said at last. "From the Iron Sisters?"

"No," admitted the Consul. "But they are a reticent bunch even under the best of circumstances. Tatiana is likely a difficult subject to question; it's possible they simply feel that there is no news yet."

"But you've sent them messages," said Flora. "And they haven't responded. Perhaps—the Reykjavík Institute?" Ariadne thought she heard a note of her mother's fear slip past the battlements of her politeness. "I know we cannot Track him, as it would be over water, but they could. I could give you something of his to send them. A handkerchief, or—"

"Flora." The Consul spoke in her kindest voice; Ariadne guessed she was, by now, gently holding her mother's hand. "This is a mission of the utmost secrecy; Maurice would be the first to demand we not alarm the Clave at large. We will send another message to the Citadel, and if we hear nothing back, we will launch an investigation of our own. I promise you."

Ariadne's mother murmured assent, but Ariadne was troubled. The Consul and her closest advisor didn't visit in person because they were merely eager for news. Something had them worried; something they had not mentioned to Flora.

Charlotte and Gideon took their leave among further reassurances. When Ariadne heard the door latch shut, she came down the stairs. Her mother, who had been standing motionless in the entryway, started when she saw her. Ariadne did her best to give the impression that she had only just arrived.

"I heard voices," she said. "Was that the Consul who just left?"

Her mother nodded vaguely, lost in thought. "And Gideon Lightwood. They wanted to know if we'd had a message from your father. And here I hoped they had come to say *they'd* heard from him."

"It's all right, Mama." Ariadne took her mother's hands in her own. "You know how Father is. He's going to be careful and take his time, and learn all he can."

"Oh, I know. But—it was his idea to send Tatiana to the Adamant

Citadel in the first place. If something's gone wrong—"

"It was an act of mercy," Ariadne said firmly. "Not locking her up in the Silent City, where she would no doubt have gone madder than she already was."

"But we did not know then what we know now," her mother said. "If Tatiana Blackthorn had something to do with Leviathan attacking the Institute . . . that is not the act of a madwoman deserving pity. It is war on the Nephilim. It is the act of a dangerous adversary, in league with the greatest of evils."

"She was in the Adamant Citadel when Leviathan attacked," Ariadne pointed out. "How could she be responsible without the Iron Sisters knowing? Don't fret, Mama," she added. "It will all be well."

Her mother sighed. "Ari," she said, "you've grown up to be such a lovely girl. I will miss you so, when some fine man chooses you, and you go off to be married."

Ariadne made a noncommittal noise.

"Oh, I know, it was a terrible experience with that Charles," her mother said. "You'll find a better man in time."

She took a breath and set her shoulders, and not for the first time, Ariadne was reminded that her mother was a Shadowhunter like any other, and confronting hardships was part of her job. "By the Angel," she said, in a new, brisk tone, "life goes on, and we cannot stand in the foyer and fret all day. I have much to attend to . . . the Inquisitor's wife must hold down the household while the master is away, and all that . . ."

Ariadne murmured her assent and kissed her mother on the cheek before going back up the stairs. Halfway down the corridor, she passed the door to her father's study, which stood ajar. She pushed the door open slightly and peered inside.

The study had been left in an alarming shambles. If Ariadne had hoped that looking inside Maurice Bridgestock's study would make her feel closer to her father, she was disappointed—it made her feel more worried instead. Her father was fastidious and organized, and proud of it. He did not tolerate mess. She knew he had left in haste, but the state of the room brought home how panicked he must have been.

Almost without thinking, she found herself straightening up:

pushing the chair back under the desk, freeing the curtains where they'd become folded over a lampshade, taking the teacups out into the hallway where the housekeeper would find them. Ashes lay cold in front of the grate; she picked up the small brass broom to whisk them back into the fireplace—

And paused.

Something white gleamed among the ashes in the fireplace grate. She could recognize her father's neat copperplate handwriting on a stack of charred paper. She leaned closer—whatever kind of notes had her father felt he needed to destroy before he left London?

She took the papers out of the fireplace, flicked the ash from them, and began to read. As she did, she felt a piercing dryness in her throat, as if she were near choking.

Scribbled across the top of the first page were the words *Herondale/Lightwood*.

It was an obvious transgression to read further, but the name Lightwood burned its letters into her eyes; she could not turn aside from it. If there was some sort of trouble facing Anna's family, how could she refuse to know it?

The pages were labeled with years: 1896, 1892, 1900. She flipped through the sheets and felt a cold finger creep up the back of her neck.

In her father's hand were not accounts of money spent or earned, but descriptions of events. Events involving Herondales and Lightwoods.

No, not events. Mistakes. Errors. Sins. It was a record of any doing of the Herondales and Lightwoods that had caused what her father considered problems; anything that could be characterized as irresponsible or ill-considered was noted here.

12/3/01: G2.L absent from Council meeting without explanation. CF angry.

6/9/98: WW in Waterloo say WH/TH refused meeting, causing them to disrupt Market.

8/1/95: Head of Oslo Institute refuses to meet with TH, citing her Heritage.

Ariadne felt sick. Most of the deeds noted seemed petty, small,

or hearsay; the report that the head of the Oslo Institute would not meet with Tessa Herondale, one of the kindest ladies Ariadne had ever known, was revolting. The head of the Oslo Institute should have been reprimanded; instead, the event was recorded here as if it had been the Herondales' fault.

What was this? What was her father thinking?

At the bottom of the stack was something else. A sheet of creamy-white stationery. Not notes, but a letter. Ariadne lifted the missive away from the rest of the stack, her eyes scanning the lines in disbelief.

"Ariadne?"

Quickly, Ariadne shoved the letter into the bodice of her dress, before rising to face her mother. Standing in the doorway, Flora was frowning, her eyes narrowed. When she spoke, it was with none of the warmth she'd had in their conversation downstairs. "Ariadne—what are you doing?"