

Chapter 1

Meeting the Next Redhead

When: Several months later

Where: Inari's world

Lysanias was feeling refreshed as he walked to Inari's cabin in the woods. He had spent several months back in Susan's world just focusing on training, and he felt it had paid off. He could (not very reliably yet) call out Rosalina, knew a variety of wanded spells, and had made sure to keep his bending and other skills sharp by at least doing each one once a week. His notes were made, the padform was in his sub-space pocket, and his friends had thrown him a party to see him off. There had been no more attacks on Luna, and Susan was busy reforming the criminal elements of the world. One person at a time if she had to. Nothing else odd happened, no one attacked him, he was simply another kid at school for the duration.

Rose promised to see him again one day, out there on other worlds, and Garrett said he would work hard to call out his wand's full power too, having now learned the hard way how to at least get his ruler out occasionally. Susan and Luna invited him back at any time, and Jenny of course was Everywhere, so she figured they would see each other again.

"But I want to hear you passed Silverstreak's tests," Susan had told him. "I want to see you walking around the Hub soon."

"I'm sure I will."

"I still owe you, so think of something, would you? I know you can do a lot yourself, but I'm still queen of magic. There must be something I can do for you."

"I will. Hope your plans to reduce crime work out."

"I'll be keeping plenty of notes on the process, don't worry. Lysanias?"

"Yeah?"

"You're going to be out here, saving worlds. But there's one piece of advice I'd like to offer you. One experienced wanderer to a less experienced one."

"Sure, anything you can suggest I'll take to heart."

She hesitated, but finally spoke. "Make peace with the fact you may have to do some things you would rather not. Kill people you would like to leave alive. Do things for the greater good some don't understand. The faster you do that, the happier you're going to be."

"I'll try."

"It might be different for you. The Darkness knew where I was going, could keep tabs on me. You'll surprise it. So it won't dig into your weaknesses like it could for me. But it'll still be awful, believe me."

Lysanias remembered thinking about the worlds the Death Star had destroyed, and how it might be his fault. "I know."

"Okay."

He had been sad to leave another world, and another group of friends behind, but he really had no choice. He didn't belong on that world either, plus he was looking forward to the next things he would learn and experience. To that end he knocked on Inari's door and was let inside.

"All rested up?" she asked. As usual her tail was swishing and ears were perky, and she was dressed in her kimono again today, rather than the workout clothes.

"Reasonably. I'm ready to move on, anyway."

"Good! Now, like I said when we last spoke I found someplace to send you I hadn't considered when I gave you the marbles. They use a tool there I think you're going to want to

get for yourself. They have them all over, it won't be a big deal to get one. And of course the usual damsels to be saved, skills to learn and teach, the avatar to slay."

"That's fine, I'm looking forward to it."

"Good. I think you'll feel a kinship to the people on this world, and you'll be able to teach them some things too. They have an odd way of doing something you're already doing so you'll both learn new ways of thinking."

Sounds intriguing. What did she find?

"I also have two tests for you, Silverstreak sent them along. I can tell you about both, but I think you should start with the harder of the two. The 'reward' if you will, should things go the way I expect, should be a great help to you."

"Okay?"

"Basically you need to take care of a rouge Wanderer. His name is Jason, Jason Amber and he's incredibly powerful. The shadow avatar really worked him over, and now he works for the other side. The people of the last world he went to imprisoned him, but that's breaking down. He's going to come back and he's going to be *mad*. If you can capture him, fine, but one way or another he needs to be stopped."

I see what Susan means. "If I did capture him could he be saved?"

She shook her head. "I don't know. It would take some time. It would be great if we could, but staying alive against him is primary. Taking him out is your first priority, leave capturing if you somehow manage to knock him out or paralyze him. I'll tell you a little about what you're up against, in case you want to use your time in the next world to make something specific to deal with him or practice anything. He's basically connected to a being called Ea. Now Ea is halfway between you and me, not exactly a physical being but it has the potential to change. And change is what they were doing. That changed those they were connected to. Alternate versions of them, you might say, but that were still influenced by Ea in some way. They selected Jason to be a herald of that change, moving across worlds to help others connected to himself realize and not fear their new state of being. Naturally we caught up with him and recruited him. For a while everything went fine. Then Jason went bad."

"What can he do?"

"His body is an idea. He's basically projecting his consciousness, while his body remains behind on his original world. Naturally the shadow avatar sealed it off, so we can't just knife him and be done with it. Essentially he's dreaming, and he can manipulate reality as though it was his dream. That's what makes him such a danger to those around-"

"I'm out." Lysanias turned to walk out the door.

"Wait, wait, it's not as bad as it sounds!"

"What, it's worse?"

"He's powerful, yes, but not all powerful. He still, like you, has energy and we're pretty sure your sword can hurt him."

"Pretty sure?"

"Reasonably. Eighty percent."

"Great." *So it's twenty percent certain I'll die attacking him? Going to have to do something to raise those odds.*

"He can get tired, and he's only one person. Attacking him from various sides with your range of skills might be enough. Wear him down, keep him off balance, you can take him."

"I guess if I want to ever visit the Hub Susan goes on about I'm going to have to."

"That's right. Still time before you have to tackle that. Now, the second. You still have that blade your parents stole for you, right?"

"Of course." He pulled it from sub-space. "I've considered making it work again, but what do I need two swords for? Three. Three swords, even if one of them is a plasma blade."

“And you’re ready to *crank it!*” she singsonged.

“Uh, sure?”

“Need to introduce you to youtube. Anyway, I’m glad to hear you say that. The second world is about sacrifice.”

“What does this sword have to do with it?”

“We want you to leave it behind.”

“What? This is the only link I have with my parents!”

She held up her hands. “I know. But that sword needs to be in a certain world. After you fix it in the way I instruct, and use it to save the world, it must be left for another. That boy, far in that world’s future, will take it up and use it to save the world again.”

“Oh. I suppose if it’s for a good cause. This is part of the test, isn’t it? To see if I can let something precious go.”

“That’s part of it. Don’t look so down. I’ll trade you for it. Look.” She gestured behind her, and floating there was a painting. It was of a happy looking couple holding a baby.

“That’s me!” Lysanias blurted. “My parents had that painting done when I was born. That’s them, an actual picture of them.” *I remember that, it was hanging... in our house...*

“Leave the sword, complete the tasks, the picture is yours. You can put it in your personal dimension somewhere. It will never degrade or fade, you have my word.”

His eyes were narrowed. “How did you get this?”

“You know I was watching you, even had a hand in guiding your parents to the place of safety they used that ultimately led you here. I knew you might want it one day, so I snuck it out of your reality and into this one.” It shimmered and was gone. “You want to know if you could be returned to that time? If I nabbed it after meeting you, from there? I’m sorry, Lysanias, but I can’t really allow you do to that. I could... but I can’t. I really did get it before, it’s been hanging around ever since. I’ve already meddled in your home more than I like, so this will have to suffice. I hope you understand. I’m not an unfeeling monster, you know. I know what you would give to see them again, but I seriously recommend against it.”

“I know you’re not,” he admitted. *Going that far back in time? Maybe letting slip I’m their son, or warning them about the flood early? Who knows what consequences that could have?* “I guess it’s a fair trade. The blade wasn’t even theirs, they stole it in the first place. At least the painting will make sure I don’t forget what they look like.”

“Excellent rationalization, Lysanias. Now, this is the world I want you to go to.” The marble she handed him was pure white, and it had an Enochan symbol on it.

“Angelic Power,” he read. “I suppose it’ll put me down someplace you can get a good laugh out of?”

She shook her head, ears waving back and forth. “Not this time. Maybe next time. You’ll see a girl who is in trouble. Help her.”

“Ah, we’re back to the old standby, great. Is she going to fall on top of me? Maybe run right into me? Will she be naked in the shower?”

“She’ll run *past* you, probably won’t even see you her nerves will be so frayed. Promise.”

“Promise?” he asked suspiciously.

“Promise. No tricks. All her clothes will be on. Humm... Sending you someplace people are naked... Have to see what I can come up with. You’re right, that could be hilarious, couldn’t it?”

“Don’t you dare!”

She laughed. “Save the girl, save the world. Side note: She’s not a cheerleader.”

“A what?”

“Never mind.”

“Very well.”

“Oh, and there’s magic there, but you’ll want the strength relic not the ring one at the moment. Most who do actual magic would be on your side, or at least wouldn’t attack you out of the blue.”

“Good to know.” He switched them out. “Anything else you want to impart?”

“Nope. That should do it. Good luck.”

“Thanks.” *Let’s just hope this is more Terra’s world than Leah’s world. I went to both for something, but one worked out far better than the other. I wonder what else she wants me to get? I guess she figured it would be obvious, as she didn’t tell me exactly what to look for.*

He put power into the marble, and the cabin vanished.

He found himself on a dark city street, rain pouring down and soaking him almost at once. He looked right and left, about to use water bending to make a bubble around himself if no one was around, but as predicted a young looking girl radiating worry and fear ran past him.

We have a winner.

She didn’t seem to notice him, running past and pushing her way into a nearby house, so he followed. It was too dark to get a good look but her long hair was plastered to her head by the rain, so she had been out for some time. She was dressed in a dark top and jeans, and he could hear her calling out to her mother as she entered the house. He followed.

Something doesn’t feel right.

The house was trashed. Broken glass and smashed up cabinets littered the floor, and as he watched the girl fell to her knees, sobbing. He peeked in past the door, not yet entering but looking around.

There’s something else here.

The girl didn’t waste much time crying, but seemed to pull herself out of it and stand again. Looking over to the side she grabbed an ax and moved deeper into the house.

Wait, does this girl need saving? And who keeps an ax just laying around?

She moved into the house and Lysanias followed, into the living room, trying to stay quiet so as to not startle her. *I guess I should have said something before she picked up the ax. Little late now. I’ve always been terrible at talking to people. Someone cooler would have grabbed her hand as she ran by and said something like “hey, you look like someone that could use a professional’s help. Lucky for you, I’m that guy.” Something like that. But no, you just let her run past and-*

“Dot?”

Lysanias snapped out of it and looked over at the girl, the ax falling out of her hands as she spotted a woman standing at the other side of the room. They started talking about some kind of cup, as if that was important right now, and suddenly the woman lunged for the girl, mouth peeling open to reveal rows of teeth.

I hate it when I’m right. Well, save the girl, save the-

She stabbed it with something and it recoiled back, almost acting as if it had been poisoned. It started to change.

Lysanias, feeling the rage and frustration of the creature wasted no time in getting his shield out and drawing his sword. The girl had backed away in horror, so as the creature finished transforming and looked up at her, Lysanias easily got between them.

“Why don’t you play with me awhile, instead?” he asked, bringing the sword back into a ready position. *Yes! Nailed it!*

The thing bounded up and leapt for him, so he smacked it with his shield, driving it

back and making it cry out in pain. The creature flew back, impacting the couch and bowling it over. Both went down.

Guess Inari was right, I did want the bracelet and not the ring. Now if I'm right... "I command you in the name of the emperor! Begone from this world, I banish thee!"

The stab wound it had suffered, plus getting bashed by Lysanias was enough of a distraction that with a cry of anguish it was forced back into the demonic realm it hailed from.

"I saw it, but I don't believe it," a man's voice said, and Lysanias whirled to see a young man standing there, a glowing blade in his hand.

"Strap in," Lysanias told him. "It's about to get weirder. Now, mind telling me who you are?" He held the sword out, point at the man's chest. "And if you're going to transform as well?"

"I'm no demon," the man insisted, showing a tattoo on his arm. "Are you from another branch? I don't recognize you, or that sword."

Another branch? Inari did describe realities as being branches on a tree, with each reality being a leaf. But I don't think that's what he meant. Lysanias looked the man over. He was blond, a bit taller than the girl, and radiated confidence and strength. On his arms and neck were words, of all things. They looked burned in, like he had repeatedly injured himself to create specific shapes. "Why do you have words written all over you? Speed... Strength... is that talent I see there?"

"You know what these runes mean but don't know why I have them?"

"Who are you people?" the girl finally screamed. "What is happening to my life? What was that creature?"

"Demon, like at the culb," the man explained. "Strange it knew what form to take to get close to you. Dot, you called her? I wonder if it's been impersonating her for some time?"

Wait, he was here the whole time? Why couldn't I- why can't I sense his energy? That's odd.

"What? You mean that thing could have been Dot for who knows how long? Oh my God!"

"How else would it know you well enough to impersonate someone you knew, convince you it was her, and get close enough to you to ask about the cup?"

"I don't know. I don't know anything! Do you smell smoke?"

"Smoke?" The two looked around, and yes, it did smell of smoke.

"I think it's coming from upstairs," Lysanias told them. "Come on."

"Come on he says?" the man repeated, but Lysanias was already bounding up the stairs. He skidded to a halt to find a room smoldering, amazed to see the fire that consumed it had apparently been satisfied to remain there, and not catch the rest of the house on fire. Most everything was burned beyond recognition, but he didn't want the fire to decide maybe it should start on the rest of the place just in case. He breathed, trying to quiet it with fire bending, while the two ran up behind him.

"My room!" the girl shouted. "It's been totally burned up!"

The fire stubbornly refused to go out, making Lysanias wonder if this was a normal fire at all. He could feel something supernatural about it, like it was resisting his efforts to make it go away. He looked up. "Sorry about this," he told the girl.

"What? Did you set this fire?" she demanded.

"Hum? No, I mean about *this*." He lashed out with the force, and the already weakened ceiling burst outward, allowing rain in to quench the fire.

"Aaah!" the girl screamed, as the rain now started to soak into her remaining possessions.

"Couldn't have that fire spreading, though how it only burned this room is a mystery."

“Maybe a fire rune? Look, how did you do that?”

“Forget that!” said the girl, pushing past them. “I have to save what I can!”

The two watched her for a moment, gathering up anything that wasn't burned to a crisp, and Lysanias decided he could trust the man. He hadn't attacked, or made any threatening moves, and even relaxed his grip on the sword so it vanished. *Huh, the local equivalent to a light saber?*

He put his own sword back, causing it to vanish in the eyes of the man, and then truly made his shield vanish back into sub-space. “Come on, let's help her,” he told him.

“Yeah, I guess.”

The three worked in silence, gathering up a pile of stuff and taking it out into the hall in a heap. It wasn't very much. When he was sure the fire was out Lysanias used water bending to gather up the rain that had fallen in, float it into place, spread it out, and turn it into ice. He then used a skill he hadn't practiced very much at all, air step, to get enough height to reach up and touch it, turning it into wood and sealing the hole again. He only need one big step up, so he stood there on nothing for a moment as he made the change.

That should hold for now. It seems she has bigger problems anyway than a hole in the roof. Naturally the man was openly gaping at him as he stepped down, but the girl was out in the hall. “I told you.”

“This is all I have left,” said the girl, looking down at the small pile sadly. There were some clothes, knickknacks, a set of cards, some books including what looked like sketch books. “I've lost everything.”

“Think of it this way,” Lysanias told her. “You lived through a demon attack, and at least the place didn't totally burn down. You're alive, and that's all that matters.”

“It isn't all that matters,” she insisted. “My mother is gone. And as you two can do all this crazy stuff I assume you're a part of all this. That means you're going to help me find her!”

Chapter 2

Touring the City

When: After the girl's declaration

Where: NY city someplace (not that Lysanias knows that)

"Of course we'll help you find your mother," Lysanias promised her. "But you've got bigger problems."

"Bigger than my mother being abducted, demons impersonating people I know, and strangers running around my house waving swords around? No, I don't think I do!" she insisted.

"You do. Try the end of your entire world, all life on it being destroyed. It's what I'm here to help prevent, and you two are obviously a part of it."

"That's crazy!"

"Perhaps, but true."

"Wait, say that again?" asked the man.

"Your entire world is in danger," he repeated. "From a being beyond even my comprehension. I'm here to stop it."

"Is that why there's been so much demonic activity lately?"

"Perhaps, if it's unexpected. It works through possession, and tries to use an upcoming event to destroy the world in order to save energy. If a demonic invasion was scheduled it may be controlling it now, or at least moving the timetable up."

"Right, because destroying the world is energy intensive," the girl sarcastically agreed.

"It is, actually. From a... certain point of view."

"Are you buying this?" she asked the man.

"Hey, I just saw him do a bunch of stuff I can't explain. I'm inclined to believe him, for now."

"How do we know he's not involved in my mother's kidnapping- hey, how do I know you're not involved?"

"Uh, we just saved you."

"Excuse me, that was mostly me. You didn't do anything."

"I would have. I was poised to strike!"

"What, from behind?"

"It's a sound tactical position."

"Will you two just please shut up? I have to think!" the girl insisted.

"Look, you're strung out and exhausted," Lysanias told her, feeling both of these things from her. "What can we do for you, right now?"

"I don't know. I don't know what's going on. My mother was babbling nonsense, now demons show up, then you two... I don't understand any of this." She started picking up the pile but then lost half of it. "This is hopeless!"

"Let's find a box to put this stuff in," Lysanias suggested. "If you want to stay here I can ward a room so you'll be safe. You can get some sleep and I'll explain everything in the morning."

"We should head to the institute," the man insisted. "It's much safer there."

"I'm not going anywhere with either of you," she told them. "In fact who are you? Why did you barge into my house?"

"I'm Jace. I don't know this guy, never seen him before."

"I'm Lysanias. I'm new around here."

"Great. Now get out."

"I don't think so," both told her. They glared at each other.

"I'm not leaving you alone with him," Jace told her.

"Similarly, I'm not leaving you alone with him," Lysanias told her.

"My heroes. Help me with this, will you?" She indicated the pile.

"Find a box, like I said."

"Argh, fine! I'll find a stupid box, okay? Will that make you happy?" She threw the stuff down again and stomped off.

"Who are you really?" Jace asked him.

"There are more of you? Demon hunters?"

"We call ourselves shadowhunters, but yes, there's lots of us. Why?"

"Then I'll need to speak to them. Your world is in danger, like I said. I'll tell you my story when I can tell it to more than one person at a time. I don't want to repeat myself over and over."

"I suppose you won't tell me how you did... whatever you did to that demon, or blew the roof out, or sealed it up, or stood on air either?"

"Be happy to. Later."

"I see."

The two stood in awkward silence a moment, and Lysanias saw a picture of a young girl with an older lady who was probably her mother.

"Is this your mother?" he called down, taking the picture down and showing it to her.

"Yes. Why?"

"I'll ask the universe where she is, maybe get an answer."

"You can do that?"

"I think you would be surprised at what I can do." He put the picture back up and augmented himself with magic, just so it didn't take twenty minutes or more to get an answer back. "It'll take ten minutes, don't disturb me until I'm done," he instructed Jace.

"Okay?"

Where was this girl's mother taken after she was attacked?

Unknown

"Great, the universe doesn't know," he told them.

"If the place was warded would you get an answer?" Jace asked.

"No, I wouldn't. Don't tell me you have wards like that here?"

"Sure. There's ways to track people so obviously there's ways to disrupt that tracking."

"Great, now he tells me. Well, I tried."

"The box is packed, let's go," the girl told them, hefting it.

"You don't need to carry it," he announced, pulling a contain ward out of subspace.

"This is a ward. A contain ward, to be specific." Jace seemed rather interested, coming around to look at it with her. "I'm going to apply it to this box and it's going to become 'attached' to it. But out of phase with three dimensional space so you can carry just the ward, and not the whole box. Watch." He stuck it on and the box vanished. The girl just stared.

"See? That box is now 'in' the contain ward. That's why I wanted the stuff boxed up, you can only put in one thing. In this case one box, rather than using a dozen wards. When you want to get the stuff back out," he set it down, "just hold it out and say release."

"Release?"

"Release. Notice I set it down so I didn't trigger it just now and waste the ward. But the box is in there, believe me."

"Ward. Right."

"Take it. Go ahead, it's your stuff so it's your ward now."

She took it, gingerly picking it up and looking it over. "I can almost read this... like it's on the tip of my tongue."

"That's unlikely," he told her. "The symbols are Enochan. Angelic writing."

"That's what our runes are," Jace told them. "They do look similar, see?" He showed her his arms, and the writing was similar. "You can use them to make things like this?"

"Sure. Inari, that's the being that sent me here, said we do similar things, just in a different way. If you use this style of writing too I can probably teach you. But that's not here or there. We still don't know your name."

"I'm Clary," she reluctantly told them. "And I'm telling you these symbols almost make sense to me."

"Well, Clary, it's nice to meet you. Right now I recommend going with Jace here. He says there are more people like him-

"Are you calling me a liar? And for the record, there's no one like me." He flashed a grin.

Which Lysanias ignored. "-and if that's true they're your best bet to figuring out your next move. They'll have the resources and manpower to look for your mother."

"Plus you'll be safe from demons. There was one, and the past few weeks that means there's usually more lurking around nearby."

Clary looked around her shattered home, waves of despair coming off her as she decided what the best thing to do was. "Fine." She pocketed the ward. "But I better not regret this."

The three walked in silence through the streets, Lysanias keeping the rain off them with water bending. *Have to keep my hand in this, don't use it that often.* They came to a church and while Lysanias could see it clearly, Clary had to struggle a bit to see it as more than a run down, abandoned building. But she did, and they went inside. It was fairly open, with tables, banks of computers, and people working and moving from place to place.

"It's fairly quiet now," Jace told them. "Demons are more active at night, so we tend to be too. Most are out on patrol, given how many demons have been showing up lately. I'll put you up in the guest quarters, Clary. In the morning we can meet with Hodge and some of the others to get your story. And yours." He gestured to Lysanias.

"Fine with me."

"What is this place?" she asked.

"Our base. Sort of a combination library, training center, and demon tracking facility. You like?"

"I can't even focus on it."

"That's fair. Come on. You, don't touch anything."

"I know that."

Jace led her off, and Lysanias figured she would be safe for the moment. He walked around, looking at the monitors and what people were doing. They were mostly directing others who were out in the field, and he got some strange looks but they left him alone.

I suppose they figure if I'm here, I'm supposed to be. I don't see any badges or anything. But one thing he did do was feel around. He could tell, though his various senses, that all these people were supernaturally active. They all had those odd runes on their skin, some which seemed to be active, but all had abilities. *How about that? I think these people could probably see my spirit, though they aren't magical. They make wards, just on themselves instead of paper, and that makes them artificers. A world of artificers, how about that?*

"Clary is settled," Jace told him, coming back. "But what am I going to do with you?"

Want a room?"

He shook his head. "Essentially I just got up. Time moves differently across realities so it was morning when I left. I'm still good for hours."

"I see." He didn't look or feel as though he did.

"I'd love a tour."

"Oh no. For all I know you're a circle member who wants to study our defenses."

"Can a 'circle member' do everything I do?"

"No," he admitted. "But it could have been some elaborate trick."

"True. I suppose you're right to be cautious. If not a tour, what then?"

"I need to get back out on patrol."

"You're leaving her here?"

"She's asleep by now."

"Says you. What if *she's* the spy and has just now gained access to your base?"

"Oh. I suppose it could have all been an act. But setting her own room on fire?"

"If she was loyal enough to her cause, she might have just followed orders. Besides, how do you know that was her room? The people that actually live in that house could be on vacation."

"And here I was thinking Alec was paranoid. Just a second." He went over to talk to someone, pointing towards where he took Clary. They nodded and he came back. "All set. She'll be watched, and they'll let me know if she wakes up."

"Sounds good. Let's go."

Jace made a call as they came out of the institute and then headed off confidently, Lysanias trailing behind. He was impressed by the city, there were plenty of enormous metal structures and sleek looking cars zoomed around, even this late at night.

So is this what Korra's world is going to look like in fifty years? Taller buildings, faster cars? Then will this world be contemplating hyperspace engines and droid morality hundreds of years after that?

The two met up with another two, a man and a woman, who were standing on a street corner waiting for Jace. The woman was very attractive, dressed in dark leather and high boots, with dark hair reaching the middle of her back. The man was taller even than Jace, and looked at him suspiciously.

"Who's this?"

"Lysanias, this is Alec and Isabelle. Guys, this is Lysanias, and I'm not sure who he is yet. He wants to wait until morning to tell us, so he doesn't have to repeat himself."

"Just consider me the ultimate shadow hunter. Oh, just so I get you both straight, which one of you is Isabelle?"

"I am, isn't that obvious?" asked Isabelle.

"Oh, I never assume anything. For all I know, around here, boys have girl's names and girls have boy's names. Nice to meet you."

"And you. Nice beard."

"What's with his eyes?" Alec asked. "He some kind of fay?"

"You know, Alec, I didn't ask," Jace told him. "Thought to myself, hey, you know what might be really rude? Asking the guy why his eyes are that color. So well done."

"Didn't ask him, asked you if you asked him. I can be rude to you all I want, you're stuck with me."

I'm standing right here.

"Don't mind them. I think they're nice," Isabelle remarked, offering a hand. "Nice to meet you."

"You would. Why's he tagging along? Is he a mundane or not?"

"Alec, he did just brag about being the ultimate shadow hunter," Isabelle reminded him. "He can't be mundane."

"Hey, that's right, I take exception to that!" Jace protested. "I'm the ultimate shadow hunter!"

"Maybe you *were*. But don't worry, you can be again after I leave."

She laughed. "I like him."

"Can we get back to it?" Alec asked, rolling his eyes.

"Sure thing, Alec. We'll just let 'the ultimate' here lead us to some shadows we can hunt. How does that sound, Mr. Ultimate?"

"Look it's nothing personal, I'm just stating a fact. As for demons, let's see what I can come up with." He looked up and down the street, there was a bus stop shelter just down the way. "Ah, we can stop in there for a second, it should be a little quieter." The others, somewhat bemused, followed him as he sat down. He made sure no one was nearby and made sure his circlet was on. *As I know now it gives a bonus to casting magic, thanks to Susan. And with the sword increasing my willpower I don't have to throw massive quantities of energy into this. I can hardly fail.* "Let my skill be augmented."

"A warlock! Why didn't you just say that? Jace," Alec chided as clearly magic was being done here. Anyone could see that.

"I didn't know. I thought warlock marks were more animalistic. It does explain the eyes. Is what you were doing before magic?"

He smirked. "Not exactly. Now I'm trying to concentrate."

He closed his eyes, again marveling that neither of the three registered to his senses. Even augmented, he couldn't feel their energy. He could sense their life, he knew they were there from that and the force, but spiritually they seemed to be completely absent. This worked in his favor, as did being in a big city. There weren't a lot of ley lines around to confuse the issue. He reached out with his senses, trying to see if there was any demonic activity nearby simply by feeling larger than human normal reserves of energy. "There's a group of highly suspicious energy signatures that way," he told them, pointing. "They feel dark, could be demons."

"Oh really?" Alec asked.

He opened his eyes again. "Yes, really."

"Sounds like a trap."

"Then lets spring it," Jace told him, feeling excited.

"Why would a warlock help us like this?"

"I'm right here."

"Lay off, Alec. It's his city too. Demons are everybody's problem," Isabelle told him.

"Yeah, but usually they leave that stuff to us. Plus I've never heard of any just sitting someplace and telling where demons are."

"So Lysanias is different. He sees a problem, he wants to help solve it. Isn't that right?"

"That's pretty much me in a nutshell, yes."

"Why are you defending a man you just met?" Alec asked.

"Maybe I like his beard. Why don't you grow a beard?"

"No thank you."

"I think you would look great with a beard!" Jace told him.

"Really? Maybe I will then." Lysanias felt a strange mixture of emotions from the man. *Huh. I thought maybe it was Alec and Isabelle but maybe it's Jace and Alec?*

"It would hide at least part of your face!" Alec scowled. "Are we going or not?" Jace continued. "I'll show you who the ultimate is."

“Contest! Contest!” Isabelle chanted. “Demon hunting contest!”

“Now that’s why we keep you around,” he said with a laugh. “You have great ideas like that one. What do you say, ultimate? See who can kill the most demons tonight?”

“Is killing them acceptable? I banished that one, it went back home.”

“Why wouldn’t it be?” Alec asked.

“Because you send one home, they tell their friends a great story about how they almost killed a shadowhunter and then they go for a beer. You kill one, they don’t come back, and those same buddies now want to hunt down the shadowhunter that killed their friend.”

“They don’t think like that.”

“Yeah, that’s giving demons way too much credit,” Jace agreed. “Just kill them. They don’t belong here.”

“Okay.” *I suppose if they attack me, it’s justified?*

“Okay to killing them, or okay to the contest?”

“You really want to have a contest? Fine, we can have a contest.”

“Yes! You two hang back, I don’t want any help for this.”

“Even if you’re about to have your eyes gauged out?” Isabelle asked him lightly.

“Well, maybe in that case.”

The group moved off and headed towards where Lysanias felt the dark energies. He maintained the spell so he could stay ‘locked on’ figuring he could drop it fast enough once they got closer. They moved past side streets, apartment and office buildings, until they came to a butcher shop with a smashed in window. There were noises coming from inside, noises of someone having the time of their life pigging out on meat.

“Now we’ll see,” Jace told everyone, hopping the sill and entering the shop. Lysanias followed, sword out. They moved past the counter into the back of the shop and burst into the processing area. The freezer was thrown upon and there were half eaten chunks of meat everywhere. But there were also five demonic forms, frozen now in various stages of biting down on something. There seemed to be a variety, one had wings, one looked like a human with no head, but a huge mouth where their belly would be. There was a tiny one, looking like that imp that delivered the message for Lucifer, while the forth looked like a dark dog with red eyes. The fifth was ignoring the meat and licking the walls for some bizarre reason.

“Five?” Jace exclaimed. “I’ll be getting the three, so I leave two to you!” He charged forward, but something curious happened. The demon didn’t snarl and charge forward as well, they shrank back, as did the others.

“Mercy!” they cried. “We hurt no one!”

The others scrambled back as well, yelling variations of the same thing. “We’re innocent!” “Mercy!” “Don’t hurt us!”

“Wait!” Lysanias grabbed hold of Jace’s sword with the force as he was bringing it back to strike.

“What the? Let me go!”

“Is that true?” he demanded, stepping forward.

“True, very true!” they chorused.

“You.” He pointed to one, the imp looking one. “You only broke in here since you came?”

“Yes, was hungry. So hungry. Very hard to get food at home. Good food. You want food?” He held out his half eaten slice of something.

“I’m fine.”

“You can’t trust them!” Jace insisted. The others came up behind them, wondering what the commotion was about. “Let me go!”

“Why didn’t you attack someone?” he asked the dog one.

“Knew shadowhunters would come. Did not want to get killed. Just wanted meat. So nice, so fresh, not like at home.”

“You’re talking to them?” Alec asked, as if he couldn’t believe his eyes.

“They aren’t attacking us, and I won’t destroy anything that calls for mercy.”

“You’re crazy.”

“Maybe.” He went over and grabbed Jace’s sword from the back with his hand. “I’m letting your sword go. Are you going to fight me on this?”

“They’ll kill us!”

He looked over at them, making no move to attack and still holding their food in any case. “I don’t think so.” He let the sword go and Jace lowered it. “You can’t stay here,” he told the demons. “I can send you home. Will you go willingly or fight us and get yourselves killed?”

“We’ll go-”

“Bring meat?” interrupted the one with the mouth belly.

“Yes, you can take as much meat as you want.”

“We go home!”

“Fine. I can get one at a time. I don’t know what will happen to you, I’ve never banished something willingly before. I’ll try to be as gentle as possible, but you are being forced out of this world back into yours. It may be painful, but you’ll be alive.”

They weren’t paying attention, grabbing up as much as they could hold.

“Ready!” they said, lining up.

“Fine.” He did what he could to make their trip back as painless as possible, and soon all five demons were gone.

Jace grabbed him by the shirt and growled “And just what was that all about?”

Chapter 3

Information Exchange

When: After being grabbed

Where: Inside the butcher shop

Lysanias didn't really appreciate being grabbed, and really who would be? So he simply removed Jace's hand forcibly. The others watched in silent amazement as Jace strained against him to no avail.

"There *is* one person I have to kill," Lysanias admitted. "Whoever is host to the shadow I'm chasing, and who has become the avatar of shadow. Anyone, or anything else I will do my utmost to preserve. I want that clear."

"But they're demons!" he protested.

"Demons who didn't hurt anyone, and in fact were smart enough to realize that hurting someone would be their own demise. So they did this instead, which was fairly commendable."

"Commendable? Demons? You're kidding."

"Look, they obviously were not here to simply rampage around. Otherwise they would have been doing just that. Instead they just grabbed a bite to eat. That suggests they may not be connected to the earlier attack at all. That maybe they didn't even know how they had come here."

"What are you suggesting?" Alec asked.

"If there was a demon world right next to a world I wanted destroyed, and I was a fairly powerful figure bent on destroying said world, what would be my easiest way to go about that? Weaken the barrier between them and let it sort itself out."

"You think that's what's happening?"

"No idea. But they got here somehow, and they were obviously not fighter type demons. I mean the one was less than a meter tall! You've already admitted more demonic presence here than there should be. It doesn't take much to put that theory together. They were here by accident, not by design of the avatar."

"I suppose."

"But if demons overran the world," protested Isabelle, "wouldn't the heavens come to our aid?"

"What, you mean angels?" Jace asked. "Don't count on it, even if they do exist."

"That would be even better," Lysanias told her. "Let humans get caught in the middle of a war between Heaven and Hell. How many lives would be lost in that case?"

"A lot," she admitted. "Jace, it makes sense."

"Don't tell me you're going soft on demons now too, Izzy?"

"No. But I am saying we need to be careful. If there's a war coming we need to choose our battles carefully. Not make enemies of demons that don't mean us harm."

"Is there a way we can prove it?" Alec asked.

"Maybe ask the next group how they got here?" Lysanias suggested. "Instead of just rushing in with swords drawn. If they say 'some weird looking guy sent us here' then okay, that's who we have to go after. The cause, not the symptom. If instead they say 'we have no idea, we were just hanging out and then boom!' we know something else is going on."

"But they would just lie," Jace told them.

"Would they? How would they know what we wanted to hear? I don't know," Alec told him.

"We can at least track where they come from," Isabelle suggested. "If they seem to pop up randomly it's a weakening, not a gateway."

“Could even the most powerful warlock weaken the barrier between our world and Hell?” Jace asked.

“How should I know?” Alec snapped. “Go ask a warlock.”

“Guess I’ll have to. Anyway, should we be standing around here in a broken into meat shop? I mean mundanes can’t see us, but how about him?”

“I could hide in plain sight if I needed to. But you’re right, let’s go.” He dropped Jace’s hand and put his sword away. The group left, turning down the street the way they had come.

No word about how I actually led them to a group of demons like I promised. Making me the ultimate and not Jace. But that’s fine, just fine.

“By the way, does this world have guns?” Lysanias asked. “Because I see you using swords...”

“Of course we have guns,” Jace told him.

He looked over at Alec. “Then why is this guy carrying around a bow and arrow? Wouldn’t a gun be a little more practical?”

Alec started to answer but then looked thoughtful. “Why don’t we? I mean if arrows can be made that hurt demons, why *not* bullets?”

“Arrows can be recovered,” Jace reminded him. “That metal is scarce.”

“Sure, but so are shadowhunters,” Isabelle reminded them both. “It would make sense to have a gun. Not as a primary weapon perhaps, but as a secondary one. Like if you got into a bad spot and it was your life or some bits of metal, you pull the gun out.”

“Couldn’t you just put ‘runes’ on bullets and allow them to harm demons?” Lysanias asked. “Would it have to be a special metal?”

“For some, yes. Not for others,” she explained. “Actually you could have two guns, one with just normal bullets for those demons it would work on.”

Ah, so in other words some demons are like my spirit, that can’t be harmed by normal means. Others can be. Got it.

“What do you mean, put runes on bullets?” Alec asked. “The iron sisters make all our weapons, only they know how to put runes on objects.”

“We probably could try it, though,” argued Jace. “What’s the worst that could happen?”

“So long as I’m not in the room, in case the thing explodes when you put the rune on.”

“I think it’s more a bravado thing,” Isabelle said thoughtfully. “Something a man thought up, no doubt.”

“What do you mean by that?” Alec demanded.

“Like shadowhunters started using swords, right? Before guns were invented. When they were, anyone seen using one would have been looked down on. ‘Oh, can’t handle a blade, kid?’ That sort of thing. Or ‘I personally cut down ten demons last week with this blade.’ It just seems more manly I guess.”

“So trying to act ‘manly’ means getting killed because you got rushed by a bunch of demons and couldn’t drop them fast enough?” Lysanias asked.

“I could see boys thinking that,” she agreed, eyeing her companions.

“And girls?”

She sighed. “Not many girls are field agents,” she explained. “I’m one of the exceptions.”

“That’s dumb. Most powerful person I ever met was a woman who started a mortal.” *Susan, just recently.* “She just had a lot of experiences and made some magical objects to help her. You can be as good a fighter as a man, nothing says you can’t. Better, depending on how much you practice.” *Take Korra for example.*

“I know, right? But no, we’re supposed to be delicate and stay at the base to keep an

eye on things. We have to work twice as hard to prove ourselves.”

“You must be pretty skilled then.”

“I get by.”

“Flirt later, I thought we were looking for demons,” Jace complained.

“Hey, I found the last group. It’s your turn now.”

But no more demons were to be found that night, and the group, a few hours later, returned to the base. By the time they got something to eat and freshened up most patrols were back and Clary was awake. So Jace got a man named Hodge and several others together, and they all sat around a table so Lysanias could finally tell them what was going on.

“So here’s what’s going on,” he said, launching into his speech about what was going on. After that, they knew what was going on, because he had just told them what was... You get the idea.

“Let me make sure I understand this,” Hodge finally said, one hand on his head. He was probably nearly forty, with many runes on his body plus a circular one right on his neck. “You’re some kind of extra dimensional shadowhunter with various powers, some which are similar to ours. You’re on the trail of a higher dimensional being that wants us all dead, and has taken somebody here over to do it. If we don’t stop them, eventually it’ll kill everything and our entire dimension will fall, along with any nearby dimensions. The energy and potential that would have made these dimensions up will be collected by this being, so they can one day evolve themselves.”

“That’s exactly right.”

“It’s too early for this. I need coffee, and lots of it. Maybe with a splash of something.”

“Sorry.”

“Besides all that we have Clary, daughter of an old circle member, Jocelyn, who I didn’t even know existed until now. Jocelyn herself, last night, was taken by other circle members because they believe she knows the location of the hidden Mortal Cup.”

“And the circle is what?” Jace asked.

“What a group of us called ourselves when a man named Valentine recruited us to do what the shadowhunter organization wouldn’t. Destroy the downworld.” He winced a bit, as the circle on his neck started to burn a little.

“Would that have even been possible?” Alec asked. “Don’t they outnumber us?”

“Rather substantially, as we found out. But most have specific weaknesses. At least Valentine thought so.”

“So is this related?” Isabelle asked.

“I can’t say,” Lysanias told them. “But the shadow avatar likes to just nudge things to being worse than they would have been. Saves effort. What does the cup do that makes it so valuable? Would someone who wanted to destroy the world want it?”

“Two things. Makes new shadowhunters if they drink from it, and allows the control of lesser demons,” Hodge told them.

“Demons. That would make sense,” Alec told them. “If last night is any indication, demons might come here but just go get a snack. If I was trying to destroy the world I would want them attacking people however they could. The cup could compel them to do so.”

“So the avatar is after the cup?” Jace asked. “Not to make new shadowhunters, which would be a danger to them, but to control demons?”

“It’s the best theory we have,” Hodge agreed. “We need to find it and secure it before they do. But it’s been lost for years, there’s not much hope of us stumbling into it now.”

“So what is our plan?” Alec asked.

Hodge shook his head. "I'm not sure yet. It's a lot to take in."

"Obviously rescuing my mother is a priority," Clary told them.

"Yes, but how to go about it? That's the key point."

"Wherever she is, we know it's warded. I tried to figure it out last night but failed."

"I'll spread the word, maybe some of Valentine's old hideouts can be checked. But that will take time."

"They could be torturing her right now!"

"I agree, but what else would you have me do? A warlock spell would have no better luck than our own techniques. And if this man Lysanias claims to have tried, we would fare no better."

"You could try. I don't know if he's lying to me. He could be part of all this for all you know!"

"Eh, not with those abilities of his," Hodge figured. "I have no idea what other powers he has, or how easily he could destroy us. But if that was his plan, why just calmly sit there and *warn us* all this is coming?"

"I don't know."

"Exactly. For now I'm inclined to believe him. As far as your mother is concerned, we would need something of hers."

"That's easy, my house is full of stuff."

"Very well. You can take us there and get something of hers. If you're a Nephilim like us, as Jace believes, we should be able to show you how to track someone fairly easily. You're the best bet, because of the blood connection you share with your mother."

"Wait, a what?" Lysanias asked.

"A Nephilim. It's what we call people that have drunk from the mortal cup or are born of those that have."

"Funny, you don't look like giant ravenous half humans. That's what we called Nephilim back home. The children of angels and humans. They were far taller than a person, and would eat everything in sight if you let them. We mostly killed them for that reason. They were pretty evil, actually. At least according to my parents."

"Really? Interesting. That brings up a good point, you said you might be able to teach us certain things?"

"You're obviously supernatural, so you could probably learn energy manipulation, and spirit step. Sensing energy, and these runes of yours seems awfully similar to wards. If you can make wards you can make talismans."

"Talismans?"

"Objects imbued with power. That sword of Jace's was glowing last night, for all I know you already know how to make talismans and the sword is one."

"The iron sisters handle that. The techniques are kept secret, even from us."

"Well, consider that secret spilled. You're going to need all the help you can get in the coming days, and if you have some talismans so much the better."

"Wards are this?" Clary asked, pulling her contain ward out.

"Right. That's a contain ward. Here, these are armor wards, take a look." He passed out some, and the group looked them over.

"It seems like angelic runes," Hodge admitted. "Like a dialect of it?"

"Maybe. I propose you all try making one. If you can, you're not Nephilim you're artificers, and I'm confident I can teach you a lot. If you can't, well, then why use angelic writing like I do?"

"But what does this ward do?" Isabelle asked.

"You slap it on and an energy field that acts as armor surrounds you. As it takes hits

the ward burns up.”

“A force field? This little slip of paper can create a force field?” Clary asked.

“You saw one pull your box in, why wouldn’t any other effect be possible? Wards can do pretty much anything, as long as you don’t mind their single use nature.”

“And you think we can make these?” Alec asked.

“That’s what Inari implied. Get some paper and pens and try it.”

The group looked skeptical but got some supplies, and each got an armor ward to study and copy. “Imagine your own energy flowing into the paper as you copy it,” he told them. Naturally Clary, being the best artist of the group, finished hers first. And it looked the most perfect, while the others finished slower and had less luck duplicating it exactly.

Oh, it doesn’t take them ten minutes to finish like it does me. Sure, sure, I get it. They can finish in their own time, according to their ability. I’m not bitter about it, it’s just how I was made. “They may still work, it doesn’t seem like anyone botched it too badly,” Lysanias told them. “They just won’t be as effective. Clary, you want to go first?”

“I guess. How do I use it?”

“Just put it on, and will yourself to be protected.”

“Okay.” She did, and it stuck to her, a good sign.

“Now, hold out your arm. I’m going to chi-block you. It’s a martial arts technique that disrupts energy flow in the body temporarily. But it doesn’t cause direct damage, so you should be protected from me. If that works, congratulations, you’re an artificer.”

“Why not just hit her?” asked Hodge.

“Because if I hit her without taking all my stuff off, she would go flying and maybe die. Armor ward or no armor ward.”

“Impossible.”

“If you’re that confident let me punch you and we’ll see how it goes.”

“I just might.”

“I saw him throw a demon across a room,” Jace told them. “I’m inclined to advise passing on that little test.”

“That’s up to you. Arm?”

She held her arm out and he rapidly punched it.

“I didn’t feel a thing.”

“There you have it.”

“I guess there’s no doubt then,” Alec told them. “Clary is indeed one of us.”

“Me next,” Jace announced.

All of them had at least succeeded at making a ward that could take some damage, which made them all rather disgusted.

“Why have we been messing around with burning our skin when we could have been making these?” Isabelle lamented.

“Can anyone use them?” Hodge asked. “Or do I have to make my own?”

“Anyone can use them. Probably even normal people.”

“It’s not that. I don’t know. Maybe we never thought of it?”

“No one ever took their stele and said ‘hey, I wonder what would happen if I made a rune on paper instead of my arm?’ Really?”

“What’s this?” Lysanias asked.

“The way we make runes,” she explained. “See?” She got out her stele and handed it over. It was a long rod, fairly heavy, about half the size of Lysanias’ wand. Hers had a snake running the length of it, and a crystal was set in the end.

"My mother just gave me one of those," Clary told them. "I left it in my room. I thought it was just a... Well, I had no idea what it was, honestly. It was shaped like a pen but it had a crystal at the end. What was I supposed to think? I'll go get it." She ran off.

"This is the tool Inari sent me to get," Lysanias reasoned. "Must be. How do you use it?"

"We just activate it, and picture in our minds the rune we want to draw. It then burns that shape into the surface we're pointing at. When we need to activate the rune we use the stele as well, providing it power again."

In other words, putting some energy in and that causes a shape to be projected from it? It's obviously a talisman of some kind, I can feel supernatural energy bound up in it. "Oh, I thought those marks of yours were done the long way, like actual tattoos. How long do they last? Active, I mean? I can sense you guys again, so you must have had one active last night that hid your spiritual energy. But they don't stay active forever, do they? Did you deactivate them or do they fade after a time?"

"That's true, some only last a few minutes," Jace admitted. "We all activate our anti-tracking wards and glamour wards before we go out. That's probably why you couldn't 'sense' us. How long do these wards last?"

"Until you take them off, or they get wet."

"Ugh, we suck," Alec moaned. "This is way better."

"In a way," Lysanias admitted. "You can't have too many active at once. They'll start to interfere with each other. If you had two the same type they would enhance each other though."

"We are going to need a full primer on how to make these," Hodge admitted. "We know we can, and it could be a powerful tool for us. Anything else you can teach us too, we would greatly appreciate it."

"I'll be happy to. But I'll want one of these in exchange. May I try this one? Are they personalized?"

"Go ahead," Isabelle told him.

He pulled out a blank sheet they had cut to size before and sent energy into the stele, imagining the shapes that went into an armor ward. The shape appeared on the paper. "We'll just leave this one here. If what I think is going to happen is going to happen, this will vanish after a few minutes."

"Why would that be?" asked Alec.

"I'll tell you if I'm right. Let's see if Clary can use hers."

She came running back into the room and got a lesson in activating the stele, drawing with it on paper to make another copy of the armor ward. "I can do it," she said excitedly. "I'm not just some normal girl. I'm an... What did you call us?"

"Artificer."

"An artificer. That's crazy. And here's something else crazy." She pulled another sheet of paper over to her and set the stele down. She then pushed it *into* the paper, and it appeared there like a drawing.

"What?" exclaimed Hodge. "That's not possible!"

"It is," she replied with a smirk. "Yesterday I had a biscotti. Then I didn't. I had a picture of a biscotti. Simon and I shrugged it off, but seeing that 'contain' ward yesterday made me think of it. Now I find out I'm an artificer. Do you get special powers? Things only one person can do? This could be like that."

"The power to make contain wards, without making a contain ward. Er, you can get it out again, right?"

"Oh. Maybe I should have used something else, huh?" She reached 'into' the paper

and pulled it out again. “Whew, I guess so!”

“I see it, but I don’t believe it,” Jace repeated from last night.

“To answer your question, no, not usually,” Hodge told her. “That’s something new, something I’ve never seen before.”

“Maybe anyone can do it, like making wards,” she suggested. “We’ll have to try.”

“I guess we will. Hey, that ward you made vanished!”

The group looked, and yes, the piece of paper was blank again.

“Thought so,” Lysanias mused. “This stele thing works exactly like an ability of mine, a special kind of ward I can make in a pinch if I don’t have paper or ink.” He held it up.

“Essentially, this allows you to do blood wards, without actually drawing any blood.”

Chapter 4

How About Working Together

When: No time has passed

Where: Meeting room

“Okay, I’ll bite,” Hodge told the room. “What’s a blood ward?”

“Something I luckily haven’t needed to do very often lately. However, if I really needed a ward and didn’t have the time or materials to make one the normal way I could cut myself, gather the blood, and use it to draw a crude shape that would serve. It doesn’t last very long, just like the runes you draw with the stele. But given everything I’ve seen here, it fits. For whatever reason you went the long way around, trying to avoid using blood wards but still using them via this.”

“I guess we know better now.”

“Hey, it’s kept you all alive this long. And really what you have done is pretty amazing. With just the most basic knowledge of artificing you’ve built all this and kept the supernatural world away from the unsupernatural world. It’s quite the accomplishment.”

“Thanks. It hasn’t been easy. I don’t know if these wards will make it any easier, but any tool we can use to help...”

“I’ll get him a stele,” Isabelle told them, rising. “It’ll be pretty plain, but it’ll work.”

“Thanks.” He handed hers back as she went past.

She went out of the room, and Clary looked hers over. “Now that I know what this can do, I hate to just put it in my pocket. This is something to be respected.”

“I’m glad you feel that way, Clary,” Hodge told her honestly. “A shadowhunter getting their first rune is a sacred ceremony to us, and properly cared for a stele will last your whole life. They should be treated with respect.” He glanced over at the others, who probably didn’t treat theirs with any more reverence than a sword. “Most of our clothes have a pocket sewn in that can unobtrusively hold it. I would offer you a holder on a chain, so you could wear it around your neck, but I see you already have a necklace.”

Huh, the same problem I had carrying my wand around. At least I’ll be able to strap the stele to the sword right next to it, and always have all three depending on which I need.

“Do you have any blank notebooks?” she asked. “A blank sketchbook would be ideal I bet.”

“Maybe? Why?”

“Get me one and I’ll show you!”

“Let me check my office.” He left, and Isabelle came back carrying a plain stele. She handed it over.

“Thanks.” He shoved it into sub-space for the moment until he could modify the wand holder strapped to the outside of his sword.

A moment later Hodge came back with a blank spiral notebook, and Clary grinned. She opened to the first page and shoved the stele into it, then closed it again. “You never know what I might want to carry around with me. If I can just put stuff on paper and take it back out again, a notebook like this will let me keep a ton of stuff at my fingertips. And if someone asks to see it, it’s just a bunch of sketches I’ve done of random objects. Nothing remarkable about that, all artists do it!”

“Just don’t leave it behind,” Hodge cautioned.

“With that out of the way, what’s next?” Alec asked.

“We’ll need to get the word out,” Hodge figured. “If it was just the circle being active again, it would be bad enough. Downworlders would be in danger.”

“Er, what’s a downworlder?” Clary asked.

"You know. A vampire, werewolf, or warlock."

"No, I didn't know that. Remember, I just got here yesterday. My mother said she wanted to talk to me about something important, this was probably it." She indicated the room in a general way. "All this. The fact that vampires are real and whatever. I mean it's a lot take in."

"I suppose it must be. I can give you a primer later, most shadowhunters go through various training as they get older. It's not your fault you were just dumped into it. For now, just imagine that most tales of things that go bump in the night can be attributed to demons or the like. They aren't just fairy tales, things are out there. A lot of the stories you've heard are true, in one sense or another."

"I just have to learn the words you use to describe them. I mean 'downworlder?' What does that even mean? Werewolves don't live underground. Do they?"

He laughed. "No, they live in apartments, at least around here."

"They're called that because most shadowhunters look down on them," Isabelle explained. "We think we're so much better than everybody else."

"We are. I mean look at us," Jace told her.

"Yeah, yeah."

"Anyway, I'll call a meeting with their representatives. Even if this shadow avatar of yours and the renewed search for the cup by the circle are two separate events, they'll need to be told so they can prepare. I don't want them blaming us if downworlders start dying."

"What about my mother?"

"Like I said, we'll check some of Valentine's old hideouts."

"The thing you have to understand," Alec told her, "is that portals exist. You can step from one corner of the earth to the other. She could be anywhere, even a different continent."

Oh, like Susan used. Maybe their magic is similar? I never heard of wand magic being able to cut holes in the air, so not all magic can do all things, apparently.

"How convenient," she muttered.

"Usually it is," Hodge admitted. "If you're not, oh, just to throw something out there, cursed never to leave the building you're in."

"Yes, yes, we know, Hodge. You did it to yourself," Jace told him.

"If these 'downworlders' don't trust you, will they even come to a meeting?" Lysanias asked.

"I hope so. It'll have to be tonight, so the vampires can get here. But it might take that long to get word to each group anyway so that's not a problem. Meanwhile Clary can head to her house and Lysanias can get an overview of making wards and talismans ready for us."

"Actually, there was a reason I asked. Would they be more likely to come if we offered them something?"

"Like what?"

"I was thinking I could make some little gold charms, one for each leader. Like a claw for the werewolves and a fang for the vampires. Show them the carrot rather than the stick. And in the invitation, propose more than just an alliance, propose actually letting anyone connected to the supernatural world have a place in the organization."

"What?" they all gasped.

"You know what I see when I look around this table? Hearing about your organization has just cemented the fact that essentially you guys are the this world's Jedi."

"Wait, from Star Wars?" asked Clary. "Simon loves those movies. Well, not the prequels so much but--"

"Those... what now?"

"Movies. You know, light sabers, the force, Yoda."

Lysanias gaped at her. "How in the world do you know about all that?"

"Uh, you think girls can't like Star Wars? I've seen them, I watched them with Simon."

"What? No, I'm talking about Yoda. How do you know who that is?"

"The movies, like I said."

"Movies. I'm talking about this!" He got his shield out and pulled his light saber from the back, which of course activated it. Now it was Clary's turn to be astonished.

"That's a real light saber," she told everyone.

"I know it's a real light saber. I built it. With some help, of course, from Obi-Wan and the others. How do you know about stuff from other worlds?"

"Wait, you met Obi-Wan?"

"Yeah."

"And Yoda?"

"Little green guy, found him on a jungle planet."

"But it's just a movie."

"It's not. I was just there." He pressed the button on the saber and the blade winked out so he could put it back. He made the shield vanish again.

"I don't know. Maybe another wanderer like yourself came here in the past and told the story of what happened there?"

"Maybe. I'll ask Susan, she'll know. The point is, if you know what the Jedi went through, you'll agree with me."

"He's right," Clary admitted. "The Jedi got wiped out. But how does that relate here?"

"The Jedi were an organization of force users. None of them had skill with a blaster. Or wore armor. Or had any different ideas. They got wiped out in a day. They were concentrated all in one place, and they all had the same powers. That made them vulnerable. If they had diversified, been more than just a club for force users, they might not have been wiped out. I don't want the same thing to happen here."

"So you're saying let anyone that wants to fight demons, in whatever way they can, into the group?" Isabelle asked.

"Exactly. Wouldn't having a magic user at your side be of great benefit in a fight? Maybe the reason there's animosity between you all is because they feel left out."

"But they're half demon," Alec told him. "Of course they feel left out."

"What does that matter? They're people. If this Valentine can betray the organization then anyone can, just being an artificer isn't enough. You have to take each person on their own merits."

Hodge rubbed his chin. "This is a pretty big change you're proposing. But I could see benefits to it."

"What?" Alec and Jace both said.

"Think about it. Your reaction actually shows just how badly we need to do something exactly like this. Do we really understand the downworld? How hard it is to be a vampire? How lonely it is to be a warlock? Having them close would let us keep an eye on things better, maybe head off problems before they become bigger problems. We should at least consider it until this current crisis is over. If nothing else, to show we're being completely straight with the other groups."

"I don't want to get to know them," Alec announced.

"Oh come on, big brother, there are great seelie I could introduce you to."

"Thanks. But no."

Oh, they're brother and sister!

"Your loss, believe me." Her eyes rolled back, just remembering.

"We can't trust them," Jace reiterated.

“You can’t trust me!” Hodge told him. “I was a circle member, remember?” He pointed to his neck. “But here I am, giving this consideration. He’s right, having only one kind of person in this organization is short sighted.”

“The clave would never go for it.”

“Too bad. It’s my responsibility to keep you all safe. Normally that means training you, keeping the gear in good shape, maintaining contacts. This is just another thing I can do which will make sure you all stay safe. Lysanias, tell me what you need to make these golden objects. Do you need gold? Are you just reshaping it with wards? I’ll draft a letter to each faction inviting them to come tonight and discuss things.”

“I just need some rocks, or some scrap metal you don’t need anymore.”

“We’ll find you something. And you’ll start the training? Today?”

“I’ll start when the objects are finished. It won’t take long.”

“Great. Thank you. For everything.” He left.

They found him some scraps which he turned into gold and reshaped with alchemy powers, creating a golden fang, claw, hand with a flame balanced on it, and a tiny winged fairy. Isabelle was delighted with each, the others were impressed but didn’t want to show it. He read over the notes to each faction and attached the charm to it, then handed them out be delivered. Isabelle said she would take the seele one, having contacts there apparently. Hodge assigned others to take care of the rest, then get back there and start training.

While all this was going on Clary got a call from her friend Simon, who had visited the house and found it trashed. She said everything was fine, and to stay away from her for the time being. She had to convince him for some time, but promised to show him some mind blowing stuff later. “It goes vawooo, shawooooo, that’s your only clue!” He finally relented, but only after she assured him she was safe, and “the police” were taking care of the people that trashed her house.

Lysanias spoke all day about ward and talisman making, showing the various wards he already knew how to create and how he would go about creating new ones. He also showed using different materials, like sticks and leaves to make them rather than ink and paper. Checking his padform over he also noticed a new section under “artificer” about circles, and explained about them. Apparently they were like giant, immobile wards that could be made permanent, and could do things like heal or seal a demon inside. With some help from the others he figured out how to connect to the printers in the place and was impressed to see the designs spewing out on paper. They remarked how like their own technology this was, though much more responsive and not needing to be charged up in any way.

I suppose with something this morphable, just a screen basically, it can look however it wants. For all I know when they look at it, the screen changes to be something they would understand, and then changes back to “normal” when I look at it. And given what powers it, a place of undreamed of technological power, it incorporates ideas from many different realities. Just like I can talk to anyone, maybe it can talk to anything, like these printers.

After lunch Clary and the others went out to see about getting some of her mother’s possessions to try and track her, but came back looking down. It hadn’t worked. Clary threw herself back into her work, probably trying to keep her mind off it. She really was a great artist, and seemed to be picking up at least the armor ward, which she made again and again to solidify it in her mind.

About 2:00 in the afternoon the group got some sleep, so they could attend the meeting. After sundown they started to arrive, the first was-

“Luke?” Clary blurted, as the dark skinned man walked into the room.

“Clary!” he returned, rushing forward to grab her up in a hug. “I’ve been beside myself with worry. How is it you’re here?”

“I could ask you the same thing! I went to the station and you were saying how you didn’t care about me, only about the cup. And some other horrible stuff, actually. In fact, I’m not even sure I’m happy to see you.” She shoved him.

“Come on, don’t be like that! I had to say all that stuff, throw Valentine’s men off the scent. I couldn’t let them know how important to me you were. I really am glad you’re safe.”

“Mom isn’t. She got taken.”

“I’m sorry to hear that. We’ll find her, somehow,” he promised.

“Who is we, exactly. I thought this was a downworld meeting? Are they calling in normal policemen too?”

He laughed. “I’m a werewolf, Clary. I used to be a shadowhunter, though. Got infected many years ago, occupational hazard, so I never thought I would be allowed back here again. But here I am. Must be something big going on. Does it have to do with all the demons lately?”

Wait, if someone becomes a werewolf they lose their nature as an artificer? I suppose that makes sense. He glanced up, as though asking the local Allfather; You don’t want a vampire werewolf artificer running around, is that it? It’s one thing or the other. Seems reasonable.

“Partly. But wait, you’re a werewolf? And I never knew? I am starting to hate my mother right now! Come and tell me everything!”

He got pulled to the side, and the next to arrive was a vampire, who immediately started whining about his skin burning off and dying or something.

“Oh crap!” Lysanias finally realized as his skin actually started smoking and burning away. “It’s my sword!” He hastily drew it and shoved it into subspace. “I forget all about that, I’m really sorry! The hilt is made of solidified sunlight, so of course it will be harmful to you.”

“Solidified what now?” he asked.

“Sunlight. It’s an alchemical thing. I can show you the moonlight one later... Er, when the werewolves aren’t around, I guess? I should have thought of it, I’ll be more careful in the future.”

“You carry sunlight around with you?”

“Well, I never knew any vampires until now! I just wanted a handy light source and a glowing sword hilt is cool.”

“I see.”

Next into the room was a man dressed rather flamboyantly, who also stopped dead and stared at “Clary?”

“What?” She looked over at the guy, recognition dawning on her face. “Hey, I saw you at the club last night! You looked at me like you knew me.”

“I do know you. You’re Clary. What are you doing here?”

“Believe me, that’s something I’d love to know myself. But here I am. You’re what? A warlock, I guess, as the others have arrived already?”

“That’s right. We should talk after. There’s some things you’re going to want to know about your mother.”

“What hasn’t she told me about *this* time?”

“Wait, are you the one that sealed her memories away?” Luke asked.

“That would be me,” he admitted. “In the flesh.”

“Wait, my memory was sealed by *magic*?” She looked horrified. “Oh, is my mother going to get an earful when I rescue her. After I hug her for like an hour, I’m going to smack her face, see that I don’t!”

“She was just trying to protect you, and I only did it under the strongest of protests,” he protested.

“Protect me. Right. Like leaving me ignorant of all this somehow keeps me safe. I could have been doing runes and shoving stuff into paper the whole time. *That* would have kept me safe. Not flailing around in the dark.”

“Where is your mother, anyway?”

“Gone. Some people grabbed her. They think she knows where the cup is.”

“She might, I wouldn’t put it past her. This situation is going to spiral out of control, isn’t it?”

“Not if we work together.”

He snorted.

“Really. Hodge is open to the idea, at least give us a chance. It’s me asking, you owe me that much at least. For the memories you messed with.”

He gave a slight bow. “For you, of course I’ll at least entertain the idea.”

Last in was a little girl, and Hodge’s and Isabelle’s eyes flew open wide. Both went to one knee.

“Your majesty,” Hodge told her, looking down. “Your presence honors us beyond words.”

Chapter 5

The Logical Course of Action

When: No time has passed

Where: Meeting room

“It does, doesn’t it?” the queen replied, allowing her hand to be kissed. The guard that had accompanied her glared at the man, as if daring him to move. He was armored and armed, with large arms that had their share of scars. He was a fighter all right.

“We didn’t expect you, majesty. A representative, yes, but not you, yourself. Our simple setting here is far too plain for the likes of you. Please allow me to apologize.”

“No need,” she assured him. “Please, rise. Isabelle is known to me, as are you by reputation. But tell me, who made this darling little charm?” She dangled the tiny fairy before him.

“That would be Lysanias,” Hodge said, rising. “Lysanias, please step forward and meet her majesty, queen of the fairies.”

Naturally our hero had no clue what protocol was for meeting royalty so he just did the same thing, going down on one knee. “Majesty.”

“Now, now, no need for that, like I said.” She tilted his head up and looked into his eyes. “You are interesting, aren’t you? Those eyes... I’ve never seen the like. How did you make this, exactly? I feel a tiny spark of power left in it.”

“With alchemy, majesty. I reshaped a nugget of gold,” *that I made out of garbage*, “to be that shape.”

“True alchemy. It does exist. Extraordinary. As was the content of the letter I received. You actually wish to propose an alliance with us?”

“That is our intent, majesty.”

“I can’t *wait* to see how that goes. Shall we sit?”

“Of course. Please,” Hodge offered, moving a chair out for her.

Now, if I was Inari I would use the force to yank the chair out from under her when she went to sit down. But I’m not, so I guess I won’t do that.

“Thank you. Please begin, I see that we’re all here.”

“If the rest of you would like to be seated?” Hodge asked. They went around the table, seating themselves. “Thank you for coming. There are a few issues I would like to talk to you about tonight, all of which are extremely important. The first is this: The circle seems active again, they are searching for the mortal cup and have taken prisoner one who they think saw it last. We don’t think they’ve found it yet, given we’re not being overrun with demons, but it’s only a matter of time.”

“Let’s talk about demons,” Luke suggested. “My pack has been attacked twice this week. What’s that all about?”

“We have been attacked too,” the vampire told them.

“We’re doing what we can,” Hodge told them. “Patrols are being increased, but no new people can be brought in. Demon attacks are increasing around the world, so there’s no place to pull more people from. We may know the reason it’s happening, which is the second reason for calling you here. Lysanias?”

Great, once more I get to make speeches. “Right. The truth is, I’m not from this world at all...” Once again he went through who he was and why he was here, showing them various things he could do that that Magnus, the warlock, assured them were not magic. Though he did magic too, making food for them which for the vampire was a bowl of blood, which he figured and had the bowl ready.

“Somewhat bland,” he reported, after drinking it down. “But appreciated. It would sustain me, and stave off the cravings, so there’s that. Say we believe you. What do you want from us?”

“That brings us to the third point, an alliance between us. And more than that, we want vampires, werewolves, etc. to actually consider themselves shadowhunters. They would get training, they would get our resources, naturally they would have to follow our laws. I thought maybe two from each group to start, then perhaps expanding the program when that was done?”

“Has the clave given the okay?” Luke asked.

“This situation calls for speed, not endless debate,” Hodge told him. “Let’s get through this situation, prove the concept works, and then I’ll take it to them.”

“Bold,” said the queen. “If some of my subjects did that I might have them killed. I might not though.”

“So wait, you want a couple of vampires to hang out here, and go on patrols and things?” asked the vampire.

“Exactly. They still answer to you, ultimately, but on the clock with us they do whatever normal shadowhunters do. Protect the mundane world from supernatural threats.”

“Until this thing with the shadow avatar is taken care of, but possibly permanently. Also possibly more at a later time.”

“That’s right. If the program is expanded and every group sends five, then five it shall be. I don’t want six vampires and one werewolf, that wouldn’t be any better.”

“I agree.”

“And what are we to gain for our assistance?” asked the queen.

“They’ll be paid a regular shadowhunter salary, and be given the opportunity to buy wards for use outside the job. I don’t know what wards yet, but the armor one certainly. Lysanias is showing us how to create our own, using our own knowledge of angelic runes, so we should have more shortly. As shadowhunters we would keep nothing from you, and the good will generated is somewhat its own reward. If you had a problem suited to being solved by us, your members could bring it to our attention and we would act on it. Just as if any current member brought something to us.”

“I wonder how history would have been different if we had done this years ago,” Luke mused. “When I became a werewolf my bond bother, Valentine, told me to kill myself. I didn’t. Obviously. But if there had been werewolves in the organization before that, if he had gotten to know some and fought beside them, wouldn’t our friendship have continued? Would the circle even been thought of?”

“There has been so much mistrust though,” the vampire claimed. “Can we really change now?”

“Change is life,” Magnus put in. “You stop changing, you die. A warlock shadowhunter. What a strange idea. A compelling one in a certain sense though.”

“I have something to offer as well,” Lysanias put in. “At least for the trial portion of the new cooperation effort.” He slammed a chunk of gold down on the table. “At your option- this one kilogram chunk of gold *or* a personalized talisman. To be given to the individual that brings information leading to Clary’s mother being found. A talisman, to define the word in my terms, is an object with supernatural power put into it, and they can be and do just about anything. Luke, you want a ring that stops your aging? A talisman can do it. Raphael do you want to walk in the sunshine? A sunglasses talisman can do it. Probably not as useful for the warlocks, magic can do a lot, but maybe there’s something I can let you do that you couldn’t on your own. But that’s why the option for the gold, I’m pretty sure anyone can find a use for a huge chunk of gold.”

"I could throw some killer parties with it," Magnus agreed.

"Same with the seele, I don't know what would interest you. If neither of these things interests you, then say what would. I'll see what I can do."

The queen looked thoughtful.

"Just to be clear, that is *pure* gold?" Magnus asked, almost salivating.

"Pure gold. But I'm not done." He slammed an even bigger chunk down, and eyes really popped. "*Ten* kilograms *and* a talisman to anyone that brings in the cup. They seem to think it's fairly important, making me wonder how they lost it in the first place, but that's not here or there. I don't want anyone holding out on us. If you have the cup, if you've heard even a rumor that pans out, this is the prize for recovering it. No questions asked how you came to have it. Just wealth like you've never seen and a supernaturally active object of your choice. And a thank you by the grave, I should think. But this offer is just between you guys and me. Tell your people, the reward is open to all."

"You're really serious about this!" Luke exclaimed.

"Can I touch it?" asked Magnus.

"Sure. But I'm watching you. Any magical trickery and I'll be very cross. I *can* feel it, so no tricks."

"No, no, nothing like that." He touched it. "Wow."

"What would we do with a chunk of gold that size?" Rapheal asked. "How would we even explain to someone that can get a fraction of the value how we got it?"

Lysanias simply touched it, shattering it and making it collapse onto itself as separate small disks. He flipped one to the vampire, who caught it. "Is that better? Far easier to work with, don't you think? You can visit every shop in the city that deals with gold with some story and have a pile of money before the day is done."

"You're a handy guy to have around," Isabelle exclaimed.

"I withdraw my complaint." He passed it back.

"So, you know why you're here. Let's discuss it," Hodge told them. "Pros and cons, for and against, all that sort of thing. We need to move on this, before things get worse. And I'd like to step up patrols this very day so any more manpower we can get from your groups would be appreciated."

"Let's talk about that," Luke requested. "Like I said, my pack has been attacked twice lately. We managed to fight them off because they were outnumbered and actually seemed rather surprised to be there. But we didn't kill any of them, just drove them off. It takes marked blades to actually kill demons. Just like it takes silver to kill us, demons regenerate. They can hurt us, we can hurt them, but it's a stalemate. The best we can do is drive each other back. How are we supposed to help long term?"

"That's where Lysanias comes in," Hodge explained.

"Talismans," he agreed, somewhat confused. "Or wards. We can simply make whatever weapons you want to use into talismans. They should be able to harm demons just fine." *Are demons different here? Do they all have regeneration?*

"Not according to the iron sisters," Luke protested. "And in fact, watch!" He got up from the table and went over to a rack of weapons, hefting a blade. "See, it doesn't light up. Now..." He handed it to Clary, and it lit up, glowing from within. "She can do it, and she's probably never held a sword in her life!"

"Well, that's stupid," Lysanias told them. "Let me see that!" He took it from Clary and it died down again. He felt inside of it, and it was still supernaturally active, but according to the runes he saw burned into the metal- "Oh, I get it." He shook his head. "What were they thinking?"

"What is it?" asked Hodge.

He tapped them. "They went out of their way to make sure only artificers could use this," he explained. "My book talks about it, but as I'm not an artificer I didn't pay much attention. But that's got to be it. Actually it's a little easier to make them this way, but not by much. This could easily have been made to light up when anyone touched it," he told Luke. "They just wanted to be snobbish and keep anyone else from using it. The techniques I teach, and the talismans I make won't have that limitation. You'll be able to hurt demons just fine, believe me." He handed the sword back and Luke took it back over to the rack. "Wait, what about those arrows?" he asked Alec. "They couldn't have all those runes all over them!"

"The bow does though," he explained. "It imparts the ability to hurt demons when they're fired. It only lasts a second, and the arrowheads are made of the same metal as the swords. It works the same way. Remind me to ask about bullets and guns later."

"Ah. Well, again, that can be changed."

"I can tell you about guns," Hodge promised them.

"So you've been holding out on us for thousands of years?" Raphael asked.

"Don't blame us," Hodge insisted. "The iron sisters insist their techniques must remain secret. And without the outside perspective of Lysanias, telling us how to *actually* use our powers, we never would have known. I mean, think about it, we could have been making weapons anyone could use and those that didn't want to have marks applied to themselves, or didn't want to risk drinking from the cup, could still have fought as shadowhunters. We could have been making wards, which they could have used in place of marks for protection or enhancement. We've been shooting ourselves in the foot just as much as keeping things from you. I mean you could have remained a shadowhunter, Luke, heck been a better one given you can't be hurt as easily."

"I suppose that's true."

"And sunlight hurts demons too," Jace told them. "Any team without vampires could carry that solid sunlight, if Lysanias can make us some more of that. Make daggers out of it or something."

"Or a talisman to make more, given he won't be around forever," Alec suggested.

"I might be able to do that. I don't know how daggers would hold up, but I've gotten better at alchemy with that potion practice I was doing on my last reality. They might."

"And there are other ways to hurt demons, like holy water," Isabelle reminded them. "We can discuss various methods anyone can use."

"And if there's no way, because things just work differently here than Lysanias believes," Hodge told them, "you can still help. Free up someone that can use the seraph blades out there by staying here. Track demons in the city and coordinate us. Hurt them and let one of us finish them off. Any work is useful work around here."

"Okay," Luke agreed. "I guess there's some hope for this alliance then."

While the others talked about specifics Clary leaned over to Lysanias, who had put the gold away but was flipping one of the coins in his hand to remind them. It was just a featureless disk, but it proved the point. "Thank you," she whispered. "I didn't expect that sort of reward for having my mother found. But they wouldn't care as much without it."

"No problem," he said back. "I thought of making it ten and a hundred, but then figured that could seriously destabilize the economy around here. But I needed something to grab their attention early and make this all worth their while. These are groups that have long been at odds, they'll need every excuse, I mean opportunity, to work together. Get them working together now competing for the reward, keep them working together after I leave once they have some momentum going."

"From what I've seen here, I agree."

“And how do we know the cup isn’t here?” the queen asked at one point. “This could all be a trick for all I know.”

“Honestly, your majesty, if we had the cup we would be training and making new shadowhunters. Not reaching out a hand to you. Now if it’s hidden here, fine, that’s a different story, but you think someone would have stumbled upon it by now.”

“Is there some ability of Lysanias to check?” she asked.

He slammed his head down on the table. “I looked for Clary’s mom but not the cup,” he admitted. “Sometimes I can be so stupid!” *Of course, I did basically just learn about it, but still, I could have offered right away.*

“Indeed, you are still only human,” the queen agreed. “Perhaps that should be done at once?”

He raised his head again. “I’ll do it immediately, majesty. I can stay, so you can see there are no tricks involved, but I’ll have to ask for quiet for the next ten minutes. Oh, and I’ll briefly need the sword it helps me cast magic. I’ll do the same thing I did last night, you guys know what it is.”

“I have no idea what you did last night,” Alec admitted. “You sat there for a moment and led us to some demons.”

“Exactly. Turn away if you would, Raphael, thank you.” He got the sword out, cast *augment skill* on himself, and put it back.

Now then, I ask the universe this question: Where is the current location of the object these people have called the ‘mortal’ cup?

Nowhere

That can’t be good.

“The answer I got back was nowhere,” he told them, ten minutes later. “Can it be destroyed?”

“It’s gone?” Hodge asked, face draining of blood. “No, it can’t be!”

“It could,” Luke countered. “If she thought it was the only way to keep it out of Valentine’s hands.”

“No, no, I mean, you really think so?”

“It could be the reason it hasn’t turned up all those years. I mean it’s been twenty years, or nearly that. And no one has even stumbled upon a rumor of where it went? That’s pretty unlikely, right?”

“But can it be destroyed?” Lysanias repeated. “I mean physically? My sword can’t, and anything as important as this cup I would make sure stuck around.”

“Sure, it’s just a cup. It’s all beat up from being around for so long, so it’s not unbreakable.”

Oh, right, I forget these guys aren’t artificers yet, not in the way I think of them. They wouldn’t have known how to do that.

“We’re so very, very screwed right now, aren’t we?” Hodge asked no one in particular.

“Maybe,” Lysanias admitted. “How was the first one created? I mean if it makes artificers, then artificers couldn’t have existed before the cup did. Therefore an artificer didn’t make it. Was it magic?”

“It was an angel. An angel saw how helpless we were against demons and such, and offered to help us. They spilled their blood into a cup, and ever since then, those that drink from the cup become sha- artificers.”

"Then your solution is simple. Get the angel back here, apologize for losing the first one, then make a plea for them to create another."

"Just like that?" the queen asked. "Even we can't just snap our fingers and have angels appear. Nor would we dare."

"I wouldn't say it was *that* easy, but I could do it. I've done it before, well, once before. I'll need more information on what type of angel this is, and some time to modify the ritual I used to summon the angel of death, as it's the only one I know at the moment. As long as they aren't too powerful I can sustain them here and you can talk to them."

"You can bend the Heavens to your will?"

He shook his head. "I can't *make* the angel do anything. I can just get them here. The artificers have to convince them." *Unless using the force would work on them? Something tells me that would backfire sooner or later though. Given what Susan went through, mind controlling an angel might be seen in a negative light by Heaven.*

"Ah, I see. Still."

"I guess I'll have to cede the title to you," Jace told him. "For the moment."

"Title?" Luke asked.

"Greatest shadowhunter ever."

"Ah."

So eventually it was decided each group would send two representatives, a man and a woman, to see about becoming shadowhunters. This too was to promote balance, and get as wide a range of talents as possible.

"After all, if we're going to do this, let's do it right," Hodge had told them.

They all agreed to send the "volunteers" the next day (or night in the case of the vampires) and the meeting broke up. Hodge thanked them all for coming, and while the queen and Raphael departed, the other two stayed to talk to Clary.

"So what did you do to me?" she demanded.

"Your mother didn't want you involved in the supernatural world, so basically she had me put a spell on you. Anything out of the ordinary you saw would immediately be locked away and you wouldn't be able to access it. Then every two years your mother came to me and I summoned a memory demon. It consumed your memories so your brain didn't explode, and the now empty portion of your brain started accumulating memories for the next two years."

"You fed my memories to a demon? How could you do that?"

"Because your mother paid me to!"

"She- oh. I suppose that's as good a reason as any. By *God* my mother is going to get an earful when I rescue her."

"I didn't want to. I thought it was a bad idea. But she insisted."

"And if you didn't do it, someone else would have, is that right?"

"Probably. And not as well, either. I figured it might as well be me, that way at least I knew nothing was left to chance. Dealing with demons isn't something even I do lightly, Clary. But if something has to be done, then do it properly."

"A warlock with a work ethic, what is the world coming to?" Luke joked.

"Look around, darned if I know."

"Granted."

"So can we get them back?"

"With difficulty. We would have to summon the demon, and convince it to return those memories to you. It would want something in exchange."

"It's a memory demon, so probably other, different, memories."

“Probably.”

“Wait, how come she isn’t forgetting now?” Lysanias asked. “You do remember yesterday, right? And doing wards, and the stele and everything?”

“Good point, why do I remember all that now?”

“Your brain space is full,” he reasoned. “It was past time for your next appointment.”

“But my mother gave me the stele. She must have been about to tell me!”

“I can’t know your mother’s mind, Clary. But I think that’s a safe assumption.”

“So what do I do? How many people to summon the demon?”

“The more people, the stronger the barrier that is created so it doesn’t break free and rampage around.”

“Maybe less cost too, more people to spread it around.”

“I don’t think they think like that.”

“Oh.”

“There’s a few things to consider here,” Lysanias cautioned her. “The first is, do you like who you are now?”

“What?”

“Just what I said. Do you like who you are now? You get a whole bunch of memories back and you’ll be a different person.”

“That’s true, we are our memories,” Magnus agreed. “Your personality might change, given the things you’ve seen and forgotten.”

“Oh. I do like who I am now, actually. And maybe I saw some really horrible stuff growing up, and would be really traumatized by it now. That would be no fun.”

“But there’s one thing we can do, to give you a taste of what you’re missing. Two years isn’t that much, granted, but those memories haven’t been purged. The block may have been created with magic, but I bet I could break it by melding with you. Going into your mind, essentially, and tearing it down with my own. That would unlock your recent past, anyway, and maybe give you a better idea what you’ve forgotten. Then you can know if it’s worth pursuing earlier years.”

“It wouldn’t hurt me, would it?” she asked Magnus. “Would your spell ‘fight back’ as it were?”

“I have no idea how it would manifest if you actually went into her mind and tried to undo it. I don’t think it would be a risk.”

Clary considered. “I want to know what my mother was trying to protect me from. I can’t ask these strangers to risk their memories, or their lives if it breaks free. But if I can get the last two years back? I’d like to.”

“Then we’ll do it. Right now, if you want. It shouldn’t take long.”

“What do I do?”

“I just have to touch you. Better sit down, just in case, then we’ll begin.”

“Okay.” They sat across from each other and Lysanias held out a hand. “Oh no, we’re doing this the right way.” He looked questioningly at her. “Do what I do.” She put her fingers on the side of Lysanias’ face, and he repeated the gesture. “My mind to your mind,” she intoned.

“My mind to your mind.”

“My thoughts to your thoughts.”

“My thoughts to your thoughts.”

She struggled not to giggle and nodded.

Lysanias went into her head.

Chapter 6

You're Inside me Right Now

When: Just then

Where: ???

Lysanias was unsure what to expect when he merged his conscience with Clary's, perhaps a mountain range guarded by a dragon? Perhaps a bank vault guarded by dozens of officers that bristled with weapons of all kinds? Perhaps even a lonely pyramid set in an endless wasteland of sand, full of death traps and denizens of the underworld? But these ideas paled to where he actually found himself, which seemed to be a control room of some sort, staffed by five odd looking people. They were turned away from him and looking at a black wall, and he wasn't sure how to let them know he was there without startling them. Each one spoke in turn.

"She's closed her eyes, now we're blind until she opens them again!"

"I know what her closing her eyes means."

"It's more than that, look, the timecode stop moving."

"What?"

All the figures looked at where the one was pointing, at a number in the corner of the display that was no longer moving.

"What did that guy do to us? I knew we shouldn't have trusted him!"

"But he's teaching us to make wards, which makes us safer. We have to trust him."

"Ha! He's probably got some ulterior motive."

"Where is that guy, anyway?"

"Probably running around someplace out there, trying to get past the wall."

"I wish him luck."

"Hey, I do too. If that wall comes down we get access to a lot of memories. He's trying to help us."

"By freezing us in time?"

"What if he crashed us?"

"What if we'll never open our eyes again?"

"Guys, guys, come on. He knows what he's doing. Let's have a little faith."

"It's just blackness. What are we supposed to do, just sit here and wait until the picture comes back?"

"We could look out and see where he might- Uh, guys?" The blue one on the end had turned around and was looking at him.

"What is it, sadness?"

"Uh, he's in here with us."

"Well of course he is. We're melded together, whatever that means. He wants to help bring the wall down he explained that." As he said this the figure was pushing buttons on the control panel, but nothing happened.

"No, I mean he's *here*, in this room, *with us*."

"Don't be absurd- oh my gosh hide!" The purple one had turned and then jumped over the console to hide behind it.

"What in the world?" asked the red one. "What are you doing here?"

"Well hi!" greeted the thin, glowing one. She skipped over to him. "I'm Joy, you must be Lysanias? Welcome!" She grabbed his hand and started shaking it. "It's so nice to meet you in person."

"Don't touch him, you don't know where he's been," cautioned the purple one.

"Oh poo, that's nonsense. Come on out, you too sadness."

“Do I have to?”

“Yes!”

“Fine.”

“I’m sorry, who are you?” Lysanias asked as the two figures came out from hiding.

“We’re aspects of Clary’s psyche,” Joy told him. “This is Vanity.”

“Humph.” The green one flipped her hair and looked away. She looked female, and dressed very well in something stylish.

“Anger.”

“You hurt us, and I will find a way to end you,” promised the red one. He looked male, and was rather wide. He was wearing a jumpsuit of some kind.

“And Paranoia.”

“You haven’t brought any diseases with you from other worlds, have you?” asked the purple one. He was quite slender and dressed in a suit and tie.

“And I’m Joy!” She twirled and raised her hands.

Joy to the world? That’s quite the assortment.

“We’re here at the control center, and out there,” she skipped a few steps past him, “are the core memory islands!” Lysanias turned, and opposite the now darkened screen was a series of windows, overlooking a large drop that separated the tower they were in from a themed group of landmasses in the distance. “There’s family island, and art island I just love that one, and friendship island-”

“What’s that dark one over there?” Lysanias pointed at a hazy and indistinct island at the far end. The others were full of imagery, like art island looking hand drawn and being part landscape, part random objects, while family island featured her mother’s picture predominantly in the center. But this one was dark and foreboding, and he could only get glimpses of what went on there.

“We don’t know,” Anger told him. “Along with the memory diversion trap that stupid warlock set up in here, that place is somewhere we’ve never been able to access.”

“The what?”

“Oh, come look, it’s such a great system!” Joy told him. “I mean, it was…” She pulled him to the edges of the room where multi-colored balls about the size of a head rested on shelves. “These are all the memories she’s made today so far. These shelves will fill up as she’s awake, and then go down to long term storage when she’s asleep. But you see this?” She indicated a path the balls could go down that looked hastily tacked on, secured with chains and locks. “Everything relating to what I guess we would call artificing gets pulled down here.”

“The manuals don’t really say where it goes from there,” Sadness told him. “Probably because it came later. But we can guess. Sometimes when Clary is feeling really good, and the place lights up, you can see over to long term storage. There’s a walled off area down there. We think there’s a direct line from here to there somehow.”

“Sadness here has read most of the manuals,” Joy bragged. “She’s an expert.”

“No I’m not.”

“You are! Come on, admit it.”

“No.”

“Oh, and here’s the most important part!” Joy ran over to the center of the room, beckoning him.

She really does like to be in motion, doesn’t she?

“These are the core memories. The ones that create the islands, and give Clary her whole personality.” Under the floor was a series of glowing orbs, a beam of light shining out and striking, or more accurately creating, the islands. “It’s this dark one that came fairly early

on that makes the dark island over there. I know it was a joyful memory, but not what it was about. It wasn't always dark, of course. It was like the others until Magnus did what he did to us."

"He really messed us up," Vanity told him.

"I can't imagine what mom was thinking," Anger added. "When I heard it was him, oh, I got so mad!"

"It probably hurt her to do it," Sadness told them. "She must have been very sad to do it."

"Ha! You don't remember any more than we do. If she was going to be sad, then she shouldn't have done it."

"So that's us!" Joy told him. "You're here to fix all this, right?"

"If I can. But I'm not sure where to start."

"We can't do anything from here, believe me, we've tried. I can tell you, when Clary is working on wards the dark island lights up, just a little. It's connected to the supernatural world."

"Duh," snipped Vanity.

Joy went on. "I think we're going to have to get access to the sealed memories before that island will light up again fully. Or maybe it'll just take time, as Clary learns more about what being an artificer slash shadowhunter means. I don't know."

"Manual doesn't say, that's for sure," Sadness agreed. "Doesn't mention anything about dark islands."

"But even then, we have to get this redirection system taken care of," Paranoia told him, rattling one of the chains. "It subverts the entire workings. If we could get these chains off we could tear it out, I'm sure. But where's the key?"

"So even if you got access to the sealed area, it wouldn't mean much?"

"Exactly," Anger agreed. "Her short term memory would still be impacted. It's jammed up now so nothing can go down and be sealed, but at the same time these memories she is accumulating can't stay here!"

"And they're mostly relating to the supernatural," Paranoia showed him. "So we're running out of short term space!"

"You mean if this problem isn't fixed, she might not be able to remember *anything* new?"

"That's right," sadness told him. "But if you did clear the blockage, letting the memories flow, without tearing this out they would still be diverted. She could remember something about the supernatural world a week from now, but anything in front of her wouldn't be retained."

"That could really be dangerous," Paranoia told them. "Especially with how, ahem, hot headed Clary can be."

"I'm just doing my job," Anger told them. "You stick to what you know, and I'll stick to what I know!"

"Old argument," Joy told him. "So, there's the elevator to the lower level. I guess you'll want to get started, right?"

"I suppose. I need to look for a key, probably guarded so it's not easy to get these chains off, a walled off section of long term storage, and possibly investigate the island to see if it's not this end causing it to be black like that, but something on the island itself causing it to be dark."

"Hey, you're a real pro!" Joy gushed. "You'll have this fixed in no time!"

“Speaking of time, we’re not exactly stopped,” Paranoia told them. “Look at the timecode.”

Everyone looked over at the display, and Anger nodded. “Yup, it moved all right. That’s just great. Time is actually passing out there, so you better hurry up.”

“Yeah. We’ll keep her still as long as we can,” Sadness told him. “I’m pretty good at that. But even I can’t hold her here forever. Joy likes her to move around.”

“Huh, maybe I should make a happiness circle,” Joy wondered.

“And one of you can’t come with me? I’ll need you to interpret what I’m seeing out there.”

“Are you crazy?” Paranoia told him, backing away and squishing against the far wall. “If one of us was lost out there, Clary would never be able to feel what we represent. Ever. Again.”

“So I’m on my own?”

“Hey, it’s okay!” Joy consoled him. “You’re used to it, right? Reality traveler and everything? Just think of this as another reality to explore.”

“One inside a young woman’s mind.”

“It’s a jungle out there,” Paranoia warned. “Be careful.”

“Thanks, that’s really helpful.”

“Good luck!” they all told him, and he pushed the button for the elevator.

Why have an elevator if you’re not going to leave this place?

It dinged and he stepped inside. There was a single button for the ground floor and one for the control room, so he pushed the ground floor and the door smoothly closed. The car descended.

Great, once more alone into the great unknown. What is with those four, anyway? I figured it would be more like my soulscape, not this entire... whatever this is. Memory factory? Processing plant? Wait a second, I’m not alone. Mountain spirit? The spirit shimmered into existence next to him, looking around at the tube they were in.

What a strange place, they said to him. Still, my assistance is yours, as always.

“Thanks. I feel a little better having you at my side. If you’re around my other abilities should work. This isn’t exactly the soulscape of another, but rather their mental landscape. So as long as I believe something works, it should. I wonder if my wand would work? Magic or the memory of it?”

Wouldn’t Rosalina be more useful here anyway? Another set of eyes, and she has her own powers.

He processed this a moment. “Probably. I’m glad I came with you, buddy!” He looked, and there was the sword at his side, or at least his memory of it. It came complete with wand and stele, so he grabbed the wand. He was about to call her out but then realized that was to get her out into the real world. This was just the memory of her. Instead he gently laid her down in his palm. “Rosalina, wake up.” He tickled the side of the wand.

He heard a giggle and standing there in her ‘princess’ outfit was Rosalina, stretching cutely and fluttering her eyelashes. “Good morning!”

“Morning, sleepy head. Want to explore the inside of Clary’s head with me?”

“I suppose I should hang out, keep you away from anything you shouldn’t be seeing.” She smiled and put her hand over his eyes a second.

“Oh, like what?”

“Never you mind. Wait, this can’t be everything it’s just a box.”

“No, this is the elevator. We should arrive shortly, I arrived in the control room.”

She giggled again. “I know.”

Finally the doors opened, and the three peeked out. Radiating off in all directions were paths leading to the various areas of Clary's mental landscape.

"Where do we even start? We need a key to unlock the chains, then two locations to investigate. The memory storage area that's sealed off, and the dark island."

Wouldn't the key be in one of the two places? Maybe behind whatever seal keeps the memories separate?

"Would it be that easy?" Rosalina asked. "The guy who did this is the high warlock for the entire area. He wouldn't be sloppy about it."

He might, given he didn't want to do this in the first place.

"He didn't expect someone to come along that could enter her mental landscape either. That's got to count for something. Now the key could be anywhere, we need clues," Lysanias decided. "Let's start with a physical location, maybe there will be signs of what to look for."

"Memory storage?" Rosalina asked, pointing with her wand.

"That seems closest. Let's start there," he agreed.

Just keep an eye out. We are intruders here. There may be mental defenses as there is an immune system in the body.

"Good point."

The three made their way towards the endless shelves that held every memory ever collected by Clary. Nothing attacked them, but a train did chug overhead, doing who knows what. They stood at basically the entrance to a maze, the shelves far too high to see over in order to keep their destination in sight.

I fear to grow any larger, I do not want to bang into anything. One shelf goes down, they'll all go down.

"Actually, I can help with this one!" Rosalina announced. She carefully set her wand in the air, where it stayed, and clapped her hands together. Slowly drawing them apart one of those yellow star creatures appeared, and started dancing in the air. "Hey you," she told it. "We need to get to that sealed off section. Can you keep us on track?" The star creature gave a quick salute and rose into the air, then dramatically pointed off into the distance.

"What are those little guys, anyway?" Lysanias asked her as she took her wand in hand again.

"I'm actually not sure," she admitted, looking up at the one again as it started dancing again. "They've always hung around, and they seem to have some effect on my own level of power. If you happen to see any, make sure to let me know."

"I will, not that I ever have before. But maybe your being around will make some show up? But we move across realities, wouldn't they just be found back where you were... made? Born? Crafted?"

She laughed. "Any of those is fine. Where do we all come from?"

"Where do we all belong?"

"Exactly. All us lonely people. Well, who knows what we'll see out there?"

"From what I've already seen, I can hardly dare to guess. I'll keep an eye out for any creatures dancing with the stars though."

"Thanks."

With the dancing star to lead them, the group made their way through the endless shelves of memory spheres. Some were brighter than others, but all matched up with the colors of the emotions Lysanias had met up in the control booth. He didn't want to actually

touch one, but peering at them they did seem to be memories, playing over and over and over again in a loop.

"You know, it's not nice to stare at a girl's memories," Rosalina chided him.

"Oh, but a boy's memories would be just fine?"

"Sure. Boys don't have anything to hide."

He snickered. "I'm sure you're right."

Moving on the star finally zipped down to them, holding up a hand and then pointing around the next corner.

"We need to be careful, something is in the next hallway," Rosalina reported.

Shall I take a look? I'm the least vulnerable.

"No you're not. Remember, this isn't the real world. Everything is a memory here, so you can be hurt because you're just a memory too."

I wonder if that's true? I have my memory about not being hurt by anything.

"Which might be fine if we were walking around my memory storage, but Clary's? I don't want to chance it. I remember feeling at least part of your pain, and taking part of your injuries." *Though I don't know exactly what it would mean if you were injured. Would you simply be hurt "mentally" and just feel pain but have no wound outside here?*

"Which means I should go?" Rosina asked. "I'm not connected to you, and I can make my bubbles."

"Check it out," he agreed.

Rosalina stepped around the corner, wand out, and gasped.

"What is it?" he whispered to her.

"Try not to gasp when you see what Clary looks like now!"

"Huh?" He stepped around the corner to see Clary getting up from the floor, looking over at them. She looked a bit older, and she wasn't wearing anything but runes. They covered much of her skin, under which rippled taut muscles as she gracefully sprang up and grabbed a retracted serif blade and stele.

My goodness I want that body. She looks so strong, look at those abs. I'm such a wimp compared to her. She looks more muscled than Korra, who basically spent her whole life training as the Avatar. "Clary? What are you doing here?" he asked. "And why do you look like that?"

"Intruders must be dealt with," she said in answer, and turned away from them. Next to her was a row of what looked like marble statues, all of her, and each was holding two blades. She went to the first and ran her stele over it, causing a rune to appear. She breathed on it and spoke. "Awaken." It raised the blades.

"Clary, come on, it's us. Lysanias and company. We're here to help you, help you remember the supernatural world. We won't hurt you."

"I'm not Clary," she repeated. "But I can see how you would make that mistake. I'm told I resemble her."

"Then who are you?" Rosalina asked. "Stop staring!" she chided Lysanias.

"I don't mind. I'm her potential. I'm what she could become." She drew another rune on the next statue, and it too came to life as she breathed on it and said "awaken."

"So then help us!" Lysanias pleaded. "Don't you want Clary to become you in the future?" *Because I want Clary to become you in the future.*

"I want her to follow her own path. Become whoever *she* wants to be. I am simply one possibility. But I am the one that has been harnessed to guard the door to the archive." She indicated the door she was in front of.

"The spell compels you do to this?" Rosalina asked, eyes narrowed.

“That is correct. I am sorry, but we all have our chain to carry. This one is mine.” Her blade activated and she turned to the statues. “Attack them.”
All three started forward.

Chapter 7

Round 1: Fight

When: Start of the combat

Where: Hallway outside the sealed room

With the constructs and Clary now rushing them Lysanias weighed his options. He felt he probably couldn't chi-block this Clary, because technically she wasn't flesh and blood. She didn't have a nervous system to disrupt, and he wondered if she even had spiritual energy in any case. *She did activate those statues with something though.* He wasn't sure he did, to put a rather fine point on things. Besides, beating up various parts of her psyche was not what he felt he was going to have to do once he got in here. He didn't want to use fire or air bending, there were shelves of memories to the left and he didn't know how fragile they would be. He briefly considered just stopping her with the force, but her runes were glowing and she looked fairly strong, she could probably break out of it.

That left a straight up sword fight and trying to think of some way to immobilize her because destroying Clary's potential was also not on the agenda for the moment. So as she got closer he drew his sword and called upon the memory of his shield, finding it on his left. Meanwhile the spirit shifted their stance and made a sweeping motion to the right which accomplished nothing.

Apparently they are not stone, it remarked. *This is going to be a problem.*

And it was, as the first blade in the hand of the statue was speeding towards the spirit. They tried to deflect it, bringing a fist down to knock it aside. They barely managed it, then had to do the same as the other one came slashing in.

The second statue tied the same with Rosalina, who tried to deflect the blades before they reached her. A barrier surrounded her, no doubt one of her "bubbles" but she hadn't been fast enough. The sword was stuck through it and had hit her, but only just. It had only been told to attack so that's what it did, trying to smash the barrier down with the blade in its other hand. It managed to get through, striking her in her wand arm (she's left handed, like her dad Luigi!) and slicing it pretty deeply. She cried out, scrambling back from the blades which were now both stuck inside the barrier.

"Hang on Rosalita!" Lysanias shouted. *Are these things just that good, or is she not as good as she thinks?*

Clary was now upon him, her serif blade darting in and making him think about his armor and how he had not thought about it hard enough to get it out before he had started all this. *Stupid, as usual.* This was a real problem because he found he had a blade through the chest. *Ow.* To add insult to injury Clary whipped her stele forward as well, drawing part of a rune on him.

Lysanias knew he had a second while she recovered, and considered retreat. *But she's not going to be any less skilled in a few minutes, and I can maybe use this situation to my advantage. Even though she just almost killed me.* As she was drawing the sword back he brought his down on top of it, wincing in pain as he did so. But the sword always struck true, and cared little for Lysanias' pain. The blades met and the ultimate sword shattered the other, the inner glow winking out as it did. Lysanias recalled the way the last healing ward looked, slapping it on himself with his left hand. It healed part of the gash, but he was still in a lot of pain.

The statue was now trying to strike again, but the two blades were held fast by the barrier. Rosalina whipped her wand past them, and stars seemed to shoot out, impacting the blades. They cracked but held.

Lysanias pulled another healing ward from nowhere, healing the gash further but still only about halfway across his chest. *How much damage did that girl do to me? Side note: never take armor off again.*

The other statue and the spirit went for each other again, this time the spirit wanted to try immobilizing the blades. They grabbed for them as they came slicing through the air, trying to control them. They managed to get one, the other was pulled back too quickly.

Clary's blade, what was left of it, vanished, but she didn't throw the hilt down. Instead he slashed with the stele again, making Lysanias jump back to try and get away from it. He wasn't used to dodging, practicing more with the shield, or perhaps the range on a stele was greater than he thought, and another dark line appeared on his body. *Just what does she think she's doing?*

The spirit, having grabbed at least one of the blades, grew in size, lifting the statue and trying to bash it into Clary. This happened at the same time as Lysanias went to smack her arm with the flat of the blade, hopefully to get her to drop the stele. He instead chopped into the statue as Clary hopped back, faster than he thought she could have. The blade, not in position, bounced off the statue harmlessly. The statue, for its part, tried to swing at the spirit but the blade couldn't reach. *Great, even if it hits 100% of the time, it can't account for something getting in the way like that. Plus was that even an attack from the sword's point of view? I wasn't trying to cut, but bash. Ragnarok would be ashamed, I should have just chopped her hand off. But I suppose that's "dark side" as Yoda would say.*

The other statue tried again to attack Rosalina, but again the blades didn't budge.

Lysanias decided to heal himself again, as Clary was now behind the statue dangling in the air. The spirit took that opportunity to step in front of Lysanias and try bashing the one statue with the other. It seemed the statue either couldn't release the blades and dodge or having been told only to attack wasn't smart enough to dodge. Cracks developed in both where they smacked together but both held.

Rosalina again sent shining stars out of her wand, whipping the tip of it against both blades. The one blade splintered and the statue pulled back what was left of it from the barrier, but didn't get away totally as the other, crumbling but whole, was still stuck there. Lysanias decided to finish the job, smashing the blade with his own and causing the statue to stumble back. It now had only a few centimeters of blade protruding from the hilts it was holding, and Lysanias wondered if it was smart enough to know that, or would try to attack as though holding the blades still. He didn't have long to wait, as the statue tried attacking the barrier but missed entirely. *Whew.*

But Clary now darted back towards him, and to his astonishment she was holding a whole seraph blade again. *Did it regenerate or something?* He again tried blocking her, but her blade dipped and cut into his leg, making him wince again. *Just how good is this part of her? I'm being guided by the force, and I still can't seem to defend myself against her. Of course, I don't want to just take her head off, either, but you would think I could block!*

While he was distracted with that her stele snaked forward again, completing the rune she had been working on. As pain shot through his body he saw it was the word "agony" in angelic script, so that made sense. This registered to him only hazily though, the agony rune living up to its name in a most distressing manor. Clary was now smirking at him, thinking this combat was basically over. But Lysanias, even doubled over in pain, knew something she didn't. Anything supernatural, from wards and talismans to things he manipulated with alchemy had spirit energy in them. And he could draw the energy out of things using the technique he had learned on Korra's world. So he concentrated on the spot where the ward was, hoping even here in Clary's mind, this "ward" would be similar. He wasn't sure if just this thought process worked to disrupt the ward as he tried to pull the energy from it, or if he

actually got something out of it, given this was all happening in a mental landscape. But it worked just the same. The pain and the marking vanished, and he took a deep breath in relief. *Don't let her put runes on you anymore!*

"Are you all right?" Rosalina asked.

"I'm fine, keep trying to figure out a way to deal with her!"

The spirit smashed the two statues together again, leaving them distracted enough Rosalina felt okay with dropping her barrier. She concentrated and a pile of chain appeared next to her. As it seemed she had a plan, Lysanias put his shield out as Clary moved towards him again. Standing sideways he wouldn't be able to strike at her very well with his blade, but hopefully would have an easier time defending from hers. To his surprise the blow didn't come, instead she concentrated on her stele, drawing another rune. This time, on his shield. *Now what's she up to?* He didn't want her completing it so he tried grabbing it with the force and yanking it out of her hand. She held onto it. *Great, why doesn't that surprise me?*

Rosalina started casting something, slower than normal because of the gash in her arm, she figured she wanted to make this work and taking the full time was worth it. This allowed Clary to finish the rune and activate it, destroying the cover. She blinked, as he was still holding the back.

Thank goodness that was just the memory of it she destroyed. Also, how? It's made of the toughest metal there is! These rune things are serious business, or she's just that good. "My shield comes in two parts," he told her. "Good luck destroying the back." *You can't put a ward on a hole in space to another- Wait, would that part even work? Could I send Clary to the memory of my personal dimension?* He tried yanking her stele away again, almost managing it but she quickly grabbed it and yanked it back again. *Oh come on! What, did she glue it to her hand? Actually, maybe one of those runes is sticking it to her hand. Huh.*

With a grimace she slashed at his legs, trying to get under the shield. It worked, and he cried out again, his leg buckling under his weight as she nearly chopped it off. He now threw up his barrier, the lifestreaming one so a green energy field appeared between them. Clary went for the finishing blow, trying to stab straight through it but Rosalina finished casting at the same time. The chain vanished and appeared around her, winding up the length of her body and constricting her movements.

"Gotcha!" she cried as Clary, unbalanced, fell against the barrier. She started straining to be released, and as the chain wasn't really secured in any way he felt she would manage it in short order.

Time to roll the dice. He dropped his barrier and basically bashed her in the head with the shield, making her vanish. With the greater threat gone the three finished destroying the statues, Lysanias pulling the energy that animated them out at a distance, and making them crumble. *Guess they can only be activated once. Still, what was that?*

"Are you all right?" Rosalina asked him, kneeling by his side. She started casting, and his leg started knitting itself back together.

"I'll live. This is only the memory of my leg anyway. I don't think my real one would suddenly fly off because I lost this one."

"You think... or you know?"

"It might be painful... I don't know, I've never had this kind of meld before. It seems different every time. Ow, careful!"

"Sorry."

We need practice, the spirit remarked, shrinking back down to the normal size. Also I think that thing wasn't holding the sword, so much as it had been sculpted with a sword in its hand. It was essentially all one piece.

"We need something," he admitted. "Did you see how she was moving? One young girl should not have been that much trouble for an experienced wanderer. Not that I'm all *that* experienced, of course."

You were holding back. You could have just exploded her head off her shoulders with space bending.

"Maybe. I'm not all that practiced at that. But I couldn't even block her once. If anyone needs practice it's me, blocking stuff."

You did use the opportunity well of her sticking you with the blade. If it hadn't regenerated that might have made the fight much easier. You could just as easily stabbed her in return, but I feel you didn't want to chance 'killing' this part of her potential.

"That I could have done, and you're right, I didn't want to risk really hurting her."

"It's my fault," Rosalina told them. "I'm the newest member. I'm the weak link."

"Hey, it's okay!" Lysanias told her. "You did your part, and you need to see to that arm, actually. I can heal myself, you heal you."

"Okay." She looked away, looking almost like she could cry at any moment and not just because of the pain in her arm.

"Hey, look at me." He took her chin and moved her head back. "You did fine. This was your first real combat, and you made the critical difference at the end. That's huge."

But the fact remains, we must now practice fighting together. Working as a unit and not three separate beings. We are all connected to you, we need to fight like that as well. Perhaps Rosalina should have defended us and left both statues to me.

He shook his head. "Every fight is going to be different. If there had been only one statue, or both had gone for me, or if there had been three it would have been very different. But I agree that later we should go over what happened, maybe come up with something similar in the soulscape, and see what other tactics we could have used. Fighting as a team *is* worthwhile to practice. We're all we've got, after all. And you did fine, believe me. That statue was made to take out anything, and there were two of them. You got the blades away from it, and you're still alive. I call that a win, so be happy, not sad. Go over what we've learned today, do a little better next time. Okay?"

"Okay."

"Good. For now we got past Clary, mission accomplished. Let's take this wall down."

"Where is she, anyway?"

"That's a good question, I'm not really sure. My shield leads to my personal dimension, so I guess the memory of it? So she's inside my memory of my personal dimension inside Clary's mental landscape? The idea of my head hurts, so I'm not going to question it, just be glad it worked. I'll just have to be sure to get her out before I leave, who knows what would happen to her otherwise."

More than likely she would just remain behind, wherever you left from.

"Perhaps, but I can't take that chance."

She will probably attack you again.

"We can be ready for her this time. Armor wards and armor, to start."

"Don't you know a spell to cancel out magic? My magic works, why wouldn't yours?"

"It's a wanded spell, I'd have to turn you back for it to work." *But she did admit to being under the influence of a spell. She rushed us right afterwards, but I didn't think to call Rosalina back and cast it. I just went for the sword. Dumb!*

“You could teach it to me. I’ve been practicing the wand movements, and like you I can’t mess up the pronunciation of the spell. I could probably get it off, I know how to do magic otherwise.”

Heh, a wand practicing wand movements, what’s next? Fish practicing swimming like fish? “That’s actually a decent idea. In fact, I bet you could wear the circlet. Making you that much better at magic would compensate for your never using the spell before. You don’t remember it making your magic better, but I do, and you’re a part of me so it should work.”

“I’m just another part of you.” She started doing a little dance and then did something really weird.

“Why are you walking like that?”

“Like what?”

“Backwards- you know what, I don’t want to know. The point is, it would make me think your magic should be better if you were wearing it, so it would be, right? I’ll go over the spell with you before we let her out. For now we have to tackle this wall.”

“Right.”

The group turned to the wall, which seemed to be a high iron wall with no door. Lysanias ran his hands over it, wondering how best to get it down. A thought struck him. “Thanks for wrapping up Clary like that, by the way. How did you make those chains, and get them around her like that?”

“Oh, that. I can make things appear out of thin air, it’s one of my innate powers. The chains I used magic for. It’s a spell to cause an object to do something it was intended to do. I made the chains to wrap up Clary, the spell allowed them to fulfill that function.”

“Nice! You have innate powers in addition to magic?” *Are they like my identity gift? Just stuff she can do because she’s a wand spirit?* “And now that I ask that I realize I should have asked you that before instead of kart racing you.” *To be fair I didn’t consider that she would, so why would I have asked?*

“Why couldn’t you have done both? You were getting to know me, so either is legit. And the kart racing is fun, come on, admit it!”

“I don’t deny it.”

“By the way, you don’t mind if I put a golf course around the mountain in your soulscape, right? I remembered I love to play golf, something else the mountain spirit could do with me while we’re not active.”

“What the heck is golf?”

“It’s a game. Needs a lot of space though, but as your soulscape is mostly empty space and one mountain, it’s ideal.”

“It’s fine, I’m not using the space.”

“Thanks, I’ve got some great ideas for a course... anyway, my powers are telekinesis, I can move things without touching them.”

“I’m familiar.”

“Telepathy, but only with those I can see.”

He snapped his fingers. “That’s how you talk to the star people?”

“Exactly. And they’re actually called Lumas.” She looked up and beckoned the one down, now that the combat was over. “Come down little one, the danger has passed.”

Forgot about that little guy. “Oh. Nice to meet you,” Lysanias said to it. “Do you have individual names?”

It waved and shook itself, indicating no.

“I’ll just call you Luma then. Thanks for leading us here. Do you mind staying? Who knows when we could use you again.”

It gave a salute.

"I guess that's a yes."

"They're pretty friendly, at least to me. They don't mind helping. Where was I? My ability to create things, and I'm good at figuring out what spirits want or have to say. Is that a power? I seem to think so. If you ever need help with spirits, I'm your girl!"

Could have used that before, but oh well.

"I also seem to have soaked up a lot of knowledge from somewhere, I almost seem to recall sitting in a lonely tower surrounded by books. So I've read a lot, or at least I seem to recall doing that but can't imagine where or how. As far as my magic repertoire, I have a few innate spells focusing on protection and can learn more from you. But you knew that, you just need to call me out with greater regularity before I start learning stuff from you. I have one ultimate spell though, that can pretty much destroy anything. It takes a little while to get going but it can't be stopped once I do."

How fortunate for us, we have the time and something we really need destroyed.

"Wait, you mean... this?" She indicated the wall.

"Hey, that's a fantastic idea, mountain spirit! I'd love to see this 'ultimate' spell, and what it can do."

"I don't mind. But you'd best stand well back."

The group moved back as directed by Rosalina who began concentrating. She pointed with her wand and several of the Lumas appeared, forming a ring in the air. They turned in a circle and Lysanias felt heat building in the center of where they were facing. They put their little arms out and he had to quickly look away as a *miniature sun* sprang into existence above the wall, and started melting the top of it. It was hard to look at, but shading his eyes he watched as she brought the orb down on one corner of the wall, then melted her way along one side of it, leaving a puddle of molten iron that was quickly cooling into a lump. She then directed it with her wand as high as she could make it go, then let the spell go, causing it to explode in the air. Heat washed over the group, and Rosalina turned to them, grinning like a maniac.

"And *that* is how you harness the power of the cosmos. What did you think?"

"That was amazing!" Lysanias told her honestly, running over to her and putting both hands on her shoulders. "You weren't kidding, that spell would burn anything nearby to a crisp in seconds. If I need a glacier melted or something, I know who to call. I'm glad you picked me to wield you, Rosalina."

"Well, likewise," she admitted, coloring and looking down. "Thanks for taking me out of that dusty shop and on your adventure. I can't wait to see what's next."

"Me either."

Much as I hate to ruin this moment, we have company.

"Huh?"

The two looked over and they were being joined by several... several... *Upright, blue jelly beans in hard hats? With arms and legs?*

"Hey everyone," said the closest one. "The wall is down!"

*Of course that's just a theory. A *Game Theory*. Thanks for reading.

Chapter 8

No Straightforward Answers

When: A moment later

Where: On the way to the island

It turned out that the blue “people” that came over were workers, the ones that sorted and maintained the memory archive that was all around them. They disposed of memories that were too old and taking up space uselessly. And they took the memories that headquarters sent down and stacked them on the shelves for easy access. With the wall down a group of them swarmed into the area to hook up the retrieval system and start sorting. The group walked around, the workers obviously proud of the system they had in place for memory movement and were happy to show them how it worked. The inside of the wall was a disaster, of course, with a tube that looked hastily tacked onto the system simply dumping the memories in the center of the walled off area in a big pile. So the need for sorting and cleanup was great. They didn’t seem to mind though, getting to work immediately straightening the area up.

When questioned about keys, other guardians, other restricted areas, and the dark island the workers were less helpful. They were forthcoming, answering questions to the best of their ability as far as Lysanias could tell, but didn’t have much to tell. They were specialized and stuck to their work, which was basically never ending. Of the island they said they rarely went there, as no memories were there. They had never been attacked while touring it, but said the darkness was creepy and only went if dared to while off duty, and very, very drunk.

What are they drinking, and how would it cause Clary to behave?

They knew nothing about keys but said the subconscious had plenty of weird stuff floating around, try there. They provided directions on how to get there, but as the islands were closer they decided to try there first. The workers wished them well and the group headed off.

They were able to skirt the edge of the memory area, the Luma hovering overhead to keep them on track. Once they got nearer they saw the islands were floating, but were anchored at the back with a bridge and a thick chain to the main area they were walking on. Crossing the bridge plunged them into a starry twilight, a full moon overhead the greatest source of light.

That was an abrupt change.

“Almost like stepping into another world,” Rosalina agreed. “This seems a dark reflection of the city she lives in. I can’t even see the other islands or where we came from.” She looked up, and the Luma pointed back the way they came. “I guess they can, so at the very least we should be able to get out of here.”

“Still, you see that large building there?” Lysanias pointed. The others looked up at it, the tallest building they could see. “If we get separated, head there.”

I’m not sure I can be separated from you by any more distance than in the real world.

“Just in case. Who knows what’s going to happen in here?”

“He’s got a point.”

The group moved about the empty streets, the city seemingly intact as though the people simply got up and left one day. Streetlight didn’t shine, and the stoplights

didn't work, which was fine as no car moved anywhere on the streets. Cars were parked everywhere, but no one entered them. The place was not silent however, as howls could be heard in the distance along with high pitched laughter sometimes as close as the other side of a food vender cart. But nothing was there when they looked.

You don't think the spell darkened this place, making it scarier and thus, less likely Clary would want to remember, do you?

"That's a possibility," Lysanias agreed. "I don't really see any clues in here. Perhaps we should head back?"

"Wait, what are they so excited about?" Rosalina was pointing her wand at the Luma, frantically pointing in one direction.

"Think they saw something?"

Or are perhaps suggesting we run in that direction away from something? The spirit looked the other way, but didn't see anything.

"They say there's light in that direction. Not a lot of it, but light."

"We can check it out."

The group moved towards the center of the city and stopped in front of a bank that had lights on, spilling out into the streets.

"Now isn't that interesting?" Lysanias asked into the stillness. "Think we could make a withdrawal?"

I saw something moving in there.

"I suppose we could learn from our mistakes..." Lysanias envisioned the armor around his body, then put armor wards on himself and the others. He drew his sword and had his shield out as well, and had the spirit open the door while he stepped inside. It seemed much warmer in here, and far more inviting, despite being a regular looking bank. Three figures were playing some kind of card game at a table and jumped up in shock as the door opened.

"Great, we could hardly handle one," Rosalina complained, looking the three over. Obviously all three were Clary, but each looked a little different. One Clary looked pale and gaunt, with black hair and very red lips. She was dressed in black, and there was a red cape thrown over the chair she had been sitting at. The one next to her looked more bestial, with gray hair, and a hairier body as well. She was stooped a little bit and had a snarl on her face. Her clothing was looser, and she had a "werewolves of London" t-shirt on. Her arms were the hairiest Lysanias had ever seen on anyone. The third looked almost normal apart from the cat's tail swishing behind her. She had on a skirt and a top that looked like a cat's face was looking out from it.

No one said anything for a moment.

"Can I help you?" asked cat tail Clary.

Rosalina nudged Lysanias. *Great, now my wand spirit is doing it.* "We're here looking for clues as to why the island is dark," he told them. "We saw the light and stopped in here."

"It's dark because that warlock Magnus pulled the light out," cat Clary explained. "We managed to find it and put it here, safest place we could think of. We're guarding it."

"From what? This is all Clary! Isn't it?" *Maybe from her potential? But she was guarding the door, she wouldn't have left it, right?*

"In case the warlock comes back, of course," said wolf Clary, as if it was obvious. "We won't make it easy for him to totally extinguish the light of this place."

“How do we know this isn’t the warlock?” asked vampire Clary. “Trying to trick us?”

“He does have weird eyes,” cat Clary admitted, walking over to him. “But what animal has eyes like that?”

“Call headquarters,” he suggested. “Any of them up there can vouch for me.”

“Oh, like Joy would say anything bad about anybody,” vamp Clary scoffed. “I don’t think so.”

“Talk to sadness then, or anger. Paranoia, not so much though, probably.”

“He talks like he’s been up there,” wolf Clary admitted.

“That doesn’t mean anything,” cat Clary told them.

“I think it does,” vamp Clary protested. “The magic was totally different. This is a man, not some magical construct. Plus, the light is still gone from this place, what reason would the warlock have to mess about now? He just renews the spell around the memory depot after feeding the memories to the demon. I don’t know that he even knows we’ve hidden the light of this island.”

“You’re well informed for being in here,” Rosalina told them.

“We keep up,” cat Clary told them. “We have our part to play.”

And what part is that, if I may ask?

“I suppose it wouldn’t hurt to tell you. I’m Clary’s courage,” said wolf Clary. “The feelings of being with a pack. The hunter inside her.”

“I represent her wisdom,” said vamp Clary. “I’ll live forever, learning and experiencing. I’m her thirst to know all there is to know, and to live to the best of my ability.”

“And I represent her power,” cat Clary said. “Her fighting spirit, her ability to overcome adversity. My magic keeps us safe, and helped to secure the light here in the vault.”

“You’re all part of her? Why aren’t you up in the control room?”

Power shook her head. “Only five can be up there at any one time. Right now they’re dominant. We have other things to do.”

“Guarding this light.”

“That’s right.”

Why do you all look like Clary, while up in the control room they took on different appearances?

“I have no idea. Why do you look like you do?”

I am the spirit of the mountain. How else would I look?

“Exactly. We feel the same way. I’m sure those up at control do too. If Clary visualized herself as something more powerful than herself as a warlock, I would look like that,” Power explained.

“It’s not like we’re actually *here*,” Wisdom told him. “Partly you see us as how you expect to see us. I mean you don’t really think there are tiny rooms inside Clary’s head, right?”

“Of course not!”

“There you are.”

In any case, aren’t we wasting time? Clary needs the light of her island back, and you have it. Please do what you need to in order to verify our story so we can move on.

“I guess I’ll have to,” Power admitted. She went over to the desk and picked up the phone, dialing it. “It’s ringing.”

“ .. ”

“Hello, Joy, this is-”

“ .. ”

“Yes, it’s good to hear your voice-”

“ .. ”

“Too long, yes. The reason for-”

“ .. ”

“No, it’s just-”

“ .. ”

“If I could just-”

“ .. ”

“Yes I know that, but-”

“ .. ”

“Hello?”

“ .. ”

“Thank you.” She put her hand over the phone. “It’s sadness.” She listened again. “I’m calling because some weird looking characters are down here claiming to be looking for the light of Clary’s island of the supernatural.”

Not it.

“Not it!” Rosalina announced.

What are they talking- weird looking characters. “Not- Darn it!”

“Ha ha!”

“Very funny, you two.”

It is. Have you looked at yourself? I mean what exactly are you supposed to be, anyway?

“Asks the guy who looks like a tiny mountain.”

Uh yeah, I look totally normal.

“Oh, they are?” Power looked them over. “You’re sure? Wait, they did what? The wall is down? That’s... surprising to say the least. What did they do with Potential? What do you mean you don’t know, you lost track of her?” She glared at Lysanias.

“What did you do to Potential?”

“She’s fine, we’ll let her out before we leave.”

“You better, Clary needs her. Okay, I’ll give it to them. Thanks.” She hung up.

“Sadness vouches for you. So does Joy, for what that’s worth. I’ll go get it.”

“Thank you.”

She vanished into the back and they heard a vault door opening, and Power came out holding a shining triangle. It was green, red, and blue, each third stuck together at the corners, leaving a triangular hole in the middle.

“Ah!” Lysanias reached for it. “Thank-”

“Ah ah ah,” Power pulled it back. “I’m not just giving it to you.”

“What?”

She went over and put it on the table, and the other two gathered around. “Like we talked about, girls.”

The three concentrated and the three colored sections broke apart, rising into the air. They went in three different directions, through the walls of the bank and out of sight.

“Oh, come on!”

"We have to do this properly, you know that," Wisdom told him. "Find my piece where the wise would go."

"Find my piece where courage is needed."

"Find my piece in a place of power. Well, that's it. Good luck to you!" The girls started cleaning up their game. "Guess we'll be on our way, there's nothing for us to guard here, after all. If you can get the city running again, great, I've got a nice apartment picked out."

"That's it, just 'go find it yourself?' It was right there, why did you do that?"

"Are you saying you aren't worthy of it?" Wisdom asked.

"How does making me run all over putting that back together make me worthy?"

"I don't know, it just does. It's in the rules somewhere, you can't just *hand over* artifacts of power. They have to be *earned*. I mean right?"

The other two nodded.

"We had to go find it," Power told him. "You think we should do all the hard work for you?"

"Have the courage to go forth and collect the fragments," Courage encouraged.

"I've no choice now, do I?" Lysanias complained. "They're still at least on the island, right?"

"Another hint? What do we look like, a strategy guide?" asked Wisdom.

"A what?"

"Never mind. Yes, they're still on the island."

"Thank you for that, at least."

"Of course. Have fun!" They left.

Now what?

"Think we should spit up?" Rosalina asked. "Can we even split up? I mean I figure I probably can..."

"We are on a schedule here, that's probably best," Lysanias admitted. "Rosalina, you're on wisdom. Mountain spirit, why don't you take courage? If we can separate, and I think we can, as my body is still sitting out in the conference room. You're not really apart from me."

From a certain point of view.

"Exactly. That tall building we saw, make for that, remember?"

"We do. Good luck!" Rosalina wished them, and the three went out of the bank, which no longer had light coming out the windows. The three took a different direction, and Lysanias found he could be away from the mountain spirit, but still see through its eyes if he needed to.

So that leaves me with power. Where does the power come from around here? Some kind of government building maybe? But how am I going to tell what building that is?

He wandered the streets, not even sure where to begin. The place inside Clary's mind that modeled her awareness of the supernatural seemed to exactly mirror the city she lived in. Thus it was packed full of buildings all with different architectural styles which had changed as time went on and more and more buildings were constructed. He was pretty sure the numerous churches he passed weren't the key here, unlike at home this place didn't have open demon gates one could stumble through and faith wasn't an integral part of daily life. *So that's not where the power comes from.*

There were maps, plastered onto the sides of bus terminal shelters but he had no idea what he was really looking for, so that wasn't much help. They were more labeled with street names not "here's where the mayor lives!" anyway. He was standing before one, scowling at it and wondering if his ability to ask the universe a question would work in here because, technically, this universe was the inside of Clary's mental process and a conceptual framework not a real place. *But then how do I know 'out there' is a real place anyway? It could just be a framework for- hello?* That's when out of the corner of his eye he saw movement, and jerked his head up at the thing that was now above him. Balancing on a high wire above him was a small yellow creature, who seemed to be biting the wire for some reason. It had two red circles on its cheeks and a black tail that stuck out, narrow at the base but wider at the top. He walked over and looked up at it, wondering what this could represent and what it was doing up there.

Then it fell.

He hastily reached out with the force, catching it before it splattered all over the ground, and drew the unresisting creature towards him. It seemed weak, not caring that it was now floating through the air, and almost seemed to be falling asleep. "Are you okay?" he asked it.

"Pichu," it replied, then almost as if this utterance was too much for it, went further limp.

"Hey, stay with me!" He scooped it up and held it, looking over the tiny body for signs of injury. It didn't look hurt, and was less than half a meter tall. It was primarily yellow, with some black stripes along the back, and had tiny claws at the end of each foot. Turning his senses on the creature he realized something. "You're starving, aren't you? Poor thing." He stroked its back with one hand, looking around. It was soft, though felt bony as if it hadn't eaten in some time. "With this place deserted like this, there's been nothing for you to eat, is that it? But what *are* you? Why are you running around? Why not just leave and head to another island. Can you not do that?"

It had no answer.

"What do you even eat? I mean you're just an abstract concept of something, right? *Would* you need to eat? Why am I talking to myself?" He looked around and headed off. *A city has people. People keep pets. Pets need to be fed. Ergo, there are places to get food for pets in cities with people. This might not be a pet, I mean it's cute enough to be the mascot of any sort of internationally recognized company, but maybe it is. In any case, there must be something at a place that sells pet food I could feed to them. I mean look at this little guy, he or she is cute enough to make me want to catch them all. Someone must have caught one and is caring for it, and everyone eats sort of the same kinds of food, right? If it's really hungry like it seems, it shouldn't be picky, so would probably eat anything close to what it normally would 'in the wild.'*

He found a shop with different animals painted on the windows and pushed his way inside. As with the bank it looked as though ready for business, with stocked shelves ready for people to come and buy. *Let's see what you might want to eat.* He found a plush bed and set the little creature into it, where they sleepily looked up at him. "Stay here, I'll see what I can find." He walked the shelves, pulling out bags of seed, cans of food with fishes on them, something that looked like a can of stew, whatever he could find that looked edible.

Wait, is this getting me closer to the mystery of the power center of this place? But I can't just let this little thing die, can I? Can it even die? I wasn't really getting

anywhere, I might as well take care of this, it should only take a minute. He scattered the seeds before the “Pichu” and opened the cans, setting them on the counter. The creature looked up at him like “eat this? Are you crazy? None of this is right for me, and can’t you get a plate or something? I’m not an animal.” (Yes, it was a very complex and nuanced look.)

“I can keep looking,” he told it. “What, you don’t eat, like, live crickets or something do you?”

“Pichu.”

“Right. Sure.” He looked around. *What else might he want? There was nothing alive, if he eats bugs or something... but then wouldn’t he have been able to fend for himself? Does everything represent something here, or are there ‘animals’ that just run around? I mean in that case would there be ‘bugs’ too? I just don’t know enough about this inner landscape business to know. I certainly didn’t expect to find all this in here. But back to the problem at hand. He’s pretty big, he must eat something substantial. Grass? Not a lot of that around here. Besides, I see his teeth, they’re not a unicorns’ flat teeth for grinding up grass. They’re sharp, like a vampires’, for puncturing something. What else can I offer? I mean that’s meat, right? It must be either a meat eater or a grain eater, and I’ve got both here.* His gaze swept the counter, thinking maybe there was a manual of what things might want to eat behind the counter so an employee could look it up. *Or maybe I can check the book section? I saw some care manuals maybe one of them might be about this little one? Wait, what’s that?* He saw a boxy shape and went around the counter to look at it. *That’s a keyboard, Susan showed me one after I stole typing from her, and how the screen one mimicked a real device. That must be the screen, and that’s the main unit? I think this is a computer, just broken into various parts, unlike the padform that’s more portable! She told me about these! Okay, now this could help, if I can figure out how to use it could this have information about various creatures that live here? Susan showed me I can use my ability to generate power to actually run things like this, so let’s give it a try.*

He traced the cables in the back of each thing, one cable going from the square on the desk to the boxy unit, one going to a place a cable on the boxy unit went to. *Ah hah! They have to get power from a single source, and yes, that thing with the plugs runs into the wall. I can put energy into that and it should power both of these devices. I really do have to learn more about technology somehow. I mean Han could hit a few buttons and travel halfway across the galaxy, but it was more blinking lights and panels of buttons. Machines can take so many forms, how am I expected to figure them all out? At least this is somewhat similar to my padform, and I’m learning how to use that. It can’t be that different, right? Expectations and all that? I’m interacting with it, maybe like the three Clary I met it will look how I expect it to look and can look things up as though using my Hub powered device. But about ‘in universe’ knowledge like what this guy needs to eat.*

He grabbed the plug out of the wall and held the cable in his hand, applying what he hoped was a minimal amount of power. *Susan said not to put too much into this, I could overload what I’m trying to power and burn it out.* With his other hand he reached for the activator switch he figured was on each piece, just like there was an activator switch on his padform. But he froze because the yellow creature was there, looking down at his hand. “Pichu?” it asked hopefully.

“Er, what?”

“Pi! Pi!” It pointed.

“What, you know how to use a computer?” he asked, a bushel of doubt in his voice.

“Pichu! Chu! Pichuuu!”

“I have no idea what you’re saying, which is actually weird for me. I need some sort of ‘talk to animals’ spell...” He brought the cable closer you. “Why are you pointing at this?”

With surprising speed the mouse like creature jumped to his hand and bit the cable, electrocuting himself.

“Hey wait!” Lysanias cried as the little guy fried himself.

Chapter 9

Finding the Pieces

When: Just after Pikachu zapped himself

Where: Pet store inside Clary's mind

Naturally, as the "Pichu" chomped down on the electric cable and started doing whatever it was doing, Lysanias cut the power off.

"Pichu?" asked the creature. "Pi! Pi!" It was frantically biting the cable, as if it wanted more-

"Power? Is *that* what you eat?" He sent a trickle of energy into the wire again, then more as the creature didn't seem to die, but instead absorb the energy he was putting into it. He couldn't keep it up for long, but the creature finally seemed to have enough and jumped down.

"Pichu!" it exclaimed, running in a circle.

"You seem happier," he remarked. "What in the world are you, eating raw electricity?"

"Pichu!" it answered, as if that much should be obvious.

Though I suppose it's not real electricity any more than I'm the real me. It eats the idea of electricity? Or just power in general... wait a minute. "Are you a *clue*? That the power I'm supposed to restore here isn't power in the political sense, but the literal one? Restore power to the island?"

"Chu?"

"It does seem a bit coincidental. Well, little Pichu, maybe you can lead me to where the power is supposed to come from?"

"Pi?"

"Right, how would you know?" He let the cable go and the Pikachu jumped on him, nuzzling him and licking his face.

"Pi! Chu chu! Pichuuu!"

"Yes, yes," he said with a laugh. "You're welcome. Come on, we've got work to do little one."

"Pichu."

He left the pet store and looked around. *The power has to come from someplace and go someplace. You were sitting on a wire for a traffic light. But where does the power that would have powered that come from?* Walking to the nearest intersection he looked both ways down the street. *Liquors, don't think that's going to help my current situation. Levis? What are they? They're 10% off, so that's good, right? Video shop, chase... what, you go in there to get chased? That's weird. Coffee, ah, that awful drink Susan tried to get me to like, no thank you. GNC? Good Night Clary? Tattoo shop, heh, if they only knew. Fancy Perfumes? Come on, how about something useful??? Wait, a "corner news grocery store." Let's take a look.* He crossed the street, marveling at the scale of the buildings, how close together everything was, and couldn't imagine cars and people moving about the place in numbers. *What must it be like? Living in a place like this, constant noise I would bet.* Going inside the shop he pawed through the racks until he found what he was looking for- a map of the area. *I just have to figure out where I am.* He managed to figure out what street corner he was at, and tracked it down eventually, making a mark on the paper. *Now, if I was a place that generated power, where would I be? Away from people? But still on the island, the three Clary's wouldn't*

lie, right? He looked the map over and decided the “Ravenswood Generating Station” was the best bet. *I mean, generating what? Power, of course!*

The place wasn't far, and with his speed and the lack of traffic on the roads he felt he made good time just jogging there. He could run faster than a car could go during normal traffic, for a city of this size. Of course, he spent more time trying to find his way and stay on course than actually running, but he finally made it and stood outside what must be the power plant. It was a fairly large installation surrounded by a wall topped with barbed wire, which he scoffed at. A few whacks with the sword tore the door down and he entered the place.

“Pichu!” Pichu was looking up at the red and white cylinders that rose into the sky.

“You can say that again,” he agreed. “I don't want to be the guy that has to go up there on that metal ladder and check whatever they need to check up there that necessitates the ladder.”

“Pichu,” he agreed.

Finding their way inside Lysanias again used fire bending to create a flame and moved through the place. Pipes of every size lined the halls, his footsteps echoing through the whole place.

“Piichuu.”

“Kinda spooky, huh? Don't worry, you're the only thing I've seen moving around here.”

“Chu.”

The pair came to a control room and Lysanias looked over the darkened computer monitors, banks of switches, and quiet blinken lights that were not blinking at the moment. “I have no idea how to start up a power plant,” he admitted to his tiny charge, who was looking things over as well from his shoulder. “What about you?”

“Chuuuuu.”

“Figured. But here's a question. How does Clary know what the inside of one of these places looks like? It's impossible, she couldn't.”

“Pj?”

“Yes, yes, I suppose she could have toured one in school or something.”

“Pi!”

“But the fact remains, this is Clary's *idea* of how a power plant should look. It's a thought in her head. So shouldn't I be able to start it up by putting another thought in her head? A thought about the power plant running?”

“Chu?”

“Let's keep looking. The thing that actually generates the power can't be in here.”

They moved on, and eventually came to a huge turbine that was sitting there inert.

“Piii.”

“I agree, that looks important. Is this part of the power generation system? Does this thing spinning generate the power?”

“Pichuu.”

“No idea, huh? Man, can I even spin this thing? I suppose it's made to spin as freely as it can, they wouldn't want it to work against itself once it got going. And it only has apparent weight, not actual weight, again because of where I am. I guess I'll give it a shot!”

“Pichu.”

He took a deep breath, focusing on the turbine before him. Reaching out with metal bending rather than the force, because it was basically solid metal and he felt bending was more efficient, he started the thing moving.

“Pi!” said the Pichu as the lights started flickering on.

Come on, that's doing it. Spin it. Spin it faster. Spin the turbine, come on, you can do it!

The turbine spun to life, lighting up the place and he let the bending go, stepping back and leaning against a cabinet of some kind.

“Pichu?”

“I'm fine, for something that doesn't actually exist, that was difficult to move.”

“Pichu!”

“Hm?”

He looked at the little critter who now jumped off him, standing and looking up at him. All around the little guy was the red portion of Clary's light, shining in a circle around him. Above him floated the pyramid shape he had seen earlier.

“Uh?”

You have shown you have the power to restore Clary's light, it seemed to say into his brain. But I wonder if you have the wisdom to complete the task, and the courage to see it through. Take me up as your reward, and go.

Lysanias put his hand on the floating triangle intending to grab it, but was surprised to see it vanish. On the back of his hand, however, there seemed to be a tattoo of the shape, one of the sections filled in. The lights flickered and died as the turbine went out again.

“Great, that didn't help for long. But I guess restoring the light to the control center is actually required.”

Indeed. Once Clary's light has returned, all will be well. Go now.

“Oh. Come on little one. Let's go see how my fellow “triforce” if you will hunters did.” He looked down, but the creature was gone, so he looked to the back of his hand instead. “I see. You were with me the whole time. That figures. Thanks Clarys.”

He made his way back to the part of the city with the large tower, and he didn't have long to wait until the other two came walking back. Both held up the back of their hands, where similar images were being projected.

“I guess you got it,” Lysanias told them.

“Sure did,” Rosalina told him. “I'll tell you all about it if you're interested.”

“Sure, let's hear it.”

“So I started looking for where a person who wanted wisdom would go,” Rosalina began. “So naturally I headed to the nearest library...”

Rosalina knew she wanted to find a library, but her experience in the world was even less than Lysanias'. She had no idea where she should go but she was pretty sure wandering aimlessly wasn't going to help. *If only I could use my power of creation to make a map!*

But one thing she did know about was telescopes, having vague memories in her head about a galactic observatory. So rather than walk around looking at street level

she walked around looking at balconies, and finally spotted one with the item she has hoping for. Gently lifting herself with telekinesis she “floated” up to it, then grabbed it and floated higher, to the roof of the building. Carefully scanning the surroundings she saw Lysanias looking around and smiled, then spotted what she thought might be a good place to start. Tucking the now stolen telescope under her arm she jumped off the building, again slowing her fall with her powers.

Wait, should I put the telescope back? I did sort of steal it. But it doesn't actually exist, right? And I'm not taking it out of Clary's mind, so have I really... I'll just put it back. She had a pretty good memory so she replaced it, then headed off in the direction of what she thought was the library. She would have made good time, as there was no traffic, but she kept getting distracted by all the stores. She just *had* to know what some of the stores sold, and couldn't walk past three in a row without at least sticking her nose into one and looking around. She was fascinated by the sheer number of shops lining the streets, and the variety of things they sold. And of course she absolutely *had* to try on a few things, which didn't actually take that long as she could just imagine herself wearing different things, and she was. She was turning this way and that, looking at herself in a mirror when she spotted the Luma in the mirror behind her.

Shouldn't you be, I don't know, hurrying a little more?

“What? I didn't call for support,” she told the Luma, who was standing there looking a bit cross.

No, but we thought we might want to check on you anyway. What are you doing? How is trying on various outfits helping to discover wisdom and thus, bring the light back to Clary's island?

“Fine, fine, the outfits can wait. But Lysanias owes me a shopping trip!”

I'll be sure to tell him.

“Thank you- wait, I'm the only one that can hear you!”

He can read minds too, we can get him to read ours one way or another.

“Oh, that's fine then.” She put her gown back on with a thought and again headed out, resisting the urge to see what that cute shop across the street was selling.

Honestly, that girl!

“I heard that.”

Now finally in the library she looked around in the darkness, deciding to summon a few more Lumas to provide light.

We're your light bulbs now? asked one. How far have we fallen?

“I haven't learned a light spell. I didn't think I would ever be away from Lysanias. But I guess I should, huh?”

You do try to be prepared for everything. Even if your sense of scale is a bit off.

“Hey, that sun summoning spell actually worked out! I told you it would.”

Because he wanted to see it. He could have easily taken the wall down any number of ways. You didn't actually need the spell.

“Says you.”

Anyway, doesn't seem to be much here out of the ordinary. Are you sure a library is what you want?

“A place we would go to find wisdom. This doesn't qualify?”

This is knowledge, not wisdom.

“Same difference. Help me look around.”

Of course.

They spent some time looking around, Rosalina having to be chased by the Lumas out of several books, as she would just sit down and start reading.

Honestly, you're like a cat. Can't you focus?

"But there's just so much to learn!"

So he'll owe you a library trip too. Get moving!

"Okay, okay. Geese, I thought I was the boss."

When magic is involved, yes. Keeping you on track is our job.

"I'm going."

They checked the library top to bottom, but nothing seemed out of place. She left somewhat dejected, now needing another idea of where to go.

What's that?

She looked over where the Luma was pointing and there, looking down at her from a streetlight was a curious looking creature. It sort of looked like an owl, if you squished one down into a ball shape. It had stumpy wings, and almost looked to be wearing a leaf as a bow tie.

"Rowlet!" it said, by way of introduction.

"Hello? What are you?" she asked.

"Rowlet!" it insisted, wondering if all humans were this slow.

"I don't suppose *you* know where to go in order to find wisdom?"

"Row!" It flapped and took off, landing on the next street lamp.

"I'm going to follow it!" she announced.

Fine with us. It doesn't seem that dangerous.

She followed it to a tall building with a glass entrance, and four stone columns supporting an archway into the place. The first two stories were a white stone, with arched windows and lots of detailing, while the upper seven were simply brick with rectangular windows.

"Here?" she asked the creature.

"Let!"

"But what is this place?"

The creature took the sky, rapidly winging out of sight.

I guess that's all the help we'll get from that creature.

"I think you're right, but where has it brought us? This is just a building."

We could go in and find out.

"Yes, thank you captain obvious."

I'm a corporal, I'm non-commission.

"Like anyone's going to get that joke. Come on!" She pushed the door open and stepped into the foyer, looking around. Before her was a desk with a book that had many names on it, and a pen on a chain. Cabinets full of papers and a door leading to an office were behind the desk, and as she moved into the area she saw it was a waiting area of a sort, with coffee tables and fine chairs.

Then she felt it.

All heads turned upwards, staring up at the ceiling. "There's a spirit here," she breathed. "Is that even possible? Come on." Moving through the place she found a set of stairs and went upward, then again, and again, and again. Finally the spirit seemed

close and she stepped into the hall. It was a featureless white hall with doors, though the doors were somewhat decorated with hand drawn pictures, photos, and the occasional warning about oxygen being in use. She had no idea what that meant but headed left, towards where she felt the spirit was. Throwing the door open she stepped into a small room, and the ghost that was there sadly looked up at her.

The ghost looked ancient, wearing a simple robe, and it blinked at her. It was male, hunched over and wrinkled as he had no doubt been in life, and it squinted against the light of the Lumas that crowded in behind her. She could see through him, to the chair he was sitting on, but the spirit made no move to stand or attack. She would have been impressed to see him just stand, given the condition he was in.

"Come to take me away at last?" he managed, voice sounding dry and unused.

"I've come to find wisdom," she admitted. "Is there any to be found here?"

"Wisdom? Ha! Regrets maybe." He said no more, head drooping back down.

"Regrets? Is that why you're still here?" she finally asked. "Why you haven't moved on?"

"I suppose."

She looked around the room, seeking some clue. There was a small dresser, another door to a bathroom, a bed, the chair he was sitting in. On the dresser was a picture of a woman in her prime.

Not much to go on. But the owl led me here. I must have to help this ghost. But how? I suppose everything in this room must be a part of the puzzle. You can work it out, Lysanias is counting on you! "Who's this?"

He struggled to raise his head again. "She was my wife."

"Was? Did you split up?"

"No."

There was another pause. "What happened?"

He didn't answer.

"I see. Something bad then." *No other clues? Not much to go on. But maybe something in the dresser.* "Mind if I look around?"

"I'm dead, what do I care?"

"Thanks." She opened the dresser and pulled out an old scrapbook, leafing through it. The beginning was full of pictures of a couple, but suddenly there was an article about the woman's death, and then empty pages. "She died, didn't she? She was murdered, according to this."

"I suppose."

"Was the killer never caught?"

"He never served his time, no."

Odd phrasing. So I'm supposed to solve this murder mystery? Is that it? With one reluctant ghost and an old scrapbook? She paged through the book again, looking carefully at the pictures. The ones in the beginning were quite telling, there was pictures of a street sign, then a house number, then a house, and people moving boxes into a house. *Ah, this is the house they lived in, and conveniently the street it's on. Maybe I'll find clues there? But this guy is old, and according to this date here, and the date of the article, she's been dead for many years. Though if her spirit were still around, it might be in the house?*

"Anything else you want to tell me?" she asked.

"No."

“Okay. If you’re not going to help me find your peace, I’ll just have to do it on my own. Come along, Lumas.” She spun and headed out the door, then poked her head back in. “I’ll bring the scrapbook back, I’m not stealing it or anything.”

“I’m dead.”

“Just saying.”

With that, she found a map on the desk, traced her route to the man’s old house, and set out resolved to put that man to rest so she could claim the piece of wisdom she needed.

Chapter 10

Coming Together

When: Some time later

Where: Standing before the house in the photo

The journey went faster after Rosalina left the city proper and moved to a more rural area. The houses were still somewhat small and close together, but at least she could see the sky again. The moon still shone overhead, but she was confident she was in the right place.

"Let's see what's in there," she told the Lumas following her.

We're right behind you.

She pushed the door open and again felt the presence of a spirit, below and somewhat to the right. Wand out she made her way through the house and to the basement, where another transparent figure hovered. This one was secured by a thick chain at the ankle, going down into the floor.

"Have you come to release me at last?" she said, catching sight of Rosalina. "Don't try to pretend you can't see me, you came right down here so you knew I was here."

I already heard that one today, she thought. "You're the murdered wife of that man, aren't you?" she asked. The woman looked younger, about the age she was in the last pictures, though it was hard to tell in the darkness and her general transparency.

"Yeah, he killed me," she admitted with a scowl. "As I didn't get a proper burial, just dumped into the floor and had concrete poured over me, I've been stuck here ever since." She lifted one leg and rattled the chain.

One would argue it was her own unresolved issues that tethered her here, not the manner of her entombment. Such as resentment towards her husband for killing her?

You're probably right, she agreed, not voicing that thought.

"What's it to you, anyway? Are you here to release me or not?"

"I think I'm here to take you to your husband," she hedged. *And she's a lot more talkative than her husband. Because she was younger when she was killed, or because of some inner strength he lacks? Or is this all a test by the Clary's because to think there was some murdered woman living here inside her... no, this just represents something. But I should treat it as if it were the situation I'm seeing.*

"That old coot is still alive?"

"No, he's a spirit, just like you. He can't move on either. I think I need to help you both past this problem together."

"He's stuck too? Poor guy, of course I'll go with you. Just let me loose."

I wonder if that's, to put it in terms of our current quest, wise?

She's the victim here! What harm can it do?

An interesting question.

"How can I do that?" she asked. "I don't think I can cut the chain with any normal tool. It's only my affinity for spirits that lets me see you at all." *So I guess it was a good thing I got picked for the wisdom mission. Or was that no accident, me finding her? Did someone have a hand in it, long before I ever knew?*

"You seem to be mostly spirit yourself, if you don't mind my saying so. There must be something you can do with that wand of yours."

"I can try." *I have one attack spell, and it's basically solidified magic. But then, I'm no more real here than she is, I have to remember this is Clary's mind. So why wouldn't that work?* She cast her spell against the chain, stars of magical energy shooting out of her wand and snapping it.

"See, you did it!" the woman crowed. "Now let's see this useless lump of an ex-husband."

As she didn't attack or try to flee, Rosalina led her back to the building, once again up the stairs to the old man's spirit.

"Sophia?" he asked. "Oh no!"

"Oh yes, Ben. It's me. Looks like I get to confront you one last time."

"No. No. Why did you bring her here?"

"To help you move on, of course. Reconcile with your wife, it's the only way to let both your spirits rest."

"Oh, I don't care to put his spirit to rest, I came here to make sure he pays for what he did!"

Rosalina stared at her in shock.

"Yes, do you remember? What you did to me? I do. I waited years in that basement. Chained up, raging at the man who had killed me. And now look at you. Old and trapped yourself. What was the point then, huh? What was the point of denying me the years you enjoyed? Tell me that, if you can."

"I can't. I'm sorry. I never forgot you. I've hated myself all these years. Please, say you forgive me!"

"Oh, but I don't," Sophia said triumphantly. "You didn't pay for your crime in life, perhaps you can pay for it in death. I do *not* forgive you. Not now, not ever. You were the worst kind of man, now begone from my sight forever."

"No. No!" he wailed, as a darkness sprang up around him. Arms seemed to come from a dark circle at his feet, and Rosalina could only stare as the soul of the man, with his business resolved at last, was pulled down to his eternal torment.

Getting no forgiveness from his wife he finally moved on, but the guilt he carried pulled him under.

"And now I am free, thanks to you," she said. "And I won't be going to where he did."

"You could have forgiven him," she said. "It would have cost you nothing. He could have gone to Heaven, with you."

"That would have been nice, wouldn't it?" she agreed. "Does this all suggest anything to you?"

"That even when it costs them nothing, people will spite each other for no reason at all."

"Well, there was reason. He did murder me. Just because I was going to die anyway didn't change the fact he robbed me of the most precious thing of all. Still, it sounds like you have the beginnings of wisdom, so I think this belongs to you."

Sophia raised a hand and shining there was the blue part of Clary's light. Rosalina took it, and as with Power it went into her hand, shining out from the back. She looked up but the ghost was gone.

That was intense.

"I agree. Is that really wisdom? Come on, let's go."

The group made their way back to Lysanias, and her story came to an end.

“Sorry you had to go through all that,” Lysanias told her. “Are you okay?”

“Yeah. Obviously they weren’t real spirits, it was just to see what I would do.”

Just keep telling yourself that, he didn’t say. “And you, mountain spirit? Did you have a rough time?”

Mine was the most physical challenge. But in most ways the most straightforward. As with both of you, I was completely unsure of how to even start looking for the piece of Clary’s light I needed. But then as with you both I soon found myself a guide.

“Help!” cried the worker, catching the attention of the mountain spirit. “Please, help us!” Looking down the street the spirit saw there was a small group of the memory workers frantically waving their arms to attract his attention. As before they were all blue “jelly bean” shapes, some larger than others but none standing taller than half as tall as the spirit. All had hardhats and white gloves on, two with safety goggles.

I hope this works- Can you hear me?

“We can hear you. You have to help us, please, there’s not much time!”

What’s the problem?

“We were exploring the underground part of the city when suddenly something happened. There was some kind of tremor... it’s easiest just to show you. Will you help us?”

Of course. Please, lead on.

“Oh thank you, thank you so much,” the group told them. They dragged the spirit by the hand to a subway terminal and rushed him down the stairs.

Great, I won’t be able to utilize my primary ability of growing larger when we’re down here. Then “aloud,” *is it getting warmer?*

“That’s the problem, you’ll see, you’ll see!”

They pulled him deeper into the tunnels, winding their way though, and suddenly grabbed onto the walls as the place shook.

What’s causing that?

“We don’t know! We should never have come here,” wailed one.

“We thought there would be safety in numbers,” another said. “We’ll never leave the archives again!”

“The island was lighting up,” explained another. “We thought we should check it out. Big mistake.”

“Come on, hurry, hurry, it’s subsiding. It might already be too late.”

They hurried the spirit along, and as they did it got warmer and brighter.

“There!” They pointed down a side passage, where a cowering worker suddenly looked up with hope.

“Help!” they screamed, “I’m trapped over here!”

The spirit could see over the workers quite easily, and didn’t like what they saw. It almost looked as though lava had come bubbling up from underground after a tremor, the passage was aglow in molten rock. Way at the end of the passage a worker was clinging to a chunk of concrete that was rather rapidly melting away. The place had sank, leaving a fair drop, and the fiery material was spreading out, making an almost lake like area of hot stone.

“You’re made of rock, can you just go and grab him?” asked one of the workers.

I’m not sure, the spirit admitted. This place can probably harm me, being made of thoughts just like I am. And even if it can’t, wading out into that? Lava blows up mountains! If I couldn’t get out... it could cool around me and I’d be stuck here!

“You have to do something!” There was another tremor, this one throwing up a plume of molten material that landed near the stranded worker. They jumped back, screaming and shutting their eyes.

“Hurry, please, do something!”

There is something I could do, the spirit thought to themselves. I could jump into that, after cooling a bit of the rock below me with earth bending. Then just create a rock “bridge” over to the worker. Pulling that much heat out of that much rock will drain me though. Will I have enough energy to pull it off? But if I don’t, that worker could die.

What about pouring water down there? Are there water pipes around here? I could bring the water to this spot.

“Are you crazy? Dumping water on that much hot rock will just super heat the water and cause it to explode! We don’t want to burn our friend to death with super heated steam!”

Oh.

“It’s sinking! Help me!”

Shoot. It’s too far to snag him with a pipe using metal bending. Can’t spirit step to him, couldn’t make the jump normally so I can’t use that to just appear over there. I never picked up the force, probably should have. And gently lifting that block of concrete is out, if it tips just a little bit he’ll go into the lava. Teleport? Never really practiced that, because usually I can’t get very far away from Lysanias. Also it would go unbalanced and toss us both off if I suddenly appeared down there. No, I think I have to go the long way. The spirit looked over the edge. *Down into lava, the thing that can tear apart mountains.*

“Go on, what are you waiting for?”

“Help!”

I’m going, I’m going.

The spirit slammed into the ground feeling the earth all around them. They felt the lava wasn’t too deep, but still enough to bury him alive. He pulled heat out of it, solidifying part of it below him. With a quick *I really hope this works* they jumped, quickly setting their feet and pulling more heat out of the area just before them.

“Hurry!”

I’m trying. You try pulling thermal energy out of lava!

There was another tremor and a piece of the ceiling broke off, headed for the worker. The spirit gestured, taking hold of the rocks inside the concrete and slamming them away from the worker. This made them lose their grip on the rock around them, which started to soften again. *Come on, work with me here!* They firmed that up again and stepped forward, cooling the next section.

“It’s working!” shouted a worker from above. “Keep it up!”

I fully intend to!

The spirit now had to let some of the rock behind them go liquid again as they moved forward, which was probably fine but made getting back harder. *But I have an idea about that.* The spirit could now feel the beginnings of additional tremors and hold them back with bending, though this softened the stone they were standing on if done

for too long. But finally they reached the worker, who grabbed on to the spirit's "head" part.

"Get us out of here!" he commanded.

No, is that really the next step? The spirit turned and decided to use all this rock to their benefit rather than have it working against them, and threw both arms up. A plume of lava shot up, making the worker cry out and shrink back, but the spirit had things under control. They were forming a ramp with the rock, both getting it out of the way so it didn't melt again quite as fast, and making it easier to get back to the opening above them. *Hold on.*

A few jumps later and the pair were out, the worker climbing back down and brushing themselves off.

Where did your friends go?

"What friends? I must say, you certainly have the courage needed for the job. Go ahead, take it." The worker held out the blue chuck of Clary's light.

It was all a trick.

"Call it a test, at least. Even you have fears, my friend. But you didn't let them stop you. That is courage."

I suppose it is. He took the shard and if you don't know what happened next, you should go back and reread. The passageway was empty, leaving the spirit to make their way back up to the surface and head to the point they had agreed on.

"Well done," Lysanias said. "You know, not falling in the lava and burning us both to death."

You would have done the same.

"I would have done something impressive I suppose. Still, we each have a portion of the light, how do we combine it?"

"How do you think?" Rosalina asked, holding her hand up.

"It's worth a shot." The two put their palms together and the wisdom portion was transferred to Lysanias, followed by the courage portion. "Okay. Now to find the key. Can a Luma lead us back to the entrance to the island?"

"Of course!"

Having left the island the group headed to what they hoped would be their final destination here- Clary's subconscious.

The area leading there was a long set of steps down, and the group came to a huge metal door, locked by a simple sliding lock that insured the door could only be opened from this side. Standing there watching them were two workers in official looking hats. Each one had on his personal hat, with no question that it was their personal hat, and not someone else's hat.

"Er..." Lysanias told them as they stood there awkwardly.

"Be bold," Rosalina told him, nudging him. "No need to be shy."

"Then you talk to them," he hissed.

"You're the one making all this possible."

"We're right here you know?" asked the one on the left.

"What do you want?" asked the one on the right.

"To go inside?"

"Fine, off you go then," said the one on the left.

“Correct. Now let’s say you had two rocks. Both are made of the same material, and are roughly the same size and shape. But one had come from Mars, while the other a riverbed a few miles away. Which would be worth more?”

“The one from Mars.”

“Exactly. It’s the same with this key. There are keys all over, but *this* one is special. It unlocks something very badly desired by you and Clary.”

“But *you’re* Clary too!” Rosalina told her.

“I’m a part of her, yes. Can you guess which part?”

“Her regal nature?” Lysanias guessed.

The dragon laughed. “Oh, very good. No, something far more primal. I’m her *greed*.”

“I would never have guessed,” he deadpanned, looking at the side of the hoard.

“Really? Well, then, you’re an idiot. But that aside, once this key is used it just becomes another key without a lock. Worthless. You’ll have to trade me for it.”

“We’re inside her mind! We can’t actually leave anything here,” he protested. “We aren’t actually here ourselves!”

“And that means you have nothing of value to offer? I think if you give it some thought, you’ll come up with something you can offer me. Until then I’ll just hold on to this, shall I?”

Can we get you something?

“Oh, no, anything I want around here I can acquire for myself. Keep trying.”

“I could maybe make you some walls, to further safeguard your treasure,” Lysanias offered.

“I’m quite capable of guarding my own treasure, thank you very much,” she sniffed. “You’re on the wrong track.”

“So give us a hint!”

“Wait a second,” Rosalina told them. “She’s been giving us hints. She didn’t say ‘bring me’ something, she said ‘offer me’ something. And she said she represents Clary’s greed. We met various aspects of Clary in her city, but who did we meet before that?”

“Joy. Sadness. Anger.”

“Exactly. I think she wants to become a prime emotion and work in the tower.”

“What a lovely offer!” the dragon agreed. “Yes, I think that might work out to my advantage. Tell you what. I won’t give you this key, but I’ll be happy to bring it with me when I accept my post. I’ll happily use it on Clary’s behalf if I’m helping run her the control tower itself.”

But only five emotions can be in the tower, the spirit protested. Or was that a lie?

“No, that’s the truth,” she agreed. “Clary will have to set aside a current prime and take me on instead. That’s what I’ll accept for the key.”

“But you won’t fit!” Rosalina blurted.

“Excuse me! I’m not making rude comments about *your* weight.”

“I’m perfectly proportioned,” Rosalina snapped. “I was talking about your size. You won’t fit in the tower!”

“My dear girl, you think Joy is really a sparkly girl in a sun dress? We represent emotional states, and part of how you see us is your own bias. I’m no more a dragon than you are. Despite what I might look like currently.”

“Oh.”

“So run along. As soon as one of the primes gives up their post I’ll take it up and unlock Clary for you. How does that sound?”

“A little one sided,” Lysanias cautioned. “We don’t know if that key is the one!”

“If it isn’t I’ll step aside again, of course. But I’ve been here since the beginning, and this key appeared just after the chains went up. It’s the one, believe me.”

“Fine. I just hope one of them goes for it.”

“I’m sure you can persuade them. Farewell!”

He held his hands out and the other two took them, allowing him to *shift* back into the control room.

“You’re back! That’s wonderful!” Joy greeted them. “Everything is perfect, right?”

“Not... exactly.”

Chapter 11

Finally out of her Head

When: A moment later

Where: Control room

“So one of us has to leave the control booth?” Anger seethed. “Not it.”

“I could go,” Sadness offered. “I know Joy hates me.”

“I don’t *hate* you, Sadness, I know you have your place,” Joy told her.

“You all want me to leave, I just know it,” Paranoia stuttered, backing up to one of the walls. “You’ve been plotting this all along!”

“No we haven’t,” Joy assured him.

“Are we sure there’s no other way to break the chains?” Anger asked.

“We tried everything,” Sadness reminded him. “Anything new she experienced and we could get an image of. Chain saws, bolt cutters, acid.”

“True. I must have whacked that chain for hours with a hatchet that one day.”

“You missed the chain most of the time,” Paranoia reminded him.

“Maybe I could get some more practice in, *on you?*”

“No that’s okay!”

“Vanity?” asked Joy. “You’re awfully quiet.”

“I think it’s pretty clear which of us Clary needs least,” she admitted, looking around at the other primes. They all started talking at once, saying how much Clary needed them specifically and didn’t she remember such and such a time when their contribution was essential and where would Clary be now without their guiding hand and- “I meant me.”

“No, no, you’re important too,” Joy tried to assure her. “I mean you... there was the time you...”

“You see? It’s fine. I’ll go out there and Greed can come be a prime. What’s the difference anyway? Vanity? Greed? Okay, she might not style her hair as well but she’ll accessorize better.”

“Are you sure?” Sadness asked her. “There’s no going back, unless she decides to leave again. And you think *greed* will relinquish anything?”

“I know. Look, it’s been great everyone, and it’s possible she’ll get tired of it before long. It’s not easy, keeping track of Clary. And I think after this it’s going to get a lot harder. You may all wish you had gotten out when you could.”

“We’ll miss you.”

“Yeah,” said Anger, looking a bit like Sadness at the moment. Even Joy looked a bit wilted.

“See you around,” she said.

“Be careful out there,” Paranoia told her.

“I will. Come here.” They shared a hug, and finally she stepped back. “I renounce my place as a prime and allow Greed to take my-”

“Hello!” A new figure was standing there. Her dress sparkled gold, and she had on strings of pearls, fancy bracelets, and the most uncomfortable heels you could possibly find. (That’s how you know they were expensive) “It seems you’ve kept your end of the bargain. Oh my, what a stark place. We can fix it up later.”

“Hi, I’m Joy!” Joy introduced herself. “Come and meet everyone!”

"In a moment," she promised, holding up a hand. "I have a bargain to keep, and I think Lysanias has one more thing to do here as well?" She swayed over to the lock and held up the key, inserting it gently. With a quick turn the chains fell away and the tacked on system vanished. "There," she announced, putting the key down the front of her dress. (Obviously a dress as expensive as hers wouldn't have something as mundane as pockets) "And now for the island."

"You care an awful lot about that," Anger told her. "Why the rush?"

"Simple. There's a whole new world opening up for Clary. I want it as soon as possible."

"That figures."

"There's actually two things," Rosalina reminded everyone. "Her potential and the light of the island."

"Let's get potential out first," he decided. "You want to go over the wand motion again?"

"Let's do that."

They practiced the spell and Lysanias handed over his circlet, which she put on. "What now?"

"I'll open the door. She can come out here and not mess you primes up, right?"

"She wouldn't be able to control Clary's actions," Paranoia agreed. "She should leave as soon as possible though."

"We do get visitors, after all," Joy added.

"Super. Shoot, hand me that circlet back." So he spent ten minutes or so opening the door, and the three passed into the memory of the personal dimension. He handed the circlet over, and at the first sign of her she cast the spell.

"I wasn't going to attack you anyway," Potential insisted. "I felt no need to, once I passed into this strange place. What is this place, by the way? And why is there a balloon in here? That is what that is, right?"

"It's sort of a long term storage area and in a pinch, a place I could live," he explained. "Come on, exit is this way."

"Wonder if Clary could make one?"

"Maybe?"

The door now closed again he took care of the last thing, Joy handing him the darkened sphere that supported the island of the supernatural. "Let's hope this works." He put his hand on it and the symbol vanished, making the sphere light up. She put it back and the island lit up, now looking like all the others.

"That should do it," Joy announced. "Thank you!"

"Glad I could help. You all take good care of her, okay?"

"We will," they assured him. With that he broke off the meld and both opened their eyes. Clary stretched in her chair. "How long were we out?"

"About an hour," Hodge told them. "Did it work?"

"After all I went through in there, it better have," Lysanias muttered.

"I feel a little different," Clary announced. "And I think I'm starting to remember things from recently, like seeing fairies flying around. Oh, my mother is going to get *murdered* when I next see her."

“Allow me,” Magnus offered. He waved his hands around Clary and nodded. “The magic I put on her is gone. And just from sitting there like that. I wouldn’t have believed it.”

“So what now?”

“If we are going to host downworlders…” Hodge paused. “You know, we need a new term for them. Downworlder has negative connotations and we are trying to make them equal partners in this.”

“In my world, those with demonic lineage are called cambions,” Lysanias offered.

“For now, cambion it is! We’ll need to outfit them. They won’t be able to use seraph blades and the like but we should think about what they could use. Squirt guns full of holy water? Water balloons?”

“Lysanias asked about that,” Alec told him. “Because I use a bow and not a gun. Why not just give them a gun and a couple of clips of ammo?”

“Magazines of ammo,” Jace corrected.

“Whatever.”

Hodge shook his head. “Wouldn’t work. Believe me, we’ve tried. Something about marking bullets with angelic runes causes them not to fire. I mean, come on, you think we’re stupid?”

“What about marking them the new way?” Isabelle asked. “That might work where the stele method failed.”

“True, we haven’t tested that. Lysanias, could you maybe make up some with Clary and we’ll see if they’ll fire?”

“Actually, say that again?” Clary requested. “Marking bullets makes them not fire?”

“That’s what we’ve been told by the iron sisters. Wait, you don’t think they were lying to us, do you?”

“You would know better than I would. But did you try shotguns?”

“I don’t know. Why would that be different?”

“It would be totally different. Simon showed me a video where some nuts were putting bizarre stuff into shotgun shells. Marbles, a spark plug, shards of glass. You can basically shoot anything out of a shotgun if it’ll fit.”

“I don’t see the relevance.”

“Basically a bullet is all one thing, right? It’s the bottom part that holds the gunpowder and the top part that flies out.”

“Right.”

“But a shotgun shell is different. You can put a slug of metal into a shotgun shell that has runes on it, separate the shell from the explosive part with some cotton or something, and there’s no reason it wouldn’t fire just fine.”

“Huh.” Hodge sat a moment in thought, trying to poke a hole in this argument. “I can’t see why that wouldn’t work, honestly.”

She smirked. “See, that’s why everybody doing the same thing in the same way over and over for years is crazy. We came in and revolutionized your whole organization in a day.”

“I wouldn’t go that far,” Alec protested.

“Day isn’t over.”

“She’s got you there, big brother.”

“Actually, that holy water in a squirt gun got me thinking,” Jace told them. “What about a talisman that’s sort of like a crossbow. It has a tank of holy water attached to it, and squirts some into a track. The talisman parts freezes it solid, then shoots it out. Imagine hitting a demon with a holy water arrow.”

“Wouldn’t it just shatter?” Alec asked, not buying it. “You would have to freeze it pretty solid.”

“Sounds complicated,” Clary agreed. “I’ll stick to a shotgun, thanks.”

“If it works,” Hodge reminded them.

“It wouldn’t have to be an ice shard,” added Alec, sticking by his bond brother’s side even if he thought the idea was ridiculous. “If you could get it shooting out fast enough a tiny chip would do it. Take a little of the water in a tank, freeze it, and accelerate it to the speed of sound or whatever. That would do the job.”

“Actually, Rosalina knows a spell to make an object perform some action,” Lysanias told them. “A talisman could do the same. It wouldn’t have to physically fling the ice through space, it could simply teleport it *inside* whatever you pointed it at.”

“Nice!” Jace exclaimed. “Now we’re getting somewhere!”

“So talismans are more up to the imagination of the maker?” Hodge asked. “If you can envision a result it can probably be made?”

“Sure. You’re drawing off the power that created the universe,” Lysanias explained. “This is a piece of the same power the Allfather used to make your reality. Why wouldn’t just about anything be possible?”

“I see. We are using the angelic language, presumably that’s what was used by God to create the universe. Just what have we been given access to, here? No wonder we were kept ignorant of how it might actually be used.”

There was a moment of silence as everyone digested this.

“So, do you want to go after your other memories?” Magnus asked.

“Let me have some time with the ones I’ve got now,” Clary requested. “I’ll get back to you about it.”

“That’s fine. No rush.”

“In any case, talismans are long term,” Hodge told them. “We’ll start working on some of course, but we’ll still need a short term set of gear for the new people.”

“The fairies will probably be fine with their own weapons,” Isabelle told them. “It’s just vampires and werewolves that will need other weapons.”

“Speaking of other weapons,” Clary changed the subject. “Do I recall you fighting some version of me using a sword and a stele at the same time?”

“You remember correctly. You swung with the blade, then with your other hand were putting a rune on me. First an ‘agony’ rune and then you destroyed part of my shield with some kind of disintegration rune.”

“Wait, using a stele *in combat*?” Hodge clarified. “Can you show me?”

“Sure. Clary?”

“I’ll give it a shot.”

They went over to the training area and Clary took up a sword and her stele. He directed her through their combat, of course she didn’t actually put the agony rune on him again.

“What a fantastic way to fight,” Hodge told them.

“He’s our weapons trainer,” Isabelle told them. “So new fighting styles excite him.”

"Then let me show you chi-blocking, and if you can make a copy of some charts I'll leave them. I assume you train with some kind of unarmed combat style?"

There were nods all around.

"Fine. Won't work on demons but I bet it would work on anything else. Fairies? Not sure, maybe we'll ask one to try it. But even vampires have spiritual energy to disrupt, so I have to assume it'll work on them too."

"Chi-blocking?"

"Watch this."

He demonstrated that as well, and gave them the diagrams to copy, which Hodge did. He seemed excited about the whole prospect, and said he would try to incorporate the new 'stele style' into the curriculum. "I wouldn't try it in the field until we get a feel for it," he cautioned. "But it seems like it would work fine. Demons can't stand marks, so that's another way for us to fight them."

"Just put a strap on your stele, so it doesn't get knocked out of your hand," Lysanias noted.

"Ah!" He made a note. "We can start putting straps on them right away."

"This is all very well," Alec told them. "But we'll need to get out and patrol pretty soon. We don't have any extra help yet."

"Clary should stay here," Hodge recommended.

"Of course I'm staying here!" she agreed. "You think I'm crazy? I don't know the first thing about fighting demons. You people have trained all your lives, it would be suicide to go out there after an hour of unlocking memories and a ten minute demo of 'stele style.'"

"I'm glad you agree." He seemed a bit taken aback.

"It's decided then," Alec said with a nod. "We'll see you when we get back."

"Wait a second," Jace protested. "She should come with us if she wants."

"But she doesn't want to."

"I guess you're- are you sure you don't want to come?"

"Look Jace, I'm here because I have nowhere else go. My mother saw to that, almost burning our house down. Once I find her and put this Valentine business behind me, then I can decide where I want my future to go. I was applying to university, to be an art student because I'm good at drawing. But in the end, what good would my drawings do? This," she indicated the institute, "means something. I can actually use my skill at drawing to save lives. Develop new wards or... what were they called? Circles?"

"Circles," agreed Lysanias.

"Or talismans. Shotgun shells, or other weapons to make you all safer. I don't think girls should sit on the sidelines if they want to fight-"

"Hear hear!" agreed Isabelle.

"-but right now that's not me. Naturally I'll learn how to handle a weapon or two because we are fighting a war here, and may at some point need to take up a sword to defend someone. But I see my place more as creating wards, learning about the angelic language to see what runes can do, and helping protect the mundane world. Lysanias says wards can heal, seal out evil, basically anything. I don't need to be a front line fighter to make a difference in the world. A new path has opened for me, and I intend to see what's best for me. If that means making wards for you guys that go out and cut

demons up all night, great. But if that doesn't fit for me, I hope I can leave just like my mother did, and that will be the end of it."

"But you're a shadowhunter!" protested Jace.

"No, you're a shadowhunter," she shot back, digging a finger into his chest. "I'm a mundane girl that found out she has the power to make marks on paper and have them actually do something. Who are you to decide what I choose to do with that power? As long as I don't hurt anyone with it, or reveal the supernatural world to others, I hope you would have the decency to allow me the choice. I was dragged into all this, and until I can ask my mother directly what she was thinking messing with my memories with magic, I'm keeping my options open. Maybe she regrets being a shadowhunter and doesn't want me making the mistakes she did. But it would have been nice to have the choice," she muttered.

"The world is changing," Hodge reluctantly agreed. "We know a little bit better what we are, now. We have a chance to expand the organization to the... cambions... of the world. That makes the world safer, and isn't that our basic mission? Maybe it's time for a different kind of shadowhunter too. Or perhaps there can be a distinction between an artificer and a shadowhunter."

"You don't need more divisions," Clary snorted.

"Yes, I suppose we are all just people. We'll figure this all out, Clary. For now, I'd like your help testing shotgun shells. The others can go on patrol, and Lysanias?"

"I'd like to start researching this angel we're going to call."

"Raziel? You're actually serious about that?"

"We need a new cup, don't we?"

"Indeed we do. Just promise me you won't do it anywhere near here."

"Okay?"

"I'm serious. Reports about the angel vary. He could be very angry to be called back here, and simply destroy anything around him. I'd rather not take the chance."

"It's fine. I'll need plenty of ley lines to help sustain them in the first place. That means doing it out in a forest someplace." *Though I can't imagine an angel being that angry to be called back. Refuse to help, sure. But rampage about? They aren't a demon.*

"Fine. I can give you all the records we have, and of course any lore from mundane sources like the Kabbalah."

"And I'll see what the community has to say. I'm sure we can come up with a petitioning prayer that will serve."

"Very well. You have your jobs, get to them." Hodge dismissed the others with a wave, who left to get their gear and weapons ready.

Lysanias spent the rest of the night researching the angel Raziel, and posting on the boards about calling an archangel. He was pleased to discover they were fairly low on the power scale, being more "battle angels" than anything else. But this presented a problem.

Archangels can't do what Raziel supposedly did here, he wrote. Can angels do different things in different realities?

Not usually, was the response. Because they come so early in a realities' history they tend to be the same.

This angel could be a prince though, another wrote. That would give them the ability to basically do what he describes. Usually it's not as roundabout, but a prince can grant a mortal power. I'll update the hubPad with the petitioning information for princes, see if it fits better. Should probably just put all the petitioning info in, so you can get any kind of angel. Let me scan my notes in.

Lysanias waited a moment for the new entry to come in, then read it over. *Good thing time doesn't run the same between the hub and here. And this bit of technology can still compensate for that. We can have a conversation across realities, but someone can put pages and pages of stuff into the hubBook locally taking hours but seeming to only take a moment on my end. I have to wonder if magic isn't involved too somehow.* The information about princes fit a lot better, but significantly increased the difficulty of calling the being, and sustaining them in the world.

That's going to be a problem.

Chapter 12

Getting in Some Practice

When: About 8:30 AM, the second day

Where: Control room

“You have what outside?” Hodge asked Jace and the others when they returned from patrolling.

“Several demons,” Alec explained. “They want to get sent home. And they aren’t outside, they’re in the shed we keep our gardening stuff in. Sun is up so they wouldn’t last long.”

Strange that they have such a weakness. I don’t recall hearing about demons being harmed by sunlight back home. Why are these so different?

“Demons.”

“Yes, demons!” he repeated. “Isabelle insisted we talk to the things rather than simply stabbing them, and we took them prisoner. She’s guarding them now. We’ve been asking them stuff but we aren’t getting anywhere so we came in to get Lysanias to send them away.”

“You took demons prisoner?”

“Will you stop repeating everything he says?” Jace requested angrily. “It’s getting annoying.”

“Sorry, it’s just not something I thought I would hear you guys saying. They really want to get sent home?”

“According to them, they have no idea how they got here. Rather than being stabbed we told them we had a way to send them home,” Alec explained. “They agreed, and we agreed to bring them here. Lysanias was saying something about needing to practice anyway, right?”

“That’s right,” he agreed. “I do need the practice. That was thoughtful of you.”

He snorted. “If it was up to me I would have just stabbed them and been done with it. Take care of it. I’m going to get something to eat.” He walked off.

“Yeah, not killing demons outright really feels wrong to me,” Jace admitted. “See you later.”

“I can’t go outside,” Hodge told him. “Actually, was hoping you might be able to take a look at that sometime. Maybe take this curse off me?”

“Sure, but I better see about these demons first. I need to talk to you anyway about petitioning.” *Ugh, I still need to show them things like sensing spirit energy and manipulating your inner energies. Talisman making, ward making, now this. These people have a lot to learn, and I’ve got a lot to do.*

“Of course. I’ll be waiting here.”

“See you shortly.”

Lysanias found the shed and went inside to find several variety of demons, both large and small, standing there awkwardly while Isabella stood, whip in hand, watching them.

“Hi Lysanias!” she bubbled. “Brought you some demons!”

“That’s so sweet of you, thanks. Sorry I didn’t get you anything.”

“That’s okay. You can next time.” They both laughed.

“And thanks for convincing the others not to just kill them outright.”

“After what happened last night, I thought it might be the right thing to do. They don’t seem to know any better how they got here, so they seem innocent. As innocent as demons can be, anyway.”

“I haven’t killed anyone!” one of the smaller ones piped up. The others were quick to agree that they, personally, hadn’t harmed so much as a hair on any human’s head.

“It’s not like we’re the fighting type anyway,” one explained. “I mean look at us! What are we even doing here?”

“Good question,” Lysanias admitted. “And none of you knows how you got here?”

They all shook their heads.

“Fine. Line up, I’ll send you home. I hope it’s painless but I have no idea. Don’t blame me if this feels a little weird.”

With the demons returned home both went back to the main building, Isabella trailing after Lysanias. “That’s so amazing, that you can just do that,” she gushed.

“Thanks. You could probably do something similar with a rune. Some kind of banishment ward, maybe? I don’t see why you couldn’t.”

“Usually just fighting types show up here, so we’ve never really had so called nice demons around. They were interesting to talk to, and had an odd perspective on things I wouldn’t mind exploring more.”

He turned to look back at her.

“What?” she asked with a small smile.

“You’re seeing a fairy, right?”

“We have some fun together, I don’t think he wants a real relationship with a mortal though. What does that have to do with it? Thinking of asking me out? He wouldn’t mind.”

He colored. “I was just thinking, you must have a really open mind, that’s all. Seems like most around here wouldn’t consider such a thing. Seeing a fairy on a regular basis or talking to demons.”

“You’re right about that.”

“Ah, there you are,” Hodge said, coming up. “Demons all taken care of?”

“Yup, they didn’t resist my efforts to send them home. Now, about angels.”

“Yes?”

“It’s strange. All the materials you gave me said this Raziel is an archangel, but the notes I got from the hub call them a throne. Why they would have a different rank I have no idea. I have the ritual for both, and what additions I need if they’re the prince of their type, which would explain how they could give you the ability to become artificers.”

“Okay?”

“The point is, someone with that amount of power is going to be rather difficult to get here. Thone or archangel, I’ll try it both ways and see what sticks. We can use circles, the dragonfly spirit, and I can hook into some ley lines to help, but the fact is I’d like to get some practice in before calling in someone so powerful. So I thought, if it was okay with you, I would petition some lesser angels or angelic creatures to see how they would react. Maybe get more information on Raziel and practice petitioning in general. If you had a space to do it here that would be ideal.”

“How much lesser are we talking about here?”

“Either a malakhim, the lowest ranked ‘humanoid’ type angel, or a phoenix, which I’ve actually had the opportunity to talk to in the last world I went to. Either are fairly easy to get here-”

“I’d love to see a real phoenix!” Isabelle told him, looking excited.

“I guess our choice is made,” Hodge replied sarcastically. “As long as you don’t think they’ll go berserk or anything and burn the place down, either is fine with me.”

“Great. I’ll work on that with Clary tomorrow. She’ll need to provide a circle which I have the directions for. How did the shotguns work out?”

“Fairly well. They fired, and any demons that were hit were injured or killed. I only had enough time for a few shells but at least it proves the concept.”

“That’s great news!”

“I can’t disagree. I’m looking forward to what you both come up with today.”

“There’s still a lot I have to show you,” he admitted. “Mostly spirit energy stuff. I’ll want to show the cambions that stuff too though. The warlocks might not be able to use any of those techniques because they’re more magical than supernatural, but who knows.”

“Tomorrow night then, before patrols, so the vampires can attend. The others should be arriving shortly. I don’t know what we’re going to do with them at this point, I suppose they can just hang out and get familiar with the place. We go to bed in around four hours, but they won’t be on our schedule yet.”

“Right. I’ll be interested to see what they can do.”

Around nine o’clock the cambions arrived. Two werewolves, two fey, and two warlocks. The one werewolf had dark skin and very frizzy hair, and introduced herself as Maia. The man was light skinned, with large arms and stood two feet taller than she did. His name was Russell. The fey were what Lysanias would call haf-elves back at home, with pointed ears and golden hair. *But not feathered ears, so these are something different.* With the plate armor they were wearing it was hard to tell the man from the woman, and they introduced themselves as Xelitha and Myancth. The warlock lady was Asian looking, dressed in normal street clothes and calling herself Ady, while the man had a t-shirt with “ask me about the size of my wand” printed on it and said his name was Dan. She had rabbit ears, while the man didn’t have any overt animal trait.

“Sensing some hostility,” Maia pointed out. The others looked over and staring at them from around their computer monitors with hardly disguised disgust were the shadowhunters that were on duty. “Are you sure we’re welcome here?”

“Given we are all professionals,” Hodge said rather loudly, “there should be no problem.” Then quieter. “I’m sorry about that, but it’s going to take some time.”

“We’re used to it,” Dan told them. “I think it’s going to take some adjustment for all of us.”

“Right you are. Anyway...” He went into their schedule for the next few hours, including a tour of the building, weapon selection, and an analysis of their fighting prowess. “But hopefully your leaders explained what we’re doing here and you’re decent fighters. We did recently find out shotgun shells can be used because the slug doesn’t touch the powder, so you can have one of those when you go out on patrol.”

“Shotgun shells?” asked Russell. “Mind if I go home and get my judge?”

“Your what?”

“It’s a pistol that shoots shotgun shells.”

“You have a pistol- sure, you can get it before your first patrol. Anyway, this fine fellow here... Where did he go?” Hodge looked around, and found Lysanias standing a little behind him. “Ah, there you are. Come on, they don’t bite.” He gestured Lysanias forward.

“Yeah, we aren’t vampires,” Maia told them.

The others shared a laugh as Lysanias came forward again.

“Right, right. Anyway, Lysanias here will be training you later as well. There’s some supernatural techniques he hopes you can learn, as well as a new fighting style focusing on energy disruption in the body rather than damage.”

“Hello.”

“And we’re full shadowhunters?” asked Dan. “We’ll live here and everything?”

“Full shadowhunters,” Hodge promised. “We have plenty of space, you’ll get paid, and if this works out and you have recommendations as to who else would be a good fit let us know. I’ll want this program to be expanded because honestly it’s a bit silly we’re the only ones actively fighting demons. You all have special abilities, why not put them to use instead of just cursing them?”

“Because only you could really hurt them,” Ady complained.

“Well, no, squirt guns full of holy water was mentioned, as well as water balloons. If we had really wanted to, we could have made it work before now.”

“And why have we all been gathered here now?” asked Myancth. “Our queen was quite vague about it. Something about a great threat?”

“We’ll get you up to speed on anything,” Hodge promised. “For now, let’s get you familiar with the grounds here and get your accounts set up on the PCs so you have email addresses and everything. There’s plenty to do, so come along.”

They trailed after him, and Clary, who had been peeking around a column to gawk at the newcomers came out.

“They seemed nice,” she said.

“I just hope it works out. You’re all still human first, thinking otherwise is silly. Well, maybe not the fey, but most everyone else.”

“Which one was the girl?”

“I have no idea.”

“Do you have a minute?”

“Ha!” He barked a laugh. “I’ve got so much to do, I don’t know where to start. What can I do for you?”

“Wanted to get more information about talismans.”

“I can go over some things for a bit, but I wanted to scrounge up some equipment. Tables, beakers, and hopefully some ingredients. If I can make up some solid sunlight that’s another weapon the new recruits can have to choose from. It takes four hours so I won’t start it today. But if it can be set up and the weather is sunny enough tomorrow I can have some done then.”

“I’ll help you with that, I’d love to see you do real alchemy. I wonder if I could make a ward that absorbs sunlight, then releases it in a burst. While you worked on solid light I could work on that.”

“Hey, that’s a great idea. We could base it off the contain ward.”

The two walked off to one of the practice rooms.

Around 11:00 PM that day Lysanias got up and mentally reviewed what he wanted to accomplish that day. *Too much, there's only one of me. Though I can have my mountain spirit watch over the alchemy while it 'cooks' up. I guess we'll just take it as it comes.*

He left his room to find the vampire recruits had arrived, and they were not getting along with the werewolves. They weren't fighting but they were staring at each other with no small amount of disgust.

"What's this all about?" he asked Dan.

"Oh, them? Yeah, from what I understand the demons that caused vampirism and lycanthropy upon the earth had some beef with each other. That got transferred to their human counterparts I guess?"

"Wait, it's been thousands of years since vampires and werewolves were made and they still don't get along?"

"Apparently."

"Great. Well, the wolves would get the sunlight weapons anyway, so I wouldn't want them mixing."

"They won't fight though, will they?" asked Ady nervously.

"Nah, but don't set them off or anything."

"Okay."

"Ah, you're all here!" Hodge said, coming into the room. "Great. Welcome vampires, sorry to send you right out when you've only just arrived. You can have the tour when you get back from your first patrol." He went on, getting them assigned to groups of shadowhunters, and they moved off. With them gone he turned to Lysanias.

"What is your plan for today?"

"Go over the ritual to get a phoenix here, then work with Clary on a circle to help. After the sun is up we'll try it, then I'll get to work on making some sunlight daggers for those that want them. I'll want to get everything set up before then, we found some tables and things I can use. We may have to go into town to buy some supplies though. Alchemy comes from natural stuff so I'm sure I can find what I need. Otherwise giving another lesson on wards. I've only given one so hopefully people have tried at least one on their own and have questions. Then before they go out on patrol give everyone a quick primer on the supernatural skills, see if they know about them already."

"Ah. That sounds good, sounds good."

"You don't seem convinced."

"Oh, I was just hoping you could take a look at this curse that's been put on me..."

This again? "I need to get you all prepared. And the cup is more important, right? We need to get that angel here and that means practice."

"Of course, of course. There's plenty of time. I'll be around if you need anything, I can't go anywhere!" He laughed and walked off.

Seems like that guy has only one thing on his mind. Getting his curse removed. How was he even cursed in the first place? Magic? Or is it just a contract sort of thing that he calls a curse? I wouldn't be able to do anything about that.

But he put that out of his mind and got to work, reading over the prayer like ritual that would call a phoenix. Naturally he could have the padform right there and open, but

he didn't want to make any mistakes in the ritual. Clary, meanwhile, was copying a circle down in chalk to assist him. He had put the spirit of the dragonfly on her beforehand, so it looked like it was coming along just fine. With that done they headed to a classroom like room where he answered questions and showed the artificers that showed up more ideas for wards, including the one Clary had just thought of which could soak up sunlight. He also entertained ideas for talismans, and said he would be around if they wanted to get started on trying to make certain things.

"Where can we find you?" asked one.

"I'll be outside, making some sunlight daggers with alchemy." *No need to tell them about the angel project and their cup being gone. That shouldn't take long.*

Now feeling ready Clary activated the circle and he stood inside it. The chalk lines faintly glowed and he synchronized his energy with it, just as the directions had said. Hodge, Isabelle, and Clary were all there, so he started the prayer. Right into the air almost without care he opened between worlds a large golden tear. As with all things he didn't feel the ritual was complete until it had gone for exactly ten minutes.

Not a blasted thing happened.

So he tried again, and while he felt he had done better, still nothing happened. "I did the circle right, didn't I?" Clary asked.

"It's helping all right," he agreed. "As is my own dragonfly spirit. But it's clear I need practice at this. The difficulty of getting a phoenix is about the same as that of getting a regular old archangel. To get a specific one, that's also a prince, is about double that difficulty. So I'm either going to have to give up on the idea for now, cheat with magic, or think of something else that can raise my skill."

"Maybe a ward?" Clary offered, because it was the only thing she could offer.

"Maybe. In any case, I'm much better at alchemy thanks to all that practice at following directions in potions class back at Hogwarts. Alchemy is only a little different, so let's get the sun shining and make some daggers." He stepped out of the circle and the chalk vanished. "Sorry about that, Isabelle, maybe I can show you a phoenix next time."

"It's okay."

"Hey, it cleans up after itself," Hodge remarked, looking at the floor.

"Yeah, the power consumes the marks or something," he agreed. "There are ways to make them that don't vanish, but you have to chisel them into the floor or make them out of metal."

"Ah, I see."

So Clary and he went outside and it was a little cloudy, so Lysanias was going to try water or air bending the clouds away. Then he had a better idea. He drew his wand.

"Rosalina, let our spirits work together to protect all people! Bankai!"

Not a blasted thing happened.

"I'm just not at my best today," he remarked, fully knowing he was trying stuff he wasn't all that practiced at. He tried again, and this time she heard him and Rosalina was standing there. She looked around, seeing they weren't under attack.

“Hi Lysanias, you called me out!” she realized with a smile.
“I was just wondering if I could borrow your sun?”

Chapter 13

Making Changes

When: A second after Rosalina appeared

Where: Outside the institute

“My magic is, of course, at your disposal,” Rosalina told him. “But what do you need my super overkill magic burn everything down spell for around here?” She looked around.

“Actually, I’m hoping to make some solid sunlight, but it’s a little cloudy for it. If we could use the light of your sun though, it would be ideal.”

“Oh, I see. I can keep it going for as long as you need. Hello.”

Lysanias turned to see who she was talking to, and Clary was standing there, looking Rosalina up and down.

Right, she’s never seen me do that before. “Clary, this is Rosalina, my wand spirit. Rosalina, this is Clary, an artificer I’ve been working with here.”

“Nice to meet you,” Rosalina told her.

“Where did you come from?” Clary asked. “You look like a princess.”

“I do, don’t I? Bowing and calling me ‘your majesty’ is not required though.” She grinned. “As for where I came from? I sort of live inside Lysanias’ soul, if I can be said to exist anywhere. I’m the conscious force that inhabits his wand and makes it possible for him to do wand magic. He can call me out, just like his mountain spirit, as you can see.” She did a twirl.

“Ahh…” She looked like she didn’t know what to say to someone that claimed to be a wand spirit.

“And you should stop by and visit,” she chided Lysanias. “The golf course looks A-Mazing if I do say so myself. And we haven’t raced karts in days!” She gave a cute little pout.

“Sorry,” he told her with a sheepish grin. “Been a little busy since I got here.”

“Golf course?” Clary asked.

“She likes golf, and I’ve got the space- look, can we get started here? I can explain everything while the solution hardens. It’s going to take hours, we’ll have the time.”

“You do whatever, it’s fine,” she allowed.

“Thank you.” Lysanias got everything ready as Rosalina got the spell going, again pointing into the sky and summoning Lumas that spun in the air, igniting the sun. As they were in the courtyard of the institute the new sun would be covered by the existing wards (he hoped) so nobody came running that a new star had been created in the city. Lysanias then cheated, calling upon magic to increase his skill at alchemy.

“I don’t like doing it, but given we scrounged this equipment up,” he explained, “I’ll need the extra knowledge that magic can give me to make sure this all goes well. A real lab is ideal, but this will do in a pinch. I also hope these ingredients I found will be okay. Plus I want to make up a lot of this stuff, which is harder. So I’ll need the boost.”

“You don’t have to explain yourself to me. But what exactly are you doing?”

“Alchemy. In this case, these ingredients here I’m going to mix up, and they’re going to absorb the nearby sunlight. They will then harden and evaporate, leaving the now raw, unsupported light in their place. At the end we’ll have a big ball of the stuff I

can then reshape into blades. I'll be working on it a little while, then letting it harden, then at the end put my spiritual energy into the process to make sure the now solid light holds together. The entire process will take four hours."

"I see. Plenty of time for me to work on making a new ward that absorbs sunlight."

"Yup. I can also go over some of the spirit energy techniques with you if you want to take a break."

"Okay."

So the pair got to work on their respective projects. Lysanias was floored when Clary seemed to simply sit for a moment with her eyes closed, then started making wards with a design he had never seen before.

"How did you do that?" he asked. "It takes me eight hours to come up with a new ward design!"

"I don't know," she admitted. "I just concentrate on what sort of thing I want to do, and the runes simply come to me."

"That's..." *not without precedent, actually. I do the same thing with Skyebourne magic. I simply shape the magic into doing what I want, and the spell is then in my head for the rest of my life. Is she the equivalent of a skyebourne mage somehow? And if so, how?* "Huh. Do you feel like the design is in the corner of your eye, or that it could take you over?"

"What?" She looked up. "Nothing like *that*."

"That's good." *Guess it's not exactly the same then. Still weird, how in the world does she do it? It's just something she can do, like shoving things into paper?*

She finished the ward she was working on, then paused. "In fact it's the opposite. If I didn't have it to look at, I wouldn't have the first clue how to make this ward. Like I get the knowledge of how to do it, I pour that out onto a paper, and then it's gone. I should actually write this down." She opened her notebook, took another notebook out of it, and copied the design down as well as what it did.

Absorbs sunlight and releases it on command.

That done she put the notebook away inside the notebook, and sat staring at the paper before her.

"Want to take a break? We can go over spirit stuff, or I can tell you about Rosalina."

"No, I'm thinking. Be right back." She headed back inside, leaving Rosalina and Lysanias wondering what she had in mind.

"Sorry I didn't bring you out someplace more interesting," he apologized. This area was basically just a lawn, no flowers or anything nice to look at. She had been wandering around, but looked a bit bored by this point.

"Oh, that's okay. It's nice just to be out. If you got your mountain spirit out we could do some training though."

"Sure. Just don't knock into my table, I don't want to start this over." *You up for some training, mountain spirit?*

I will gladly train with Rosalina. At least she remembered me...

The two moved off to the side and Clary came back holding a bag. She spilled it out, then grabbed one of the metal cylinders now rolling around the table. Grabbing her brush she started putting the ward symbols on the thing.

“What’s that?”

“A slug. I had the brilliant idea, if I say so myself, of making more bullets but with this ward in addition to the ones the shadowhunters showed me that wound demons.”

“So wait, you mean make them soak up sunlight and then they get activated when you shoot them?”

“Exactly. Same principal, and this way is even better. Longer range, wounds the demon you’re shooting at, and they get left behind so any other demons in the area start to feel it as well. My original thought was a sort of sunshine barrier around people, but the gun idea seems way better.”

“Huh. That’s a great idea all right!”

“If it works. I’ll have them put this together after I let it ‘soak’ for a moment and see what happens when I fire it.”

“Sounds reasonable.”

“Er, I hate to ask, but why is Rosalina fighting that miniature mountain over there?”

He laughed. “That’s my mountain spirit, they’re training. Our first combat together went pretty badly, so we need to learn to work together. Actually, our first combat together was against you, your potential self anyway.”

“You got beat by a girl!” She winked.

“I nearly did. My shield saved me, I don’t know what I would have done otherwise. Oh, one thing for your notebook, another technique your potential self used.”

“Okay.” She got it out again.

“It was a stone statue, in your image, that she gave a semblance of life to before our combat. I was thinking if you could shove something like that into your book you could pull it out, mark it up, and have a combatant at your side. A portable minion, in other words.”

“Not much of a sculptor, but I’ll keep it in mind. Thanks.”

“Sure.”

Moments later Clary came back with a completed slug, loaded into a shotgun.

“Here, shoot it into my shield,” Lysanias offered, getting it out. “We’ll be able to tell how bright it is, if it works at all. And it won’t damage anything around here.”

“Okay. I just pull this trigger, right?”

“Watch where you point that thing!”

“Sorry! Guess I need a gun safety course, huh?” She laughed.

With the cover off Clary totally lost the shotgun after firing it because she wasn’t expecting the kickback, but she had been inches from the shield so they saw the glowing slug inside the darkness. “I guess it works,” she announced, rubbing her arm. “That really hurt. How are you supposed to fire that thing without breaking your own arm?”

“I suppose shadowhunters would have strength runes going or something? But normal people can use them... There must be a way.”

“Must be,” she agreed. “I must have been holding it wrong. Well, I’ll make up more now that we know that works.”

Interesting. She's essentially found a way to duplicate what I'm doing, with wards. Mine are more permanent, but force you to get close. She can make a dozen in an hour, but they're only good once. I suppose the ward is the better way to go.

With that done Lysanias went back to monitoring his alchemy, hours later putting energy into the ball. With his skill magically enhanced he had no problem doing this, and lifted a very large ball of sunlight out of the bowl he had been mixing the stuff in.

"I'll shatter it now, but shape it later," he decided. "I need to get to bed."

"Me too, I'm on a weird schedule now," Clary agreed. "I have a question for you though. Actually, more like I need some advice. Simon has been texting me, and I've told him I'm fine, but he wants to see me."

What's texting?

"Do you think I should tell him about all this? He's going to want to know where my mom is, he hangs out with me all the time."

"Ah. That breaks shadowhunter rules, right?"

"Of course. They have rules for everything it seems. Even who they can marry." She blushed. "Not that I asked about marrying anyone in particular around here, by the way. But he's my best friend, we've known each other forever. What do I do?"

Lysanias thought a moment. "I would hold off for now. Go see him, obviously, we don't want him to worry. But telling him seems a bit cruel."

"How so?"

"Think about it. You're dangling the supernatural world in front of someone, then telling them they can have no part of it. How would you feel if the situation was reversed?" *Plus he then has a secret he can't tell anyone else, and that's never good right?*

"I'd worry about him. Maybe be a bit angry he wanted to exclude me, even if it was for my own good."

"Exactly. The way I see it, the whole situation is temporary anyway."

"What? You don't think we're going to lose, do you?"

"What? Oh, you mean the shadow avatar? No, I've beaten it before and I will again. I mean once we get a new cup, you know, the one that makes artificers? You can ask them to allow him to drink from it. He can then make wards, and maybe like you be an artificer rather than a shadowhunter. Unless he wants to do the demon fighting, I mean. These iron sisters they talk about don't fight, so there's precedent for it."

"True." She looked thoughtful. "He's a hard worker, though he's not an artist like me. But he could draw runes and make things. He could make a good artificer, he's careful about things and he'd love to meet real vampires and the others. You can get the angel here in a week or so, right? I can hold him off that long."

"I'll try. I'll do the magic if I have to, I just didn't know if they would be able to tell. Like I didn't do it completely with my own efforts, you know? But at the same time the notes say it's super tough to get a prince of angels so..." *And doing magic is just another skill for me, who is to say it's cheating all that much, or more than calling my spirits?*

"I have faith in you!"

"Thanks."

“So hold off telling him. I get it. Hey, maybe tomorrow could you come with me and fix my front door? I can’t exactly call a contractor and tell them, yeah, a demon broke through it and abducted my mother.”

“Sure, shouldn’t be too hard.”

“Good. I can at least meet him there, and just say my mom is out. That happens. Have to clean up a bit, and keep him away from my room but at least he can see me. Put his mind at ease.” She looked a little down.

“You holding up okay?”

“I guess. I know everyone did what they could to find her. We’ll just have to wait to see what happens. She’s still alive, I’m sure of it. Sometimes I almost think I can see her, she’s floating somewhere and there’s this energy field around her. But it only lasts a second.”

“We’ll find her. Valentine will slip up and we’ll nail him to a wall, believe me.”

“I’ll hold you to that.”

“Do you need the sun anymore?” asked Rosalina.

“We’re both going to bed, so I don’t think so,” Lysanias told her.

“Okay.” She gestured with the wand and it rose into the air, then burst apart sending the heat washing over the pair. “I’ll see you later then.”

“Thanks,” he told her, and was holding the wand again.

“Can I see that?” Clary asked. He shrugged and handed it over. “It really is a magic wand.”

“It really is. I’m familiar with five different types of magic now, given warlock magic seems a little different than anything I knew before coming here. Who knows how many other types I might encounter in my travels?” She handed it back and he put it away again.

“Do you like it? Wandering around like this?”

“I like learning new things, and making new friends. I don’t like saying goodbye to them, or having to fight off the shadow avatar. It’s a living.”

“I see.” She gathered up her now runed shotgun slugs. “I’ll see you tomorrow, or like later today, or whatever.”

“See you later.”

He went to get some sleep.

Now 11:00 PM on the third day in that reality Lysanias got himself up and went over what he wanted to show everyone. With the vampires now there he could teach a complete class, so before their nightly patrol he figured he would give an overview, see if they already knew any of this stuff, and pass out the charts and diagrams for chi-blocking as well as demonstrating. As expected the vampires and werewolves were on opposite sides of the room, but all seemed interested in what he was going to teach them. He demonstrated spirit step, cautioning it took a great deal of control over one’s spiritual energy to pull off. Of course about spirit energy in general, what it could do including the defensive aura he hardly ever used, seeing people’s auras, and feeling out energy in the world. He was going over chi-blocking when the door flew open and a very stern looking lady swept into the room.

"I wouldn't have believed it!" she announced, looking the room over. Hodge looked at her in surprise, and then at the person following in the woman's wake with a scowl. He made a helpless gesture and backed out, not wanting to be caught in the storm that was no doubt to come. "Downworlders. Here! In the institute." She said this like she was saying "who tracked mud on my carpets?"

"Inquisitor, welcome to the New York institute," Hodge greeted. "What a pleasant surprise to see you!"

"I bet. What do you think you're playing at, Hodge?"

"I think I'm doing my job, and keeping the mundane world safe," he explained. "It's high time we stopped ignoring potential recruits just because their parents didn't drink out of a cup at some point in history."

"Do you think this will curry favor in the clave? Some sort of reversal after all these years now that it seems Valentine is still around? You wanted to kill them all before, now you're inviting them inside? Showing you've turned over a new leaf or some such?"

He held up a hand. "The past is the past, inquisitor. Right now we have bigger problems, which Lysanias and I will be happy to explain to you. After this lesson is over. We have precious little time to prepare, so we need all the time we can get with him."

"Who?"

"Lysanias." He indicated our hero. "He's teaching us a whole new martial arts style at the moment."

"A new martial arts style?" she scoffed. "Preposterous. Go home, all of you. You're not welcome here."

"They are home, believe it or not. And they're not going anywhere because they are welcome here."

"You overstep yourself!"

"You don't have all the facts!"

"There are no so called facts that could change the fact downworlders are not allowed to train as shadowhunters!"

"We call them cambions now, actually," he replied smugly. "Downworlder isn't exactly politically correct, is it? And why not train them? They have skills of their own, magic or speed or healing abilities that would allow them to be excellent shadowhunters. We ignore their talents at our peril."

"Because it's the law!"

"Oh well, you've convinced me. Pack it up everyone- wait no. Just saying that means nothing. Let us tell you what's going on, what's at stake, and-"

"Actually, the word 'stake' is rather offensive to us," one of the vampires said.

"I could go for a nice steak. Raw," Maia told them, licking her lips.

"My apologies, rather what is at risk..." He looked over and they nodded. "And then you'll see why I'm doing this."

"You seriously believe anything you say could- could-"

While this little tirade had been going on, Lysanias has taking his shirt off. *These people are big on angels, right? They revere the one that gave them powers, they've got statues of the guy all over the place. And why wouldn't they? Let's see how she reacts to this.* Great white wings sprouted from Lysanias' back, unfurling behind him. He spread them as high as they would go, and everyone shrank back a little.

"Impossible!" she sputtered. "You can't be..."

“You have no idea what I am,” he informed her softly, activating his spirit aura just for a little bit more wow factor. He lit up, energy crackling around his body like he was a certain yellow spiky haired alien from a universe with seven balls in it. Then he drew his sword, which as the sheath was still covered with an ‘ignore me’ ward seemed to be drawn from nowhere. *This sword is a work of art, and Ragnarok did instruct me to change people’s minds. It should help sell the point I’m not from around here.* He held it up pointed at the ceiling, so the entire length could be seen. “I am Lysanias, and I am all that stands between your world and utter destruction. Now you can continue your uniformed rant if you would like, but you are disrupting my class. I have very little time here, and you are wasting it. I do not care who you think you are, barging in here like this, but I’ve heard enough. If you wish to have *all* the facts, and *then* make an informed choice, you may wait quietly until I’ve finished. Otherwise you may leave and rant at any that will listen outside those doors. The choice, as with all mortal beings that inhabit the Earth, lies with you.” He leveled the sword in her direction. “Choose.”

Chapter 14

A Little Normalcy

When: After his proclamation to choose

Where: Institute training room

"I've never seen an inquisitor back off like that," Jace remarked. "She basically ran out the door."

"I don't blame her," Alec said, eyes still fixed on the wings. "I mean look!"

"Come on Alec, it's still me," Lysanias told him. "Come on everyone, back to work." The wings vanished. But everyone was well away from him, as though afraid to approach. "Oh dear."

"What did you expect?" Isabelle asked. "No one has seen a real angel in thousands of years."

"I'm not- look. All of you, everyone needs to hear this." He went over to the board that was stuck on the wall and grabbed up the marker. He made a circle at the top and pointed to it. "The Allfather. God of the world I come from." He drew a line and a crude pair of wings. "The Allfather created angels." He drew a line coming off of them, then two boxes. "He then made people, those who were not angels, to live on Earth. But like angels, these people had abilities, powers they could draw upon that people who came later," he drew a box lower down, "didn't have. Those people he created," he drew a line from each of the two boxes that came together, with a box at the end, "had kids. One of those kids was me." He drew wavy lines between the top and bottom set of boxes. "The Allfather decided he wanted powerless people instead, short lived, stupid, more easily controlled. Who knows His reasoning, I don't. But the fact is He wiped us out in a flood. Even innocent kids like me, or animals that knew nothing of why they were dying. Because He's a god of *love*. But despite His best efforts, some of my people survived on their own strengths, while others like me, through sacrifice, were saved." He drew an arrow down from his box to the others. "The people that came after called my people progenitors, and a very few of them walk my world to this day. But I left my world, because I didn't fit there anymore, to walk others as I'm doing now. To train you, share my knowledge, and to be your shield against the dark." He drew a circle. "I'm no angel, that was just a trick to put that woman in her place. The last 'inquisitor' I met it didn't go so well, they tried to kill me with light sabers in fact. So you'll have to forgive my wanting to play a little trick on this one. But that's all it was. A trick. Am I closer to being an angel than any of you? Maybe. Do I have abilities you don't? Most certainly. Does that make me better than you? Not in the least. But I'm only one person. I need your help to protect this world and all others like it. So let's get back to it, shall we?"

"Other worlds?" asked a vampire. "You mean like the seelie realm?"

"What? You should have been told this." He looked over at Hodge. "Why haven't you told them what we're fighting?"

"I was typing it up but I never finished. I've been busy," he protested. "I'll finish it later today and email everyone, I promise."

"Please do. Busy, honestly. I suppose I can relate, it's been a busy couple of days. Anyway, you're not just here because we spontaneously decided to include everybody. Didn't your leaders tell you this? We met with them..."

“Luke just said there was some threat and any who wanted to come work here could,” Dan told him. “It seemed like a better deal than what I was doing, working the docks, so I came here.”

Lysanias covered his eyes with a hand. “Fine. Whatever. Read what Hodge has to say about why I’m here, I’ll answer questions later. Right now we need to get back to it.”

There was some grumbling, but everyone got back into place and he went on with the lesson.

At 2:00 AM the vampires got sent out of the room so the sunlight blades could be distributed, but not before the sunlight rounds were handed out. “Pay careful attention to the shells you load,” Clary explained. “I’ve had them mark sunshine slugs with a circle. You shoot one at a nearby demon sunlight will come spilling out, and hurt vampires too. So if you’re in a group with a vampire, only load shells with no circle. Vampires, don’t ever load a shell with a circle. Got it?” They did, and the vampires loaded up with basic ruined slugs, the only weapon they could use to kill demons. With that done Lysanias coated any blade brought to him with a thin layer of sunshine, figuring this was a better use of the material than making solid blades. He could compress the metal a little, so they still fit or folded like they used to into sheaths, while still being lethal to demons. The hardened sunlight seemed fairly tough, at least as tough as the metal it flowed over, so he had no doubt they would last. With that the groups went out to make sure there were no demons running around, but were told if any surrendered to bring them back.

“We need information on how they’re getting here,” he told them. “Those we’ve talked to have been clueless, but another might not. Got that?” They did.

Now to deal with this inquisitor person.

“Lysanias, this is inquisitor Whitelaw,” Hodge introduced them. “Inquisitor, the traveler Lysanias.”

“I notice you’re a bit calmer now,” Lysanias told her, looking her over. She was probably in her sixties, with graying hair, and she wore a gray suit which contrasted the black everyone else around there seemed to wear.

“Hodge has been filling me in as he finished his report for the new recruits,” she explained. He had slipped away soon after Lysanias had gone back to teaching, and he was glad the man had used his time wisely. “I’m more inclined to believe it than I was an hour ago. But the fact remains, threat from outside our world or not, downworlders running around the institute is a serious breach of the accords!”

Lysanias looked questioningly at Hodge. “She means our law. We gave it a fancy name to make ourselves feel more important.”

“Ah.”

“That is not true and- never mind. Then there’s the matter of not telling us about this threat directly.”

“Oh, yes, I’m sure the clave would have reacted with clear heads, forthright thinking, and logical action, isn’t that right? We both know that’s not how it would have gone, inquisitor.”

“But hiding something so serious...”

"The truth is, I have no idea who we can trust," Lysanias explained. "I have some ability to feel out a person possessed by the shadow avatar, but I'm not good at it." *Need to practice that too, when I get a minute. As well as petitioning, and my blocking could use work too...* "The more people running around, the harder it is to know who might be working against us. Or the easier it will get back to the shadow avatar exactly who is here to defend this reality, and then they can prepare for me. Besides, the majority of the action will be here. Inari may be a prankster, but she does want to see me succeed. She's always put me right where I need to be in order to get the job done."

"Isn't it obvious who you're looking for? How can it be anyone but Valentine? He's the one disrupting things now."

"Because your world is still here. You all stopped him once, and I'm here *now*. If it was him, and yes, he could have been taken over in the meantime, I would have been sent here earlier. But that's not the case. Besides, in my experience the shadow avatar doesn't take over the most obvious person. You want to send help, great. You want to send people to learn the new techniques I'm teaching, like ward making, talisman creation, making circles? Not a problem. But Clary and the people connected to her are at the center of this, just like Luke and just like Terra were. Er, not Luke the werewolf, Luke Skywalker."

She had a blank look on her face. "That sounds like a shadowhunter name but I don't think I know the man. What does he look like?"

"What do you mean, it sounds like a shadowhuter name?"

"They're compound, to honor the name the angel gave the first shadowhunter. You know, light wood, town house, that sort of thing. That's where our title came from. Sky walker, totally a shadowhunter name."

I'm sorry I bought it up. "You don't know this guy. The point is, the shadow avatar will strike here first. I'm fairly sure of it. We who are here must be prepared to meet that threat."

"Then we will reinforce you as we can," she promised. "But you may have to come to Idris, to convince the clave. Me telling them I saw a man with angel wings pulling a blade out of nowhere will get me an evaluation at best, stripped of my runes at worst. I heard your little 'I'm not an angel' speech but maybe that's a lie to get them to trust you. I know what I saw."

Whoops. Maybe I did go overboard a bit? "We'll welcome the help, but they better be prepared to work with cambions. Your 'downworlders.' Attitudes need to change, all this division is stupid. Aside from the seelie, you're all human first."

"I guess." She didn't sound convinced. "But even an angel descending from Heaven and ordering us to work together isn't going to change all the years of mistrust we've gone through."

"That's up to you. You know what we're doing here now, and what is at stake. Let me do what I came here to do, and I'll be on my way to the next world. As far as help, anyone you've known personally for years, has not changed their behavior or ideas lately, and is brought to me for testing should be fine."

"Inquisitor, wards *alone* change the equation drastically," Hodge interrupted. "Marks on paper that persist until removed? And he's been showing us how to combine runes to create different things they can do. Take some back with you, show the clave what we've done here. It's only been a day that the cambions have patrolled with us but already the pressure is easing. I can feel it. I mean if you think about it, we were

shooting ourselves in the foot trying to do everything ourselves in the first place. We protect vampires and fairies from demons just as much as mundane people. Let the cambions take on some of that work for a change. They came back *happy* to have been included. *Optimistic* this could work. Even, dare I say it, a little closer to the shadowhunters now that they knew what exactly it was we do. It was subtle, yes, but they stood closer together, and were more at ease with each other. That will only get stronger, and there's absolutely no reason it shouldn't!"

"You mean they may have resented us because they thought we were sitting around night after night?"

"Yes, I do. I don't think they realized just how tough it is keeping demons in check. Especially now when they seem to be popping up all over the place. Every group encountered at least one, so everyone got a piece of the action. Keeping your group safe, that's an excellent way to make them bond."

"I wonder. But having that many demons in one city alone is troubling. Demonic activity is the same elsewhere, so you could be right. Perhaps this is where your 'shadow avatar' will focus their efforts." She sighed. "Fine. I'll return to Idris and make my report. For now you may continue this trail program of working with downworlders. I see it's two of each type? Increase it to five each."

"Ma'am?" Hodge gave her a look like that was the last thing he was expecting.

"Two isn't enough. Two can easily avoid hostility. But five? If this really can work, then let's see it work with greater numbers. We'll need to know now if that many downworlders can really fit into our organization. You, of course, will be taking responsibility if it goes wrong."

"Of course." He seemed resigned.

"Excellent. Lysanias, whatever you are, it was nice to meet you. Please have Hodge contact the clave if we can be of any assistance. We'll be watching to see if this experiment of yours works."

"I will. Thank you."

"If I do choose to send anyone here I'll make sure Hodge is there to meet them and bring them to you so you can make sure they aren't this person you're looking for. Now where can I get some wards?"

Hodge led her off, and he turned back to the others who were waiting for him.

"You're done, great. Let's go fix my house," Clary told him, grabbing his arm and pulling him towards the door.

"What's the rush?"

"She's hoping to get away before we remind her what a bad idea it is," Alec said, trailing behind. "She shouldn't leave the institute."

"I agree," Jace agreed. "It was more of a fluke than anything you were away when your mother was taken. I'm sure the house will be watched. We don't want you getting taken too."

"Good thing my escort consists of both the best shadowhunters their worlds had to offer," Clary said sweetly.

"Who said I was going?" Jace asked her.

"Why wouldn't you? Don't you want to protect me?"

"If you don't leave, I don't have to."

“But I can’t keep Simon in the dark forever. According to your laws I can’t tell him, and me vanishing will just make him call the police. We have enough problems. Let me go, fix up the house so he thinks things are normal, have lunch with him, and come back here. I’m not just tossing my old life because my mother made some poor choices without my consent.”

“Hard to explain us being there. If we go glamoured, all we’ll be able to do is stand around, you won’t be able to talk to us.”

“Look, Lysanias I can introduce as a friend of Luke’s who is looking after me until we know who broke into the house. Do you really think any number of circle members, attacking in broad daylight, could get past him?”

“Actually,” Lysanias countered, “If something happened I would probably just grab you and teleport back here. Much better than brawling in the street.”

“There, you see? I’ll be perfectly safe.”

“We can’t hold her here against her will,” Isabelle reminded them. “And until she decides to become a shadowhunter she’s just a girl, like she said, that can make things happen when she draws on stuff. She’s making us ammo as a favor, and to repay our looking for her mom, but she could go it alone if she wanted.”

“Thank you, Izzy,” Clary told her. “I wouldn’t, I do need your help finding my mother, but I just want to clear my head, hang out with my best friend for an hour or two. Is that too much to ask?”

“A little,” Jace told her.

“Come on Jace, you think it’s fun going out killing demons, but some of us need other outlets. Like shopping,” Isabelle teased. “We only know people who are shadowhunters, so of course we don’t know what it’s like to want to leave and go talk to mundanes. She does. Have fun Clary, but do come back safe. Stick to Lysanias.”

“I will.”

“Who will answer to me if something happens.” Isabelle stared hard at him, seemingly tapping the bracelet/whip she carried innocently.

“She’ll be fine.”

The others grumbled, but let her go.

“Thought they were going to tie me down for a minute there,” Clary said to him as they walked down the institute steps.

“You are the main crux of all this somehow, I did just get finished saying that.”

“So that means my life is over until this avatar of yours is killed?”

“Hey, I’m walking down these steps with you, remember? I wasn’t the one trying to keep you there.”

“I guess. It’s good to be out and about again. Come on, my house is this way.”

“I’ve been inside, remember? We could just teleport there directly.”

She stopped dead. “Oh yeah. Wait, circle members wouldn’t see us go in or out in any case!”

“I know. I was hoping they would think of that when I reminded them I can actually teleport, but not so much. Ah well. Come on, take my hand and we’ll head there.”

He *shifted*.

The two picked up the mess in the house after Lysanias fixed the front door, cleaning it up until Simon arrived for lunch. He was an average looking guy with glasses who Lysanias felt was head over heels in love with Clary the moment he saw him. He could clearly feel the emotions in the room as he looked at Clary, ranging from relief at seeing her again to devotion. She greeted him simply as a friend however, and didn't have any strong feelings apart from being glad to see him.

Oh dear. That can't be good. Sorry friend. Wonder if I should tell her? He did feel the guy out, and he seemed to belong here, so that was good. I would hate to have to kill her friend.

"Lysanias, this is Simon. Simon, this is Lysanias. He's a friend of Luke's, who is worried about me of course. The break in, and everything. So he agreed to hang out, you know, for a few days."

"Nice to meet you," Simon said, not really looking at him.

Of course, he only has eyes for Clary, so I guess I won't be too offended. I should be keeping a low profile anyway.

"They still don't know who did it?"

"No," she lied. "Probably just one of those random occurrences, you know?"

"If you say so. So what did you want to show me? You said it went vroom vroom or something, right? Did your mom buy you a car?"

"Oh! Right. That. Uh... Lysanias, a quick word?"

Simon looked between the two and then took a step towards him, peering intently at him. "Wow, those are some massively cool eyes! They look exactly like the copy wheel eye. You some kind of extreme Naruto fan or something? I didn't know they could make contacts like that, are they imported from Japan? Where I can get some? Were they expensive?"

"Down boy," Clary told him, giving him a shove. "He'll answer your questions in a minute."

"Fine, I don't see why he can't just tell me." He rubbed his shoulder.

Clary dragged him into the other room and shut the door. "Let's tell him about you!" she demanded excitedly.

"What?"

"I just realized- you aren't part of the shadow world, and he would flip out over the light saber. We wouldn't be breaking clave law telling him you're from another world and hunting the shadow avatar. There's no rule about that! We just leave out anything about the supernatural here!"

There's no rule about it because how often would it come up in the lifetime of a planet? Once, maybe? But she seems really excited about the prospect. Why do I get the feeling that's a really, really bad idea?

Chapter 15

Little Dot Returns

When: A moment of thought later

Where: Clary's house

"No, it's a bad idea," Lysanias decided with finality.

Clary looked disappointed. "What? Why?"

"Think about it. He's going to want to know why I'm hanging out with you, a random girl with *nothing special at all about her.*"

"Oh. I guess you have a point. We can't explain why I'm helping you without revealing my abilities, and that would be against clave law. If only he was a vampire or something, we could tell him because he would already know!"

"He's not, so it's out. Besides, he's just a normal person, right? What help is he going to be against demons or whatever else the shadow avatar throws at us?"

She sighed. "None at all."

"So keep him away from all this, safe, until you decide what you're going to do. It's not like he's going to be any happier knowing light sabers are real, he can't have mine. That's like dangling candy in front of a child and snatching it away again! In fact it might make him feel worse knowing all these great adventures *are* going on, in other worlds and this one, that he can't participate in."

"You're right, that's for the best. In that case though, better not seem too familiar with me. Just hang out in the background like you were keeping an eye on me."

"That's fine with me." *I wouldn't know what to talk with him about anyway.*

"He can't tell you," Clary told Simon as they came into the room again.

Simon looked at her like she had told him he couldn't be told where Lysanias had bought his shoes or what he had for breakfast that morning. "He can't tell me about his contacts?"

"That's right. I have forbidden him from answering any of your questions, so don't even think about it."

He looked between Clary and Lysanias. "What are you talking about? Clary, what's going on? Are they stolen? Prototypes that aren't for sale yet? He isn't exactly hiding them so what's the big deal?"

"It's not a big deal. What's going on is we're going to lunch. Come on, let's go." She grabbed him by the arm and started dragging him towards the door.

"You're really not going to let him tell me?"

"That's right!"

"That's so mean!"

Lysanias just shook his head and followed behind. *Not as mean as the alternative my friend, believe me.*

At lunch he did what they did, picking something at random from the menu and sending into Clary's brain to remind her that he didn't actually have any of their type of money. She paid for his meal, making Simon that much more suspicious, and he sat at the table next to them. Simon spoke to her softly, glancing at him out of the corners of his eyes, but Lysanias ignored him. He pretended to be watching the door and looking around for anyone "suspicious" to maintain the (very) thin illusion that's what he was

there to do. Finally Simon dropped it and the pair sat in silence, finishing their meal. He somewhat peevishly went on his way when it was done.

“Sorry to have made your friend mad,” he apologized.

“No, it’s not you,” she assured him. “I mean it is, couldn’t you hide those eyes of yours like you made the wings? It’s the whole supernatural world. I should be able to tell my friends!”

I suppose I could, actually. Never thought about it, but I have changed myself and they’ve remained. Maybe I would have to do them separately for it to work. It would last all day, or near enough, and if I changed myself to be a cat or something they would change. They would get smaller, but they might still be red unless I focused on them. They would only need to be ‘pure’ if I was using them to absorb someone’s skill at something. “Sure, and they either believe you because you can prove it, or think you’re nuts and the friendship is over. But say they do believe you. Now they have to keep the secret, and why can’t they tell their friends? But now you have the same problem. They can’t prove it, not like you can. So everyone thinks they’re nuts.”

“Or they are believed, and people start going out hunting vampires and getting themselves killed.”

“That’s a possibility too, I suppose. This protects people as much as it protects cambions from being harassed all the time.”

“I guess. Let’s head back, it’s about the time they go to bed around there, and I’m getting tired myself.”

“Sure thing.”

The two headed back to the institute to go to bed, but someone was waiting for them when they arrived.

“Magnus,” Clary greeted him, a bit coldly.

Guess she hasn’t totally forgiven him for stealing her memories.

“Hello Clary. I brought a friend of yours in, she’s around here someplace. I’m waiting to talk to Hodge so we can wait together.”

“A friend of mine? Who?”

“Dot.”

“Dot? Dot’s here? Where?” She looked around.

“The shadowhunters wanted to talk to her. She should be back in a bit.”

“Is she okay?”

“She’s fine. A little shaken up about being replaced by a demon, but she finally managed to escape the ones holding her captive and made her way to me. I, of course, brought her here to let the shadowhunters know.”

Clary looked shocked. “I never even looked for her! Oh my God I’m such a terrible person. I gave her up once I saw that demon in her shape, never even gave her a second thought!”

“So you’re a shadowhunter after all, then?”

“How can you say that!?”

“You just admitted to it!”

“I...”

“Never mind, Clary. Everything worked out, I’m sure she won’t resent you for the rest of her life. We warlocks take a long view of things, given we tend to outlive most people.”

"How old are you?"

"Old enough, old enough. Ah, here she comes now!"

A woman that Lysanias had seen turning into a demon was coming into view alongside Hodge, who waved and came up to the group. The two greeted each other, Clary apologizing for giving her no thought over the last few days. Lysanias, meanwhile, was feeling her out, making sure this *was* actually Dot, and not another demon in disguise. He pulled out a sunlight orb and held it up, making her squint as she looked over at it but not burn away or start changing. *So she's probably okay. Her energy feels human, and she feels magical though demons can do magic so that's not a true test. Her magic feels similar to Magnus here so putting it all together it's probably fine.*

"It's okay Clary," Dot assured her. "What's important now is Jocelyn, I have information about her I just gave to the others."

"You know where my mom is?"

Dot shook her head. "I'm sorry Clary, I don't. When we got jumped she put up a good fight, but she was out of practice and badly outnumbered."

"I know, I was there. She shoved me through a portal and that's the last I saw of her. What happened?"

"She had to use her plan B."

"Plan B?"

"A potion that put her into a deep sleep. It protected her too, some kind of green energy barrier formed around her."

"So she's safe?"

"I would have to say so, it will take some effort to remove the spell from around her, and warlocks aren't exactly cooperating with Valentine."

"Thank goodness. But Valentine has her, right?"

"More than likely. We need to somehow find where he's hiding before he gets her awake again. If he does he'll get the location of the mortal cup and we'll all be in a lot more trouble."

"Nothing's turned up yet, though the shadowhunters do say they're looking. But are you okay? Magnus said you were but I want to hear it from you."

She gave a weak smile. "I'm fine, Clary. Not sure what I'm going to do now, but fine."

"Why not become a shadowhunter?" Lysanias suggested.

"What?" She looked at him like he had just asked her to cut her own arm off.

"That's not a bad idea," Magnus agreed. "I was supposed to be choosing another three warlocks wasn't I? Slipped my mind, but she's as good as any I suppose."

"You suppose?" She glowered at him. "Who escaped from a bunch of demons?"

"But how long did it take you?"

"I was exhausted from fighting circle members! After Jocelyn took the potion I was left on my own, you know."

"Always some excuse."

"It's not an excuse!"

"All right," Clary said, stepping between them. "Would you like to be a shadowhunter or not?"

"How can I be one?" she asked. "I can't drink from the cup even if you had it. You didn't find it already, did you?"

She shook her head. "No, it's just a... trial program we have going on right now. Five vampires, werewolves, fairies, and warlocks treated as shadowhunters. We call people that can do what we do artificers, so shadowhunter just becomes a more generic label for people that hunt demons and such."

"I see." Though it looked like she didn't.

"They need the help because of all the recent demon attacks, and it's silly to refuse it from people as powerful and durable as cambions."

"As who?"

"Cambions, people with demonic ancestry. It sounds better than 'downworlder.' Lysanias came up with it."

"I see," she repeated. "You're changing the labels of everything around here, huh?" She glanced at him. "I suppose it's one place he won't ever break into. Not without a lot of effort, anyway."

"Exactly. And I've love to have you around again," Clary told her.

"It's settled then," Magnus told her. "Congratulations on your new job. I'll send two more along soon. But now I have to talk to the group, since you're done being briefed or debriefed or whatever. I mean don't get me wrong I love debriefing people- if you get my drift."

"I don't," Clary deadpanned.

"The point is, I have a question for Hodge and the others, so come along." He set off down the hall back where Dot had come from, and the others trailed behind him. He pushed the doors open and the shadowhunters in the room looked up.

"Ah, Magnus, was there something else?" Hodge asked.

"Indeed there is. With our new spirit of cooperation and everything I need to know what you're going to do to protect my warlocks now that Valentine will no doubt look for one to get the spell off Jocelyn?"

Hodge's eyebrows lowered. "I can only help those in this area, you know that the Clave isn't instituting my- Lysanias' I should say- idea to bolster our ranks with Cambions on a wide scale. Not until it works out here, anyway. So any not in the city are on their own."

"Still, there are many warlocks that work here, so don't dodge the question. Can you help keep them safe or not?"

"We're stretched thin as it is, Magnus. That's why you're supposed to be finding us a few more warlocks to help out and become part of the shadowhunter trial. What do you suggest? I mean the warlocks are the most powerful faction after the fairies. Who don't even live around here so I don't have to worry about them."

"So we should protect each other, then? Strange, that seems like you doing nothing given we have to do that most of the time anyway."

"I can offer you some wards-"

"I can help," Lysanias offered, cutting him off.

"You're only one person, there are dozens of warlocks in the city," Magnus protested.

Lysanias shook his head. "Not like that. Your warlocks aren't warded, or at least I hope they aren't. I can ask the universe which of them is going to be placed in danger next. When agents of Valentine show up they spring our trap, finding more than just a lone warlock to deal with."

“We take them prisoner and maybe we can find out where my mother is!” Clary reasoned.

“Exactly. Either by melding with them, looking into their past, or just commanding them to tell us. There’s plenty of ways I could see where they came from and then get there myself.”

“Use us as bait? I don’t know,” Magnus hesitated. “Plus, many warlocks will be magically warded, I know my place is.”

“Oh. Can you call a meeting or something, get them in one place so I can ask about it? Something like ‘which of these warlocks will be the next to be attacked by forces loyal to Valentine?’”

“Or we could just use logic,” Clary told them, looking a bit smug.

“Do what?” Magnus asked her.

“Logic. How many warlocks could reasonably negate the spell that was used to protect my mother?”

“From what I saw of it, the spell was pretty strong,” Dot told her. “I couldn’t tell you exactly what it is, so even I would have trouble undoing it. Not without studying it awhile, anyway. And if I was being forced to do it, I’d have even less incentive so that would add time too.”

“So probably no young warlocks,” Clary reasoned, “meaning Valentine will ignore them. Older ones, such as yourself, would probably be too well guarded by spells to risk attacking. Unless he has a lot of followers to throw away, and I have to hope he doesn’t. So we can eliminate them. That leaves us with warlocks that are young-ish, move around fairly predictably so they can be grabbed and dragged into an alley somewhere after being knocked in the head from behind, and maybe wouldn’t be missed for a day or two. That gives Valentine a chance to ‘persuade’ them to try their hand at undoing the spell before an alarm is raised. How many warlocks fit *that* description? Get them in a room and see what shakes out.”

“So you’re thinking like Valentine? What, are you related to him or something?”

“No, don’t be stupid!”

“I’m just kidding.”

“Well don’t, that’s not something I want to even think about.”

“You’re right, I suppose it was in bad taste.”

“In any case,” Lysanias told them, “I can ask about it now. Unwarded warlocks are the most vulnerable anyway, so let’s ask about them. If I get an answer, great, they can be protected. If not you can get those that fit Clary’s criteria here and I’ll ask about them directly. They don’t ward themselves, right? Just their main base of operations?”

“That’s right,” Magus replied.

“Then give me ten to thirty minutes and I’ll have an answer for you.”

But he got lucky, and only ten minutes later had a name. *Huh, now that I think about it I could have tried for an hour if there was no warlock around here that would come under attack. I wouldn’t have known the difference between a non-answer and my own inability to hear the answer. Ah well, it all worked out in the end.*

“So Lloyd is going to get targeted next, you say?” Magnus mused. “But you don’t know exactly when?”

“I could ask about it, but narrowing it down might take a few tries. I typically get only one word answers.”

He waved that off. "Don't worry about it. I'll just have some warlocks nearby, out of sight, and wait. I'm sure it won't be more than a few days, Valentine isn't known for his patience."

"That he is not," Hodge agreed, rubbing the circle on his neck. "How many of us do you want?"

Magnus shook his head. "It's fine, I'll take care of it from here."

"What?" asked Clary. "Why would you refuse our help now?"

"Yeah, you started this whole conversation wanting to know what we were going to do for you!" Hodge reminded him.

"This is a warlock matter," he explained. "If I had to ask for help from you guys it would be like admitting weakness. Like I couldn't protect my own people. They would look down on me."

"Yes, that's so much better than how you're going to feel if someone actually gets taken," Clary told him with a roll of her eyes. "We're supposed to be cooperating here, remember?"

"And I'm sure shadowhunters would immediately reach out if the situation was reversed," he countered. "Like if there was a shadowhunter that needed to be escorted through some woods, they would go ask some werewolves for help. Rather than just trying to take care of it themselves."

"We totally would," Hodge admitted. "It's going to take some time before the entire supernatural world sees itself as a whole, rather than five separate groups that just keep to themselves." He looked down. "We're to blame for that, I'm afraid."

"Exactly. And this is different. I wanted to know what, in general, would be done to keep my people safe. This is a specific person we need to protect. Totally different."

"It's not," Clary muttered.

"I do appreciate your concern though," Magnus told her. "It does you credit."

"Thanks. Wait here." She took off and returned a moment later with a handful of wards and a sheet of paper. "At least take some shadowhunter wards. I've got sunlight, useful if Valentine sends demons along, armor, and I've been copying Lysanias' contain wards which are labeled 'capture.' They're labeled on the back." She turned them over and showed them.

Hodge was nodding. "It's a good idea. We can help protect you without even being there."

"I don't know," Magnus hedged, taking the papers and looking them over.

"Oh go on, take them," Clary insisted. "Armor at the very least. We make them for others to use. Our power helps you. You can say you bought them if it makes you feel better. I don't know if the supernatural world has a currency or if you just trade favors or what."

"I would have to know they worked in a combat situation before I started buying them."

"So take them as a trial, that's fine too."

"Very well. Let it not be said that warlocks, even ones as old as I am, can't adapt to new ideas."

"That's the spirit!" Hodge told him. "We don't really have a pricing structure yet anyway, I suppose each person might charge based on how effective their individual wards prove to be? We haven't talked about it, they're too new."

"I see. I wonder if, for now, you might just accept a report on how they were used and how useful they were in combat."

"That would be excellent, if you didn't mind."

"I'll get back to you, then." He shoved the wards into a pocket.

"You'll want the contain wards anyway," Lysanias told him. "Much easier to move a piece of paper around than a prisoner. We do want them taken alive, don't forget."

"For questioning, I remember. Dot, why don't you stay here, given you're working for them now."

She snorted. "Like I had a choice, you just decided that for me. Typical man."

"I thought you were keen on the idea!"

She grimaced. "I suppose, having not shown up for work the past few days with no explanation I might not be welcome back. And this might pay better. Am I moving in here?"

"We have plenty of space," Hodge told her. "We're handling it on a case by case basis for now. Shadowhunters traditionally live here but they don't have to. It would save you rent on an apartment."

Dot turned to Clary. "Maybe you wouldn't mind going with me tomorrow, back to my apartment? I don't know about giving it up just yet, but I'll need some things, like clothes, from there. I'd feel better with a shadowhunter or two, your, uh, prophecy notwithstanding."

"No offense taken," Lysanias told her.

"I'd be happy to," Clary chirped. "I can see why you would want to keep your options open. If this whole thing falls apart a week from now you don't want to have to find a new apartment."

"Exactly."

"Then this is where I leave you," Magus announced. "I wish you all a good night."

He left and the little group broke up, so Lysanias went to his own room to get some sleep. Some sleep, where he began to dream.

Chapter 16
A Talking Bird
When: That Night
Where: ???

In the dream, Lysanias sat at a long rectangular table set in a forest clearing. Many strange creatures sat with him, from a large humanoid rabbit to what looked like person sized playing cards. Each was a different number, red on one side of the table and black on the other. But they all looked to be from the same “deck” as they were styled similarly. How they had hands, feet, and heads he couldn’t figure out but it was a dream and such things are to be accepted in dreams.

“A very merry unbirthday to all of you!” said the figure at the end of the table. “Unless of course it is your birthday today. In that case, *get out!*”

One of the playing cards dejectedly rose and pushed their chair back.

“I’m just kidding,” said the man. “Stay and have some tea, even if it is your birthday. Hey, you there, boy! Is it your birthday?”

Lysanias realized the man was talking to him, and leaned over the table to look down at it. The man was dressed in an odd suit, his bow tie almost as large as the poofs of hair that stuck out from under his amazingly tall hat. His face was pure white, apart from the area around the eyes that was somewhat red.

But then, I’ve got red eyes so who am I to judge? “I’m not actually sure,” he answered honestly. “We didn’t really keep track of that sort of thing back home.” *And with all the different calendars I’ve operated under lately, who can say what date it really is for me? I suppose I could ask the universe what day I was born.*

“Didn’t keep track?” The man seemed taken aback. “Of your birthday?”

“For one thing the concept of time was somewhat meaningless, as no one really died of old age.” *So what was the point of keeping track of how old you were?*

“Until they all died,” said the cat, who Lysanias swore hadn’t been there a second ago. “Not of old age I admit.”

“Where did you come from?” he asked, jumping a bit.

“A mother cat? You see, when a male cat and a female cat-”

“Never mind that,” said the man. “It’s not really important. What is important...” He looked expectantly over the assembled playing cards. “What is important...” he prompted again.

“Tea?” one of the cards said.

“Yes, tea, this is a tea party.” He held up a tea pot. “Which is not a party *for* tea, which is what the words ‘tea party’ might conjure up for some confused people. I mean a birthday party is for a birthday, a graduation party is for graduating people, but a tea party is for what? You?” He pointed.

“Tea?”

“Exactly. Wait that’s the opposite of what I wanted to say. You see? Confusion all around!”

The cards agreed that this was, in fact, quite confusing.

“What’s with those cups, though?” asked the cat, padding over to sniff one. He pawed it, making it almost tip over, but the card nearest him steadied it. “Not teacups like I’ve ever seen.”

Lysanias looked, and rather than teacups the table had been set with tall, golden cups that were encrusted with jewels.

“What’s wrong with them?” asked the man, picking his up. “A toast! And by that I mean I don’t believe that this cup is made of bread, that would be very odd, not to mention soggy. I actually mean that I want to propose a toast. And by that I mean I don’t think we should get out a toaster but rather raise our glasses and say a good word.”

The cups were raised by the cards, and they all said a good word. A different word, so it was impossible to actually tell what they had all said. They then tossed the liquid in the cups over their shoulders and tipped their heads back. Their jaws opened and their heads flipped back like a lighter, so when they dropped the cup in it would fit, and they started to crunch down on it.

“Er,” started Lysanias, who felt this was rather strange for a bunch of playing card men to be doing. They finished the cup and all reached for the various cakes and other goodies stacked on the table.

“It’s always like this here,” the cat remarked to him. “I wouldn’t try to make sense of it. I’m certain all this isn’t a vital clue to something, if only you were bright enough to figure it out.”

“What-”

And he was awake again.

“Riiight.” *Maybe this world is telling me not to worry, that finding the cup is “in the cards” for me? Yeah, that must be it, right?*

Lysanias got ready for the day and headed into the common area of the institute, looking for Clary. He found her, joined her for breakfast, and the pair went to where she could make another circle for him.

“And you can’t make them? I may be a better artist, but you can learn any skill, right? I mean I’m happy to do it don’t get me wrong. But I was going to go practice that energy stuff this morning you were talking about.”

“Oh sure, I could make the design and everything, that’s not even supernatural. But activating it is another story. I mean I could try, but take a look.” He got out his padform and scrolled to the circles section. “Right here it says, and I quote, Non-Artifcers cannot activate circles, but can tap into active circles that have already been activated.” *It’s a strange restriction, and maybe would be better worded ‘the person that created the circle can activate it’ but for now I’ll just leave it to her. I’ve got so many other abilities, I think I can leave creating circles off the list.*

“That’s why you need me to do it? I can activate it and let you tap into it?”

“Exactly. And you can practice the energy stuff while I call the angel. I’m going to cheat this morning and get them here, so I figured you would know a good spot away from the institute.”

“Ah, so they don’t go nuts and burn the place to the ground? But an angel would know where this place was, right? If they just flew off to attack this place, what would you do about it?”

“Fly after them, I suppose.”

“Wings, right. Well, okay, we can go for a walk.” She looked at her watch. “It’s twelve o’clock at night. We’ll have to wear some ‘ignore me’ wards if we don’t want to get hassled by cops wondering why we’re wandering around a park at midnight.”

“Listen to you, all ‘we should use wards’ now.” He bumped her with an elbow.

“Quit it!” But she laughed. “We should!”

“I agree. I’m just glad you’re coming to terms with it.”

“Getting some of my memories back helped. Hey, there’s Izzy. Izzy! Come on, we’re going to try for that angel again!”

Now out away from the institute with the others, and having told Hodge they were going, the group was standing in an abandoned basketball court waiting for Clary to finish her circle. There were just enough lines he figured it would be fine, according to his notes even an angel as powerful as the one he was trying to get could be maintained fairly easily once here. Lysanias had put the spirit of the dragonfly on her, then was going to put it on himself after she activated the circle. Then hook into it, then use magic to make himself better at calling angels. This he did, and began the ten minute ritual to get the angel there.

Not a blasted thing happened.

“I don’t believe this!” he complained. “Even cheating I can’t do it?”

“Just how hard is it supposed to be?” Isabelle asked.

“According to my notes, nearly impossible,” he admitted. “But I figured with all the extra bonuses I was getting it would be fine. I’ve never really outright failed this badly to do something before.”

“So what’s the plan?” Clary asked.

He shook his head. “I don’t know. How do you practice something you can’t possibly succeed at?”

“But you could call lesser beings, right?” Isabelle asked. “You wouldn’t need to go top shelf right from the start.”

He grimaced. “I didn’t want to antagonize the heavens too much while I was here. Even getting this one angel might make them perk up and take notice of me. No one else around here can just yank an angel out of Heaven, if they take exception to it where does that leave me? On the wrong side of a fight with heavenly forces.”

“They wouldn’t attack you though, surely!” Clary insisted. “Right?” She looked over at Isabelle.

“Don’t look at me, we’ve only had dealings with that one angel. Who knows how others would react? And that was some time ago, and our stories about the whole thing could be wrong.”

I suppose that’s a concern, the first artificers here wouldn’t want to write down ‘tortured an angel until they gave us powers’ in their history books, now would they? “Nothing for it I guess,” he admitted, turning the “pages” of the padform. “I’ll have to call a lesser being. Phoenix it is.”

“Isn’t there something easier?” Clary asked.

“Not by much. There’s Malakh, they’re supposed to be pretty easy but they can’t actually do all that much. They have a possession power according to this, and not much else. There’s Houri, which would be great if we wanted to be fed grapes or something. They’re just servants. Pneuma, or basic souls of the dead. Then Qulin-”

“Wait, say that again?” Isabelle interrupted.

“What, Houri?”

“No, souls. You mean you could get *dead people* back here?”

“Er, yeah, I guess. I would need to know their name, what they looked like, that sort of thing. Otherwise I would just get a random dead person. Who wouldn’t be freaked out *at all* about being pulled out of Heaven.”

“There was no pain,” Clary singsonged. “There was no doubt, till they pulled me out. Of Heaven. I think I was in Heaven.”

Isabelle looked at her like she had gone crazy.

“Not a Buffy fan?” Clary asked.

“I have no idea what you’re talking about. What’s a Buffy?”

“Never mind. Wonder if you could get my father here? I don’t have any pictures of him though. My mother didn’t keep any apparently.”

“Anyway, you were saying?” Isabelle said, turning back to Lysanias. She looked a little haunted, but it wasn’t every day you got told by someone that they could make the dead walk on the earth again.

“I was saying there’s Qilin, unicorn like creatures kept as pets, and Yata Garasu, the sun crow.”

“So then why go for the phoenix?” Clary asked.

“Like I said, I’ve at least got some experience with them. One. I met one. He at least seemed reasonable where the others? I have no idea how they would react.”

“Maybe get the Qilin then, just to know you can,” Isabelle suggested. “You don’t know for sure if these prayers of yours will work here, right?”

“I guess that’s true. But I’m still maintaining the spell, so getting the phoenix should be a snap. If I can’t get one right away I’ll try something else.”

“Up to you.”

So Lysanias switched prayers and went for a phoenix, which he couldn’t fail at given the energy he had put into his *augment skill* magic. A sleeping bird appeared at his feet, and the girls stared.

“Beautiful,” Isabelle breathed. Lysanias had to agree, the feathers shone white and gold even in the moonlight, though there was some light from his sword hilt spilling over the area as well.

“I guess you can do it,” Clary admitted. “I had to say I was a little skeptical.”

“You and me both,” Lysanias muttered.

“Hey,” Isabelle said, gently shaking the bird. “Wake up please.”

“Wait, if you don’t wake it up-” Lysanias started to say.

But the bird opened its eyes and yawned. “What is it?” they asked.

I can just send it back without it being the wiser, Lysanias finished in his head.

“Oh, you can talk!”

“Wha?” The phoenix now raised its head and looked around. “Er... What’s going on?” they asked. Their head was darting back and forth, taking in the world around them. “Where am I?”

“It’s all right, you’re safe,” Lysanias assured them.

“Is this... Is this Earth?” they asked, sounding a bit worried. “I can’t be here! I can’t talk to humans!”

“You’re not going to freak out if we say yes, are you?” Clary asked.

“I don’t know, should I?” they asked. “I have to get away, I can’t be seen by-” They started to spread their wings but then paused. “Wait, are you people shadowhunters?”

“What gave it away?” Isabelle asked, holding her arms out. Runes of course covered them. “The runes? I bet it was the runes.”

“Your spirit energy, actually,” said the bird, hopping up on both feet and settling their wings again. They stood about half as tall as a person though they had a long neck like a heron. “I’ve heard there are people on Earth running around killing demons but never gave it much thought. I suppose if I have to talk to humans, those with angelic power inside them are fine. At least you already know angels exist. The question remains, how did *I* get here? Where is here, by the way?”

“New York,” Clary told them.

“New York? Really!” The phoenix took another look around. “How about that? But why this basketball court? No, forget that I would rather you explain why.”

“I brought you here,” Lysanias explained. “I needed the practice to get the prince of the archangels.” *And to know I could even do it.* “We hoped you could help us.”

“*You* brought me here? That’s impossible, no nephilim has that power. Apart from using the mortal instruments, I mean, and I don’t see either a cup or a sword in your hand. Actually can you get any angel with them? I don’t actually know.”

“I don’t know either. How do you explain your being here then?” Isabelle asked.

“That’s a good point. But nephilim make runes, that’s it. I’ve never heard of one just yanking something out of Heaven.”

“Maybe I’m not a nephilim,” Lysanias told them. “Can a nephilim do this?” he asked dryly, balancing a flame on his hand. *They’re a bird of flame, maybe this will win their trust a little?*

“What in the world? Let me see that!” He held his hand out and the bird passed a wing through it. “It’s fire, all right, not an illusion. Doesn’t seem to be magic, and I can feel you maintaining it spiritually. You don’t feel like a demon either, so what are you?”

“I should say not!” he replied, somewhat offended. “Look, I can’t maintain you here all night. We need to reach the angel Raziel as soon as possible. Is there anything you can do to help?”

“Like what?” they asked suspiciously.

“Maybe bring them a contain ward they can go into, you hold onto it, and agree to be petitioned again,” Clary announced. “We can get them out and talk to them!” She ended this sentence with a big smile, thinking that would work perfectly. And honestly, as a way around petitioning, it was a clever way of going about things.

“What’s a contain ward?” they asked.

“Oh, it’s a ward... that contains things,” she explained.

“That doesn’t tell me anything!”

“A ward is a piece of paper with the angelic language printed on it,” she explained, getting one out. “This allows it to do certain things. Contain wards hold things. They could go inside and just come along for the ride. Then when you go back they can reverse the process.”

“That is the angelic language, I’ll give you that much,” they admitted, looking the ward over with narrowed eyes. “You guys can mark up paper now, not just yourselves? Really should keep up with stuff here but honestly it’s so far removed from me it’s not even funny. So let me get this straight in my head,” they deadpanned. “You want me to find the prince of archangels, fly up to him and ask ‘hey, would you mind climbing into this piece of paper and being dragged into the human world for a few minutes by a guy who is not a Nephilim but can make flame shoot out of his hands?’”

“Er, yes?” Lysanias agreed hopefully.

The phoenix laughed and laughed, tears spilling out of the corners of his eyes. *What a waste, phoenix tears are supposedly quite potent. And I'd love to analyze them.* Finally they stopped. “No,” they said simply.

“Come on, at least consider it!” Clary begged.

“Sure, sure, I'll just sit here and consider it for a second- no.”

“Please!?”

“No! You're crazy. You pull me out of Heaven, somehow, then talk about making contact with some high up angel. I'm not doing anything for you without days, maybe weeks of explanation as to how you've done what you've done and what you want with Raziel. I'm just a phoenix, you want to talk to Raziel get him here yourself!”

“I can't, that's the problem,” Lysanias told him. “I've not done a lot of pulling things out of Heaven and he's nearly impossible to get in the first place.”

“I should hope not,” the phoenix agreed. They sighed. “Why do you need to talk to him, specifically?”

“It's about the mortal cup, we think it's been destroyed,” Isabelle told them.

“That's rather serious,” they admitted. “Without it you can't get him back here to make a new one. Eventually all shadowhunters are killed, and demons overrun the Earth. But then how did you get me here? Does it have something to do with the flame you showed me earlier? Flame calling to flame or something?”

“It has nothing to do with that, fire bending is just something I can easily do to get attention, because fire. Petitioning angels is just something else I can do, one skill among many that I possess. You'll just have to trust me on that one.”

“I'm here, there's no denying that. How did you lose it though? It should be the most important object in the world to shadowhunters, one would think you would keep an eye on it.”

“We aren't sure how it was lost,” Isabelle went on. “But I have it on good authority it's not around anymore.” She glanced at Lysanias out of the corner of her eyes. “Either way we haven't had it for years now. We think demons know about it, and are trying to wipe us out. Attacks are increasing lately, and we don't know what to do about it.”

“I'm starting to get the picture. You got me here hoping I would help?”

“I've dealt with a phoenix before, he seemed reasonable,” Lysanias agreed. “I hoped you would be too.”

“Why not just call that one?”

“Er, long story.”

“Ah, they reincarnated and didn't want to be reminded of their old life, is that it? That's pretty common. Say no more.”

Not exactly, but sure. The real reason is it was another world.

“I still don't know what you want me to do about any of this.”

“Can you get him a message?” Clary asked. “That would be better than nothing. Maybe they can get here on their own, like they did the first time.”

The phoenix thought about it. “I suppose.”

“Thank you!”

“But I get to read it,” they cautioned. “I'm not delivering an insult or something. For all I know this is some elaborate prank dreamed up by my friends. I mean this clearly isn't Heaven but...”

“We’ll write it up right here in front of you,” Lysanias promised. “I’ll do it, so it’s in Enochian. That may impress him at least a little, enough to get him to read the thing anyway.”

“Here,” Clary handed him a piece of paper ripped from her notebook and a pen.
“Thanks.”

So the group wrote up a short note begging for assistance and asking the angel to please come to the New York institute or tell them how to get in touch with him some other way. They said it was about the cup, but not that it was missing in case that enraged the angel. As a show of their sincerity they handed over several wards, showing they had expanded the skills the shadowhunters had and hopefully enticing them to come see what else they had been doing.

Of course it took me coming here to show them wards were possible, but fine, the angel doesn’t need to know that.

They finished the note saying that demons were becoming bolder and that something big seemed to be on the horizon, so even if he could no longer help directly, please come and hear what they had to say.

The phoenix took the wards, the note, and promised to get after Raziel right away.

“Get me back here in an hour or so,” they said. “I should have a reply by then.”

“That soon?” Izabelle asked, surprised.

“Sure. I can move about Heaven at will, not like here where I would have to fly places. I should be able to track him down fairly quickly. A prince can’t be that hard to track down, they usually stick together.”

“Thank you,” Lysanias told them gratefully. “I’ll need to know your name though, to get you back here.”

They hesitated. “I am Kasitel.”

“Nice to meet you, Kasitel. One hour and I’ll get you back here.” He let the connection go, knowing it would be just a moment or two and they would return home. “I’m not keeping you here, so you should return where you came from in a moment.”

“Very well. If you don’t mind, I’d like to take a look at the city. It might be my only chance to.”

“Of course.”

“Then I’ll see you in about an hour.” He pushed off the ground and soared into the sky.

“Well, that happened,” Isabelle remarked.

“And now we wait,” Clary grumbled. “You’re helping me with spirit energy stuff!”

“That’s fine,” Lysanias told her, not displeased to be teaching something.

“Count me in,” Isabelle agreed with a smile. “But now that I’ve seen a real, live, phoenix, how about that unicorn creature you were talking about?”

Chapter 17

Stairway To Heaven

When: About an hour later

Where: The same basketball court

Ten minutes before the hour was up Lysanias began the ritual once again to call the phoenix Kasitel back to Earth. He had hung on to the magic that was augmenting his skill, figuring the drag wasn't too bad, he was just monitoring Clary and Isabelle as they tried various spirit energy techniques. He didn't bother with the circle this time, figuring his magic augmentation would be adequate. (He had spent about a third of his energy on it originally, making it something he couldn't do too many times in a row. Especially if he wanted to keep the being there without slapping a ward on them, as they drained energy to remain there just like spirits did.)

With the prayer completed, Kasitel popped back into the world, awake and alert this time. They had something in their claw, a rolled up parchment it looked like, and was standing on one foot as birds often do. They looked around.

"I'll never get used to that," they remarked. "No one back home has heard of anyone, ever, being able to do what you just did. Don't suppose I could get some sort of explanation?"

"Never mind that," Clary told them. "What did the angel say? Did you see him?"

"I saw him. He was interested in those wards you gave me, that's for sure. Somewhat confused about the cup though."

"Why?" asked Isabelle.

"He can tell you himself."

"He's agreed to meet us?" Clary asked, excited.

"In a way. He says he'll meet you halfway, that way he won't influence this world even accidentally. Angels are pretty uptight about that sort of thing, probably under orders from The Big Guy."

"What does that mean?" Isabelle wondered.

"He'll step down into the astral plane, but he needs you to step up to it if you want to meet him."

"Oh. Can you do that?" Isabelle asked Lysanias.

"I can, if I want that spell bouncing around my head forever." *I suppose it could be useful, but I've never needed it before so it's hard to know.* "If there's a way we can do it that doesn't involve me using skybourne magic, I would rather do that," he admitted. "I have Susan's complete book of magic in my padform but crossing dimensions sounds fairly involved. I only had the briefest of training on how to use each sphere of magic though, I'm even worse at it than petitioning. And I can't augment my skill with magic... Using magic. I wouldn't want to screw it up." *Susan showed me how to cast using her way of manipulating magic though, with energy. I could in theory just dump energy into it, as long as I knew I wasn't going to need to do much else after that.*

"I already thought of that," Kasitel told them a bit smugly, holding out the scroll. "I stopped by the Heavenly library and picked this up. I've always been meaning to look into casting spells, we phoenix are spellcasters, you know. Just never got around to it. Not sure what I've been doing with my endless existence that took precedence either, oddly." He cocked his head, thinking about it.

Clary took it and handed it over to Lysanias, who unrolled it and looked it over. "This must be the spell formula for magic users around here," he told them. "It doesn't seem to be the same type as I'm used to. But according to this it will let someone step into the astral all right."

"We do have some warlocks on our side," Clary mused. "I'm sure Dot will be able to cast it."

"Please don't share this with anyone you don't trust completely," Kasitel warned them. "And I want your word you'll destroy it once you don't need it anymore. This situation of dragging me here is already wildly unorthodox, so there's really no rule against what I did. No one figured we would need one! But if warlocks everywhere start bouncing into the astral and using it to spy on people, or gain more power in this world, their use of the spell to do evil will be my fault."

What about their use of it for good? Or are we really so far gone that you can only imagine us using what we learn for nefarious ends? "You think warlocks haven't already figured out something similar?" Lysanias asked, looking up from the text.

"Maybe," they allowed. "But I would rather not have anyone angry at me, you know?"

"I've known Dot for years, she's okay," Clary told them. "She helped my mother 'protect' me from the supernatural world, so my mom trusts her. Can I do less?"

"Up to you. Anyway, he said he'll pop in where your institute is every so often to check if you're there. You'll have to wait around, but given he is a fairly powerful angel expecting him to wait around for you would be a bit much."

"We wouldn't expect that," Isabelle assured them. "Just agreeing to meet us is wonderful!"

"So long as you understand. Is there anything else?" The three looked at each other, but all shook their heads. "Fine." They looked a little embarrassed, quite a feat for a guy with the face of a bird. "If you're heading back, mind if I walk with you? Seeing the city for a moment from above was interesting, but I'd like to see it from ground level too. What other chance will I get?"

"I have no problem with it," Lysanias told them. *As long as my energy holds out, anyway. I think I can keep them here by myself, without the ley lines. Phoenix only being a "2" on the difficulty scale, according to the notes.*

Neither of the girls had a problem with it so they headed back, the bird waddling along beside them until Lysanias offered his arm.

"Ah, thanks, I'm more graceful in the air, obviously." He worked his way up to Lysanias's shoulder and looked around with interest.

On the way the girls were pestering Kasitel about life in Heaven, and what kind of magic they might want to one day study. A few minutes out Lysanias released his hold, so Kasitel got a look at the institute and then vanished.

"But call on me again, if you need me," they had said before they left. "This was sort of fun, once I got over the initial shock."

"Sure thing. And thanks."

Now back inside the group went to look for Dot, who was getting her account set up so she could log into the shadowhunter computer systems.

“There you are, Clary!” she exclaimed, standing to meet them. “Hodge said not to worry, you were fine, but I couldn’t help it. You know you’re a target for Valentine, right?”

She barked a laugh. “I’d love to see him come try and take me, given who I was with. Save us some time in tracking that bastard down, actually.”

Her eyes flicked to Lysanias, who gave a shy wave. “Hello.”

“I see. You think he’s that good, huh? So what’s up?”

“We were wondering if you could do a spell for us,” Clary told her, and Lysanias made to hand it over.

“I guess, let me take...” She took it but Lysanias didn’t let it go, and she was standing there tugging it. “You have to give it to me if you want me to cast it.”

“This comes with some... restrictions,” he told her.

“You know, limitations?” Clary snickered. “Provisos?” All the supernatural people there looked at her like she was growing that second head again. “What? You don’t know Buffy or Aladdin? Don’t you people have any respect for the classics?”

“Classic whats?” Isabelle asked.

Clary threw up her hands. “Never mind. If you have to ask!”

“So, restrictions?” Dot asked.

“Right. You can only use it in this situation, can’t teach it to anyone, and we have to destroy the written copy afterwards.”

“What situation? What is this spell?”

Clary looked around, then down at the shadowhunter that had been helping Dot. “You? Leave.”

“What did I do?” he asked, somewhat hurt.

“Clary, be nice!” Dot admonished.

“Believe me, it’s better if you don’t know,” Clary told him.

“Fine.” He got up. “I had incredibly important tasks to perform anyway!” He stalked away to go and sulk in his room, because really he didn’t have anything better to do at the moment.

“We’re meeting the angel that originally created shadowhunters,” Clary told her. “But we have to meet him halfway.”

“Meet an angel? Meet him halfway? Clary, what are you talking about?”

“Just as I’ve said.”

“It’ll make sense later,” Lysanias told her. “Look, can you agree to the terms or not? I’d like to stay on the good side of the being that gave us this.”

“Fine, I guess. Destroy the spell and don’t tell anyone I know it. Got it.”

He looked at her but she seemed sincere. And he had to trust Clary knew what she was doing. “Very well.” He released it.

“So what is the fuss all...” She trailed off, looking the scroll over. “Wait.” She read it again. “No way! Do you know how useful something like this would be? I can’t believe I never thought of it before.”

“Exactly why we need to keep it out of people’s hands,” Clary agreed. “Can you do it?”

“Yeah, I think so. Give me a little while to really look it over though. You don’t need to go right away, do you?”

“Soon, but not immediately.”

“Okay. Man, what I could make selling this to the right people!”

"More like the wrong people," Isabelle told her. "Remember your word."

"I know, I know. Where did you even get this from?"

"An... intermediary," Clary hedged. "The same person that set the meeting up with the angel. They weren't sure about it at first, but we won them over."

"You're being vague on purpose just to annoy me, aren't you?"

"How can you even think that?" Clary asked, with an air of total innocence.

Some time later Dot came to find Clary who was making more shotgun wards, the type vampires could use because the sun wasn't out yet. She was actually doing more to oversee some other artificers who were trying their hand at it than making them herself, but they were getting made. She told them to keep at it and followed Dot out into the night, sunrise still hours away. Isabelle joined them, there was no way she was going to miss out on this after seeing the phoenix.

"So according to this I cast the spell, and anyone touching me is brought along," she explained. "So get behind me, you can put a hand on my shoulders, and I'll see about casting the spell."

"Wait a second," Lysanias told her, holding up a hand. He slid the circlet off his head and handed it to her. "Put this on, I don't want to get turned inside out or whatever."

"Okay?" She took it and slipped it over her head. "And this helps with that how, exactly?"

"Believe me, it just does." He stepped behind her and took her shoulder.

"If you say so. Girls?"

They got into position and she cast, naturally finding it easier than she would have otherwise. The group took a step, and found themselves in a strange place. All around them shone a muted version of the light of Heaven, still radiant despite it being the "nighttime" there just as it was in the human world. Overlaying this view was the normal everyday world, making it difficult to focus on anything apart from the others who were the only thing that seemed solid.

"So that's the light of Heaven?" Isabelle asked, squinting and trying to see "up" into Heaven more clearly.

"Don't focus too much on it," Lysanias warned her. "I've seen real, actual Heaven gates, and it's not for mortal minds. You can get entranced by it and that only leads to trouble." *Even we were warned away from them back home, before the world was destroyed. We heard stories of people getting too close and stumbling in, then had to be forced out again.*

"We're safe here, right?" asked Dot nervously. "I can take us back anytime but still."

"We should be fine," he assured her. "Gates are different because you can just step through them, and the feeling of light and love that flows out of Heaven beckons anyone that gets near. Standing where we are we can't get the full blast, plus it seems muted because we can still see the Earth. So we won't get addicted to it and lose our minds obsessing over trying to find a way back." *At least I hope, but these girls all seem fairly strong willed, they should be fine for the duration.*

"Suddenly I want to spend a lot more time in church, praying," Clary announced. "Just to make sure I do get to see Heaven when it's my time."

Lysanias snorted. "Believe me, He has plenty of angels that have nothing to do but sit around all day and sing His praises. He doesn't need any more mindless drones saying how great He is, He should know by now. Go out and do good in the world rather than sitting around a church all day praying. At least then you can look Him in the face (so to speak) and say "I spent my life doing good, what have You managed to accomplish in that time?"

The three ladies looked rather shocked at this, especially given the bitter tone it was delivered in.

"Don't put much faith in God, do you?" Isabelle asked at last. "Weird, for a guy who seems to know so much about Heaven and angels and the rest of it."

"I would have some choice words for the God that destroyed my world and killed almost everyone I know, including my parents, yes. We would not meet on good terms. Maybe yours is different, but the fact remains He created a world much like mine, meaning They probably think in much the same ways."

"He'll either say I'm pleased where man has been, or tear it down and start again," Clary said softly.

"Yes, exactly!" Lysanias exclaimed. "That's how He thinks! It isn't, 'oh well I gave these people free will so they have to make their own choices and I have to live with it.' or 'the slightest application of my will would remove any elements of the world I find that do not please Me so let's just do that.' No. It's 'better wipe out every man, woman, and child, innocent or not, and make a bunch of people almost but not exactly the same as the ones I just made who will most likely make the exact same mistakes because again I'll give them free will and no other restrictions!"

"Right, so," Isabelle interrupted, probably making a mental note never to bring any of this up again. "The angel said they would meet us right here?"

"We're really meeting an angel?" Dot asked.

"I doubt the phoenix would lie about it," Clary told her. "We'll just have to wait. Want to play eye-spy?"

But in the end the two just did a bit more training, and were not surprised to see a large angel flying towards them. He was transparent and ghostly looking, being still in Heaven, but as he got closer stepping into the astral and became more "solid." He looked like the typical representation of an angel, with two sets of black wings neatly folded at his back as he landed. He wore a gleaming armor and carried a sword that seemed to be on fire, making Lysanias feel a little nostalgic for when he had a sword like that. *Not that I don't think my current sword is a fine tradeoff, of course.*

Dazzling light shone around him, and as he stepped up it seemed he was twice as tall as any of them, making them strain to look up at him.

"Should we bow?" Dot whispered.

"You should only bow to your Lord God, the Father of all and ruler of Heaven and Earth," the angel said. "I am but a lowly messenger of His will."

Lowly, right. This guy has six times the energy I do at least. He's a beast!

"I am Raziel, I hear you've been trying to reach me."

Lysanias wasn't stepping up, and neither was Dot. Isabelle looked a little out of her league so Clary took point and stepped forward. "That is correct, most holy Raziel. Thank you for agreeing to meet with us like this."

He laughed. "When a phoenix comes roaring up to you, babbling about being yanked out of heaven and shoving a bunch of wards into your hand, I don't care who you are, you listen to what they have to say. I named them correctly, did I not? You call them wards?" He showed his other hand, which had the slips of paper in the palm.

"Yes, that's what we call them."

"Interesting, how you've managed to bind your power into a simple piece of paper like that using the runes I gave you. But your bragging about this accomplishment is not why I'm here, is it?"

"No, holy one. Our war with demon kind grows more desperate, as demons are being seen more and more often lately, and in greater numbers than before."

"So make more shadowhunters," he suggested. "I have given you the means, have I not?"

"That's really why we've called you," she admitted. "The cup seems to have been lost somehow."

His eyes widened. "Lost?"

"We haven't seen it for twenty years," Isabelle told him, finding her voice. "The only shadowhunters now between the ages of one and twenty are those that were born that way."

"Lost, I see. Very distressing. Yes." He looked thoughtful.

"Can you make us a new one?" Clary asked.

"Obviously we'll work to show we're worthy of it!" Isabelle hastened to add. "And we'll keep a better eye on it this time, I promise."

"Do you?" He bent over, looking down at her.

"Yes?" she squeaked.

"I wonder. Still, I made the first one, I suppose I could make another. If I had to." The two girls looked excited. "What about the others though? Werewolves and such? Have you asked them for help?"

"We have, actually!" Clary announced. "Five of each faction are training to become full shadowhunters, despite not being able to take runes on their skin like we can. Even Dot here, she's a warlock!" Dot waved and gave a weak smile. "If it works out for us the clave has said they'll make the postings permanent and offer employment to other cambions like that all over the world. We're making the wards mostly for them, actually. They work just fine and can do most of the same things, so it's a good way around that limitation."

"Oh." He seemed a bit disappointed at this news, like maybe he was stalling and that was going to be one way to get some time. "That's good, I guess."

You guess?

"Make you a new cup, I don't know." He scratched his head.

The group traded a look, was he playing with them or what?

"There is something you could do for me, actually," he admitted, brightening.

"Anything!" Clary agreed.

"One of my angels has vanished. Haven't heard from him in more than twenty years now. That means he's on Earth someplace. Find him for me, bring him home, and I'll see about this cup of yours."

How do you lose track of a whole angel? Right, the same way a bunch of people lost track of their precious cup.

"That sounds fair," Clary admitted. "What's his name?"

"Ithuriel"

"So when you say one of 'your' angels," Lysanias clarified, "you mean an archangel, correct?"

"That's correct. One of my direct subordinates. He simply vanished one day, and now here is a man that can pull angels out of Heaven." He gave Lysanias the stink eye.

"I wasn't even around twenty years ago!" he protested.

"I realize that, but if you can do it, perhaps someone else figured out a way before you?"

"I suppose." *Could someone have made a talisman to open a gateway between here and Heaven? And then drag an angel back though? It seems impossible but...*

"It's settled then. You find Ithuriel and return him to his rightful place at my side, and then we'll talk about the cup. Deal?"

"Deal," all three echoed.

"I look forward to the good news then," he told them. He turned away, went misty again so he had obviously passed back into Heaven, and vanished.

Isabelle sagged, letting out a deep breath. "And I thought fairy folk were hot. Did you see that guy?"

"Oh, I saw," agreed Dot.

"That aside, how are we going to find this wayward angel?" Clary asked.

"Oh, that," Lysanias replied with a wave of his hand. "That'll be easy, barely an inconvenience."

Chapter 18

Set My Angel Free

When: Just a moment later

Where: Back from the astral plane

Having released the spell the group found themselves back in the institute, and Lysanias requested that Clary create another circle to help him petition.

“Ah, that’s what you meant,” she realized, nodding. “You’re just going to petition the angel here.” She got started on it, putting it down in chalk on the floor.

“That’s right. Obviously once I let them go they’ll just snap back to wherever they came from, but at least we can get an explanation.”

“Yeah, about that,” remarked Dot. “What if they’re here hiding out on Earth and they don’t *want* to be found?”

“Tough,” Isabelle remarked. “The boss said to find them, so we find them. If they are hiding out here, which I have to doubt, it’s probably because they did something wrong in Heaven. Do you want an angel that breaks the rules running around?”

“I don’t know, I don’t know what the rules are in Heaven or how an angel could even break them.”

“It does seem strange,” Clary told them from the floor. “That an angel could be kept against their will, and that the head archangel would need a couple of shadowhunters to track him down.”

“Probably warded,” Isabelle explained. “Wait, will petitioning work through wards?”

“I don’t see why not,” Lysanias replied confidently. “Warding against seeing is something completely different.”

“I think I’ll get a serif blade just in case,” Isabelle told them. “I’ll want something a little more close quarters than my whip.” She left.

“If we really have to fight an angel, something has gone seriously wrong,” Dot remarked, and no one had anything to say against that.

Now complete, Lysanias was hooked into the circle. He had not taken the circlet back, just in case Dot needed to do some quick magic, but he had reapplied the dragonfly spirit to himself as well as the skill augmentation magic which had vanished at some point during all that. He then read out the prayer, again and again, calling for the angel Ithuriel to come to them. Clary was holding the padform up so he could see it, though she felt a little resentful at being reduced to a music stand. As the minutes ticked by the other two got more and more tense, as they had no idea what might come through at the end. Whatever they were expecting, it wasn’t the dirty, naked, broken angel that suddenly appeared before them.

Ithuriel, looking much like a normal man with wings, slumped over as though they had been chained to the wall and now those chains had been left behind. Everyone gasped as they took in his beaten, filthy, blood encrusted form, and ran to his side. He groaned and raised his head, and Lysanias saw his eyes had been destroyed, leaving empty holes where they should be. His wings, naturally black but looking burned at one time or another were broken, twisted at odd angles. Many feathers were missing, and there was a scent of ash about them.

“What happened to him?” Isabelle breathed, eyes wide and hand over her mouth.

"Who's there?" he managed, voice sounding disused and weak.

"Go get him some water," Clary commanded Dot, who nodded and ran out of the room. She pulled her notebook out, pulling another notebook from it, which she hastily paged through looking for something.

"It's okay," Lysanias told him, taking his hand and helping him to sit up. "You're safe here. You're among friends."

"Friends?" The angel's head moved back and forth, stopping on each person in the room, and Lysanias figured they could sense energy or had other senses just like he did. *He couldn't have stopped so exactly otherwise.*

"Yes. I'll explain but... your wounds. I can heal them, but your eyes? I can't regrow them. I'm sorry."

"Maybe I can," Clary told them. "Here it is, the circle of healing. I'll just try putting it around him." She started to draw, making a circle around Ithuriel with her stele. "I don't want to move him too much, his legs look broken too. I'll need someone to lift his wing though... thanks Isabelle." She went to the side and gently lifted the broken wing enough for Clary to get the chalk circle under him.

"Is this some trick?"

"No trick. It's a long story. Save your strength, she'll be back with some water. Who did this to you?"

"Valentine."

"Unbelievable," Isabelle gasped, dropping the wing. "He would go so far as this?"

"And further," he managed. "Also, ow. My wings are broken but I can still feel them."

"Sorry!"

Dot rushed back in with some water, which they slowly gave to him.

"Ah, the nectars of Heaven never tasted so sweet," he said, his voice gaining a little strength back. "Who are you all? There are four, correct?"

"In the room with me is Clary and Isabelle, both shadowhunters, and Dot, a warlock," Lysanias told him.

"And you?" Ithuriel asked.

"I'm... not from around here. I do a little of everything."

"I see. Or not, as the case may be." He weakly gestured to his eyes. *At least your sense of humor is intact.* "But I do hear you, and you speak my language. Very peculiar, especially your energy which feels strange to me. But we can leave that, for now. This wouldn't be Clary Fairchild, would it?"

"You know me?" Clary squeaked, almost losing the chalk.

"I do. We share a connection you and I. Have I not given you knowledge of runes when you needed them?"

"That was you? Forget that for a moment, I'm trying to finish this."

"I'm not sure what 'this' is? Can I have some more water?"

"Here." Dot held the cup up to him.

"My God, I don't believe it!" Hodge said, busting into the room. "There really is a hurt angel in here! Dot said there was, but..." In his hands was a blanket, which he passed over to Lysanias, and he tried to cover the angel. "Here, you can cover them with this." *Do they get cold?*

"Ah, thank you."

"Please move, I'm trying to work here!" Clary growled at Hodge, who was standing next to the angel and in the way.

"What's this?" Hodge asked looking down at the unfinished shape.

"Circle of healing. If I can get it finished."

"You can heal... This?"

"I think so."

"That would be wonderful," the angel told her. "I really would like to see what's going on."

"Move!"

"Oh! Yes, of course."

They both moved, and Clary closed the circle off. "But I need him lifted so I can do the middle part."

"I'll get some more help," Hodge told them.

"What, you don't think I'm strong enough?" Isabelle scoffed, getting out her stele. "I can be as strong as you." She went to touch it to her arm.

"That's not necessary," Lysanias told them, holding up a hand. "I think I can manage." He lifted the angel with the force, supporting their whole body equally so as to not cause their bones any more stress. This allowed Clary to crawl under him and complete the design, and as he was lowered again she touched it and activated it with energy. It started to glow, and the angel cried out as his bones were snapped back into place and his eyes started to regrow. His feathers regrew, and just for good measure Lysanias cast his cleaning spell, wiping away the dried blood and grime from his skin. Finally he seemed perfectly healed and the circle went dark again. Ithuriel got up and looked around, checking his wings out and finally folding them behind himself. He still looked thin, but there was a golden light that shone around him that seemed stronger now. *Take the wings away and he would not have been stared at on the streets, he looks like just a regular guy.* Dark hair and eyes, a little taller than Lysanias, but near perfect looks now that they could fully see his face. *And why would God have made something ugly anyway? Of course he's going to be radiant and desirable.*

"Where am I?" he asked finally, Lysanias could feel the confusion in him so he probably had a million questions.

"The New York institute," Hodge told him. "I'm Hodge, I'm in charge here. Are you all right?"

"I'm feeling much better. Thank you, all of you. How was this miracle accomplished?"

"Which one?" Lysanias asked a little snarkily. "You being here or you being healed?"

"I have a question," Hodge interrupted. "Where did you pull him from?"

Lysanias just shrugged. He had no idea.

"I'm not sure where Valentine was keeping me," Ithuriel admitted. "I was blinded almost immediately after my capture. All I can say is, I've been his prisoner for quite some time."

"Valentine?" Hodge spat. "He would imprison an angel? Torture one? Blind him? To think there was a time I followed that man. I'm sorry, on behalf of all shadowhunters, for what that's worth."

Ithuriel nodded to Hodge, though that wasn't quite an acceptance of the apology, Lysanias noted.

“You said ‘and more’ earlier. What did you mean?” Isabelle asked, sounding afraid to know but resigned. “What else did Valentine do to you?”

“He took my blood, at least at first. I don’t know what he wanted with it.”

“Blood? And how long ago was this?” Hodge asked, sounding more suspicious than shocked. *Does he, a former associate of Valentine, know something about that?*

“Hard to tell the passage of time. Years, certainly.”

“But what’s this about a connection with me?” Clary asked. Lysanias felt her shock, he could imagine his own at being told he was connected to an angel somehow.

“I have been... aware of you shall we say, for some time. What that means and how it was accomplished I cannot say, only that I have been able to help you once I worked out what was happening. Feeling you out there give me some hope that I would eventually be rescued. Now I have been, and here you are. Such things must be part of the Lord’s plan for us all.”

Sure, it was all part of the ‘plan’ to allow an angel to be tortured for years until I came along and got you out of there. For reasons. Could He have known I was coming? I think not, given I came from ‘above’ this place. So don’t be too sure, Mr. Angel. “Did you see where you were being held?” Lysanias asked, thinking of melding and just teleporting there.

“Most recently?” Ithuriel shook his head. “I did not. I have been moved many times since I was blinded. Valentine seems the paranoid type, from what I have gathered during his tortures of me.”

“Pity.”

“May my questions be answered now? Not that I’m ungrateful you understand but I had given up all hope of rescue. Now here I am, free and whole again. I would like to know how.”

“Ah. Not free, exactly,” Lysanias cautioned. “While you won’t be hurt to go back, I’m keeping you here. I can’t do it forever so eventually you’ll go back to wherever you were a moment ago. If you were chained, those chains have now been moved out of the way by your moving around here, so you won’t be chained up anymore at least. But you’ll still be a prisoner someplace. We brought you here hoping you could tell us where you were so we could then rescue you properly. We didn’t expect he would blind you, and the rest.”

“I don’t exactly understand how I got here but if I must return... Am I just being taunted with freedom?”

“Not at all,” Clary told him. “Like Lysanias said you won’t be chained anymore, and you’ll be able to see. If you can take anything you can hold onto back with you, escaping whatever confinement you find yourself in should be possible.”

“Humm, perhaps,” he agreed. “If someone could lend me a sword that might help tremendously.”

“I can do better than that,” Lysanias told him. “You might need to cut your way out, if you’re inside a bunker or underground or something. I’ll give you a shield that has a plasma blade attached to it. I’ll want it back, of course.” *Or at the very least you go back, take a look around, I petition you ten minutes later, I meld with you and teleport to your location having seen it through your eyes.*

“Of course, I wouldn’t steal it!” The angel seemed scandalized at the very idea. “And my being healed, how was that accomplished so quickly?”

"I did that," Clary told him. "This is a circle of healing. It can regenerate any injury short of death."

The angel looked down at it. "This is unknown to me. You humans have been advancing your arts while I was captured, I see. Thank you for that, it is good to see again."

Yeah, thanks to me.

"Of course."

"But I still don't understand *how* I was brought here. What power was used to accomplish this? Magic? Has the warlock done this?"

"It was me. Like I said, I can do a number of things that shadowhunters can't. It's not magical, just supernatural in origin. It's a long story, I don't have time to get into it." *Plus, if you knew I was a being that was created right after angels, you might not be so calm about it. For all I know this place has a similar history, of a flood wiping out the original people. But in this world they all were killed, rather than just most. So by all rights I should be dead, and maybe they would try to 'finish the job' as it were if they learned who I was.*

"Very well, I suppose humans love their secrets. But how did you know I had even been captured? I mean it's been years, like I said. Why now? Was Valentine captured? Did he tell you? Did one of his followers give up information after being captured?"

Everyone shook their heads. "Your boss told us," Isabelle told him. "Said he wanted you found before he would help us. I don't think even he expected what you had gone through, or he would have been more adamant about it. He was like, 'yeah, go find my wayward angel or whatever' not 'rescue my fallen brother from his bondage.'"

"You've spoken to Raziel?" Surprise was plain on his face. "Ruler of archangels? You've *seen* him? Face to face?"

"Just a few minutes ago."

"So the mortal instruments were used? You summoned him into this world? You know the secret of the lake?"

"Lake?" Hodge asked, looking at Isabelle, who shrugged.

Lysanias shook his head. "The cup has been lost, that's why I needed to talk to him. I tried to get him here like I got you here. But he's too powerful for me currently, I couldn't manage it. I actually got him a massage through a phoenix and we met here on the astral. That's when he told us about you."

Ithuriel stared, blinking in surprise now that he could blink again. "What? The cup? Lost? You've seen a sun herald as well? Who *are* you?"

"I'm Lysanias."

"Are biblical names coming back? That's a name I haven't heard in a long time, it doesn't sound like a name that would be given to a child in this time."

"Er, yes?"

"You don't sound convinced. Very well, I can see that is a secret you wish to keep to yourself. If I am not staying here I should go back. My disappearance may have caused a stir and started people looking for me. I must escape from there before they get too organized in their search."

"Very well." Lysanias handed over his shield, which of course he pulled from nowhere. Ithuriel took it, clearly holding himself back from asking how *that* had just been accomplished. Lysanias at this point cut the spiritual connection to the angel so they

would go back shortly, so they didn't have to stand around here uncomfortably. "When you're back there, just yank this out," he said, showing the light saber. "The beam will come from this end, so have it clear. To put it back just shove it into the holder and give it a twist."

"Beam?"

"It's a plasma blade, like I said. In case you're in a cell you can just slice your way out with it. It'll basically cut anything, so don't take your wing off swinging it around." *Because I'm not giving you Ragnarok. The shield I could make again, but I went through a lot of trouble for the sword. Even if I don't exactly know what it does yet.*

"It seems your technology has advanced as well."

"Er, it's the only one of its kind on this world."

"I see. Another secret?"

"It's all one secret, and it's not really secret, just annoying long to tell."

"Can you make your way back here?" Hodge asked more practically.

"Once I can see the open sky, I'm sure I can go anywhere," Ithuriel stated confidently. "My wings feel fine. I will be able to find my way back here."

Right, seeing a naked angel flying around won't raise any eyebrows. But maybe they're like my spirit, and normal people can't see them? I'll hope that the case.

"Meanwhile, we'll try to figure out a way to get you back to Heaven," Lysanias told him. "Unless you can get back on your own?"

"I cannot. We angelic beings and those souls that inhabit Heaven are allowed to step down into the astral to observe humanity, but go no further. So I cannot reach Heaven that way, having started here on Earth with all of you. I believe it's a safety feature from our Lord, so that humans do not try to ascend in that way."

"Wait, souls can see what we're doing here?" Hodge asked. "People who have died could just be standing there next to us at any time, watching what we're doing?" His face was getting a bit red. "And we wouldn't even know it?"

"Indeed. Did you not know that?"

"No, I didn't."

"But why not just get there with magic," Dot asked, "and then you can- Ahhhh!" She yelled as the angel vanished.

"Good luck," Lysanias said softly. "You're on your own, now."

"Wawawawawhat happened?" she stuttered. "Did he die?"

"Nah, he just went back. I can't control it exactly, I can just stop maintaining the connection and some time later they go back on their own."

"That's inconvenient. Don't scare me like that!" She had a hand on her heart but dropped it.

"Sorry."

"So how are we getting him back to heaven?" Clary asked. "There's no circle for that!"

"Good question. What were you saying, Dot?"

"We can step him up to the astral, and he can go the rest of the way himself."

"I don't know," Hodge said. "The way he was talking it's like they let a rope down into the astral from 'above' and then climb back 'up' the rope. Without starting in Heaven can he get back there when it's magic getting him to the astral in the first place?"

"Oh. Maybe his boss can think of something?"

“There are angels of travel, maybe one can just open a portal here and he can walk through,” Lysanias offered. “In any case, we don’t know where he’s coming from or what will be after him. Maybe flying demons? We should be ready to show them a warm welcome.”

“I’ll get everyone here on alert,” Hodge told them, heading back out the door. “By God we’ll return an angel to Heaven. That will be one for the history books!”

“So what now?” Clary asked when he was gone.

“Now we wait. Though it’s back to training for you girls!”

“Yes Sensei,” both chorused, and laughed.

Chapter 19

About That Cup Thing...

When: Two hours later

Where: The institute

A breathless shadowhunter ran into the room where Lysanias was going over things with Clary and Isabelle to tell them a bright *something* was approaching the place. Dot was there, reading a book, interested in a general way about the energy stuff but probably not able to use it as far as Lysanias could tell. So she was sticking around to see if they needed her magic but had nothing to contribute at the moment. They headed out, and it wasn't long before Lysanias felt the same energy he had felt before, now approaching them by air. It was only about 5:00 AM so the sun was not yet up, making the glowing form of the angel all that much more obvious.

Now that I think about it, maybe we should have given the angel one of those phone things Clary is always staring at to take back. He could have called us or taken a picture of where he was, rather than him lighting up the sky and producing dozens of witnesses of angels flying around Earth. I suppose it's too much to hope for that normal people can't see angels any better than demons or runed shadowhunters?

Ithuriel landed before them with a thud, folding his wings. He had the shield strapped to one arm, and smiled as he handed it over to Lysanias. "You have given me my freedom, and true. I am in your debt."

"Convince your boss to help us again, and we'll call it even," Lysanias told him. He looked around, the angel landing there had caused a stir, the shadowhunters making a wide ring around him.

"Humm, I really should get back," Ithuriel told them. "It is not for so many eyes that I walk the Earth. Faith should come from prayer and taking the Lord our God into one's heart, not staring into the face of an angel."

Yeah, right into the heart, until He decides to wipe out your species, but enough about my annoyance with the version of the Allfather I got. "Ah, about that... I don't suppose you can get there on your own?"

"I'm afraid not. I was hoping you might be able to do so."

"We can get you to the astral, does that help?"

"To see the splendor of Heaven once again, but be unable to touch it? I would rather be once again blinded."

"That's a no then. I could call Kasitel, the only other resident of Heaven I know. He can get a message to Raziel and maybe *he* can think of some way to get you back there."

"Actually, Kasitel took a message back, right?" Clary asked.

"Yeah."

"So why not a ward? It's still just paper at that point, right?"

The two looked at each other, and Lysanias smiled. "Excellent idea. Come on, it'll take me ten minutes, let's not keep you standing out here." He beckoned the angel while Isabelle shooed everyone out of their way. Lysanias did notice Alec was there, towering over most, Jace at his side. Both were staring like they couldn't believe their eyes, and he caught a fairly smug expression on Isabelle's part. *Don't really know the names of the others, but it was Clary I had to rescue and help, not them. So naturally I would notice them hanging around. I thought maybe they played a bigger part in this but*

I guess not? Ah well, they're just regular old shadowhunters, nothing special about either, right? I'm sure my rescuing Clary from that demon when I arrived instead of Jace didn't change either of their futures at all.

"Where are we going?" asked the angel.

"Just inside and to a room we can make a circle in," he explained. "Away from prying eyes."

"Very well."

Twenty minutes later, once again helped by the circle and his own dragonfly spirit the phoenix Kasitel was before them.

"Didn't I just leave this party?" he asked. "Can't a guy get some- oh. Hello."

"Greetings, sun herald," Ithuriel said formally. "It is good to look upon one of your kind again. How I have missed hearing your morning songs. I look forward to the coming dawn that I might hear one again."

"Naturally," they said, after a second of hesitation. "So they found you, then."

"They did. And apparently you are to help carry me back to Heaven, where I belong."

"I don't think I can lift you," they said uncertainly.

"You don't have to," Lysanias told them, pulling out a blank scrap of paper and his stele. He quickly traced a contain ward, which only needed to last a few minutes anyway, rather than waste a "real" one for this. "We're putting him in here. You go back, carry this, and just release him. Ithuriel can then go see Raziel, who can then step back into the astral and make good on his promise to help us with the cup."

"In a piece of paper?"

"It's a ward. I'll explain." He told them how it worked, and the angel looked a little troubled.

"So, the shadowhunters have realized runes can be used in more ways than simply drawing upon themselves. I suppose it was inevitable."

Oh, did Heaven not want that to happen? Too bad. They're going to need them.

"Why would you want to deny us a tool that can keep us safe? Demons are dangerous," Clary asked them. "And there's so few shadowhunters. More now, that they're finally starting to work together, but still."

"Because anyone can use them, among other reasons."

"In any case, I'm not keeping Kasitel maintained here and I would rather not have to petition them again. I'm putting you inside, please don't fight it. In a moment you'll be back in Heaven, and we'll be waiting in the astral at this location."

"Very well. The secret of runes is out, bickering about it will serve no purpose. Let me say again that you have my thanks. I can't really help you any more than any other angel, but if there is something you think I can do, don't hesitate to call upon me."

For ten minutes. Yeah, no. "I will." He slapped the ward on Ithuriel, who vanished, and handed it to Kasitel.

"I've heard of faith in angels disappearing but not angels themselves. That was a neat trick."

"Thank you."

"And I just have to say... the word?"

"And he'll pop right out, that's right."

"Okay."

He waited around a moment in awkward silence, making Lysanias once again wish there was way to banish angels like there was for demons, gently of course. *This having to wait around until they vanish is sort of annoying.*

He vanished.

“Guess I’m up again,” Dot told them.

“And then I’ll need my circlet back,” Lysanias told her. “Don’t think I’ve forgotten it.”

“You wouldn’t sell this to me, would you? I realize now what it does.”

“Not on your life.” *And curse you, past me, for not buying a hundred of the things when I had the chance. Not that I knew it would make magic easier but still. Still, could Clary make her a talisman that did something similar? It works here, there must be a way.*

Once again back in the astral the group didn’t have to wait long for Raziel to appear, Ithuriel in tow.

“You have done Heaven, and more importantly me a great service,” he told them. “And rather suspiciously quickly, too.”

“You don’t think we had him?” Isabelle sputtered.

“Of course not.”

“Then why mention it?”

“Hummm... I wonder. Still, my subordinate is returned to my side, and I have a promise to keep. You wanted information, correct?”

“We want a new mortal cup,” Clary told him. “So that more artificers can be made.”

“About that...”

“Yes?”

“The thing is...”

“What?”

“Well, I didn’t actually expect you to succeed, honestly. And not so quickly.”

“What’s the problem?” Lysanias asked, eyes narrowing. “I work fast, I like to solve problems, not draw them out and whine about it. Do you need time to forge a new cup or something? Is it special?”

“That’s not it, not exactly. How much do you know about how the cup works?”

“You drink from it and become an artificer,” Isabelle stated. “What’s to know?”

“That’s actually not in the least bit correct,” he informed her. “Drinking from it is totally optional.”

“What?” the three girls chorused.

Raziel’s mouth was set in a line. “Look, no mortal knows this, well, maybe you do, Lysanias, but as a prince of the archangels I may grant power to mortals.”

“Yeah, that’s how the first shadowhunter was made,” Isabelle said with a wave. “Even if we don’t have the story a hundred percent right, we know that much.”

“You know nothing,” Rizeil said a bit testily. “I mean it literally, I can bestow powers. Not a cup.”

“But then how-”

“The cup,” he interrupted, “is a conduit. All that blood nonsense and whatnot was just a cover.”

"It's a talisman," Lysanias breathed. "A talisman you made to channel your power to the Earth."

"Exactly." He looked a bit embarrassed. "I couldn't go running to Earth all the time, and I wanted people to become able to defend others from demons. So I made the cup. When someone holds it and wishes to become a shadowhunter, I feel it."

"In Heaven?" Dot asked.

"It's rather powerful, if I do say so myself," he answered smugly. "If I think they are worthy of it, I grant them the power. If they are not, I kill them. Simple as that."

"We thought it was people not being strong enough to survive the change," Isabelle gasped. "It was never that at all? The cup just calls to you, and you do the work from Heaven? The cup has nothing to do with the process at all? It could be a coin, or a whistle? The form is meaningless?"

"Exactly. So you see, if the cup really was gone I would know. There's a connection between myself and it. Has that connection been muted as late? Yes, yes it has. But is it gone? No. So I can't make you a new cup, because the old one is still out there someplace. I can have only one such connection like that at a time."

"That's just great," Clary complained, throwing her arms up. "We're back to square one. Unless you can tell us approximately where it is?"

He shook his head. "Not even a little."

"Super."

The group shared a look, wondering what to do next. Lysanias felt their frustration, and shared it. *Telling us that before...* "Telling us that before would have been nice. Did you think we wouldn't rescue Ithuriel if we knew?"

"The chances were higher if you didn't," he said without a trace of guilt. "Humans being what they are."

"God's chosen, and by His own words greatest creation?" Isabelle asked sweetly. "Who indirectly got Lucifer kicked out of Heaven because he wouldn't acknowledge that simple fact?"

"Er, yes." Now he looked a little embarrassed and looked away.

"So now what?" Clary asked.

"I can give you no further advice," Raziel told them. "Or assistance, in finding the cup. You know as much as-." He cocked his head. "But perhaps there is something?"

Lysanias realized he was being stared at. "Something?"

"I could make you a shadowhunter," he announced. "A poor substitute for rescuing Ithuriel so quickly, especially when I had been looking for years. But it was mainly your work that made it possible, was it not? I can feel you are not a shadowhunter currently, despite your other gifts."

"I suppose. But I can already make wards and talismans, so would it really benefit me?"

"Ah, but can you empower them?" he asked knowingly.

"Do what now?"

"What do you know of energy manipulation within your body?"

"I know everything there is to know about energy manipulation in the body! I had to, in order to learn spirit step."

"Excellent, that saves me some explanation. Shadowhunters can empower wards, in other words, provide them additional energy when they are activated to increase their effectiveness."

Lysanias stared at him. *Just like skyebourne magic, or Susan's type of energy magic. I never even suspected such a thing!*

"You didn't know that, did you? But then, you're not a shadowhunter."

"I didn't know it, and I'm a shadowhunter," Clary grumped.

"You may have been doing it unconsciously, if you know about energy manipulation."

"Lysanias has been teaching me. But I haven't activated all that many yet, I'm still *very much* in training."

"I'm not sure I'm pleased about that. But the cat, as it were, is out of the bag, so I may as well tell you. Oh, wait here." He vanished, leaving Ithuriel there with a look of "where did you go, boss?" on his face, but Raziel appeared again a moment later.

"Here." He handed over a scroll like the one the spell had been written on. *Another bit of the Heavenly library? To be allowed there for half an hour...*

Lysanias unrolled it and began to read, the others peering over his shoulders. "Activating wards remotely?" he gasped. "That's a thing?"

"It is. You could probably do it, given the directions here, you wouldn't need to become a shadowhunter. But my offer is still open. This new technique and that for your help, so you don't go away empty handed."

"Actually," he mused, "if you're going to make one person a shadowhunter, how about Clary's friend, Simon?"

"You would do that, for me?" Clary asked, clearly stunned. "You don't even know Simon!"

Lysanias turned to her. "But if he's your best friend, there must be a reason for it. I trust you, and thus, I trust him. He'll never be able to enter the supernatural world otherwise, right? And if it came down to it, being a shadowhunter or leaving the supernatural world so you didn't have to say goodbye to your friend? I would have to hope you would stand by your friend." *Plus he's in love with you, and your leaving him would break his heart. This way he gets to stay by your side, and maybe one day have the courage to tell you.*

"I was going to put off that choice as long as possible," she admitted. "I don't really know what I would choose."

"I think you've made your choice," Raziel said with a slight grin. "Now you just have to understand it."

"That's a quote from the Matrix," Clary told him, an odd look on her face.

"You think we don't have movies in heaven?" he asked with a shrug.

"Good ones, maybe. That was from the terrible sequels, I forget which one."

Raziel threw back his head and laughed. "Okay, you got me. We actually got the super special directors cut that was everything the movies should have been, had they been made in Heaven, and so are thus perfect. But I saw the other ones, just to compare them."

"You... how..."

"Anyway, Simon, huh? You would give up becoming a shadowhunter and instead pass that honor onto another?"

"I can already do so much, it's not a huge deal. It's easy to be generous when you have an abundance."

“And harder for a wealthy man to enter heaven than for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle. Can you really do so much that my offer is of so little consequence?”

Lysanias nodded, though really thinking *it would be nice to empower wards once in a while...*

“It was Clary that restored my sight,” Ithuriel told him. “I believe both should be rewarded.”

“You do, do you?”

“As he said, he can already do just about everything a shadowhunter can do, mainly wards and talismans. His energy doesn’t seem all that impressive, he would quickly tire if he tried to empower many wards in succession. I think there is little danger in giving him this additional ability.”

Sure, remind me of how little energy I have thanks to my stay in the cave. It’s fine, no need to hold back. Joke’s on you though, as I can use my abilities to recharge myself from people or lines. While I can’t hold much at any one time it’s true, I have effectively unlimited amounts as long as I’m not in a life or death struggle.

“I suppose,” Raziel agreed, rubbing his chin. “And you, Clary, you vouch for this Simon of yours?”

“Without hesitation,” she agreed, with only a moment’s hesitation.

“Very well. I shall grant you *both* the power of a shadowhunter. If Simon misuses this power, you will have to answer for it, Clary.”

“I understand. Do I have to bring him here, or...”

Raziel shook his head. “Who do you think I am? It is already done. Though he doesn’t realize it, of course. Congratulations on becoming a shadowhunter!”

Or in my terms, a true artificer I guess? I don’t feel any different, but then, I don’t suppose I would. “Thank you!”

“Thank you all, for freeing my brother from bondage. Good luck in your search for the cup.”

Yeah, thanks.

Both vanished back into Heaven and were gone again.

“That was somewhat of a bust,” Isabelle complained. “And not the good kind.”

Clary smirked and whacked her shoulder. “Of course it was! We know the cup is still someplace on Earth, probably behind a bunch of wards so we can’t figure out where. But there must be a way.”

“Sure, ask your mom.”

“Trouble is, I bet if we had the cup, we could lure Valentine out with it, and maybe rescue my mom.”

“But we need your mom to tell us where the cup is, and we can’t find her either,” Isabelle lamented.

“It’s a vicious cycle,” Clary agreed.

“But one we can maybe break,” Dot offered thoughtfully. “Do we need the actual cup? Or do we just need the rumor of it?”

“What do you mean?”

“I mean think about where we are now. We can basically go anywhere in this space and see the world, right?”

“Yes...” Lysanias agreed.

“So let’s do it. We set a trap for Valentine. Tell them the warlocks have found the cup and are holding it to get more power over the Clave. Like it’ll cost them ten thousand dollars or something per use. I don’t know. The more crazy the rumor the better. Meanwhile we tell the Clave to act all flustered and grumpy about how the warlocks are being all mean and unreasonable.”

“Valentine will have to send someone to see if the rumor is true!” Clary realized, eyes shining.

“That’s right. We station a bunch of people here at one of the meetings between our factions. A circle member or 5 show up, we jump them from here with far superior numbers they didn’t expect. When his agent or agents don’t show back up he’ll realize the rumors are true. He’ll send more people, and we can capture them too.”

“Maybe let one go, with a fake location they can attack?” offered Isabelle.

“Even better,” Dot agreed. “He loses enough people he’ll have to come himself. I can’t believe there would be that many circle members he can just throw away, and the cup will be a prize he’ll want to claim himself.”

“We can do even better,” Lysanias told them. “Ward the place we expect an attack so that no powers work. But magic could. So the circle members lose their runes, their special weapons, but magic takes them down easily.”

“Yeah, I like it,” Clary exclaimed. “Shall we go tell Hodge?”

“It’s the beginnings of a plan all right,” Lysanias agreed. “And I can ask the universe some yes-no questions to see how best to attract his attention and where the first attack will take place so we can ward it appropriately.”

“We’re getting my mother back,” Clary announced, hands curled into fists. “Then my best friend can get some training and join me. Lysanias, you’re the best!”

I guess I can’t argue if it’s true...

The group vanished from the astral.

Chapter 20

Simon Says

When: Around 10:00 that morning

Where: The institute

Having found Hodge and telling them what the angel had disclosed he agreed to the warlock plan. "As long as they agree to it, I mean," he clarified.

"I can get in touch with Magnus," Dot told them. "Set up a meeting to see if he'll go along with it and how best to start rumors circulating."

"That sounds fine. You are a shadowhunter warlock so it's a perfect assignment for you. Also you'll need to scout out some locations. Where we can have our 'meetings' and where to keep the fake cup. Lysanias can make one for us, right?"

"Easily," he told them. "Just get me a picture."

"I can do that."

"Once you do pick some locations you'll have to bring us a picture," Clary told Dot. "We can just teleport there so no one sees us coming in and out. We'll need to set up the wards so powers don't work."

"Take a picture, got it."

Hodge sent her on her way, then turned back to the others. "So we have a new recruit, this friend of yours, Simon?"

"That's right. I think we should probably wait until this whole shadow avatar thing is taken care of," she suggested. "To tell him, I mean."

"We'll have to approach him carefully. But you can bring him in, I'm sure."

"Shouldn't be an issue."

"Fine." He shook his head. "To think the cup was just a doorbell, essentially. Honestly, we've not been given correct or complete information from that angel from the start!"

"Maybe they hoped we would figure it out on our own?" Isabelle suggested.

"We failed, if that was the case. The fault is ours, we somewhat stopped trying to see what our powers could do and just relied on marking ourselves. Of course, the secrecy of the Iron Sisters probably didn't help. I have no idea what I'm going to tell them once they get wind of the fact we're making our own talismans now."

"That they should have told you themselves, rather than be total jerks about it?" Lysanias suggested.

"Maybe. You said something about a new technique the angel showed you?" Hodge asked.

"Yes, remotely activating wards. Either turning them on at a distance, or making what they do happen at a distance."

"Like if I had an armor ward in my hand, I could make the armor cover someone without actually sticking it on them?" Clary asked.

"Exactly."

"Let's go over that today!"

"I'm fine with it. Hodge, anything else for the moment? Oh, if you want to make copies of this and start handing it out to anyone making wards..." He held up the scroll. *Have to remember to put it into the hubPad as well.*

"Just a second, be right back." He took and went into his office, emerging a moment later. "Copies made. Let me know how it goes."

“Right.”

The three headed to a practice room where until about 1:00 they practiced the new technique. (And had a lunch break of course) Lysanias used the stele to create short lived contain wards that he tried to pull an object across the room with, while the two girls tried the opposite. They made armor wards and tried activating them on each other. Given it was based on strength of will, and Lysanias was still augmented by the sword he had little trouble once he figured out the trick. The girls were not having as much luck.

“I think you’re going to need more practice in manipulating your energy,” he finally announced. “From what I can tell, when I do it a conduit of energy forms between myself and the target. That isn’t happening for either of you. So let’s practice that for now instead.”

“Fine with me.”

Not long after Clary’s phone rang and she said it was Simon.

“Hey boyfriend,” she answered. “What’s going on?”

Lysanias heard the other end of the conversation as well, given it seemed Simon was totally freaking out. Clary winced and took the phone away from her ear as he answered.

“Clary, you have to get over here right away!”

“What’s going on, Simon? Are you okay?”

“No, I’m not. I’m seeing things! My mom thinks I’m going nuts, and I have to agree with her!”

“Seeing things...” *Oh crap.* “What sort of things?”

“You’re not going to believe this! A couple of tiny fairies are riding squirrels around my yard!” There was a moment of silence. “I told you that you wouldn’t believe me!”

“I’ll get there right away. Just try not to look at them, okay?”

“Don’t look at them? Didn’t you hear me? Fairies! Are riding. Squirrels!”

“It’s fine, Simon.”

“How can this be fine? It’s the opposite of fine! It’s as far from fine as it can possibly be!”

“Just hang on, I’m on my way, okay?”

“Okay, just get here soon.”

“I promise.” She hung up. “Simon-”

“We heard,” Isabelle told her. “How could we not? I guess it worked, huh?”

“Didn’t stop to consider he could now see things he wouldn’t be able to before. We better go over there and calm him down.”

“Good idea.”

“You don’t have to come.”

“Oh no? I want a look at this boy you have such faith in. Besides, you don’t have any runes yet, but I do. He’ll want more proof than just your word for it. Thirdly, I’m not leaving you alone out there, did you forget your mother was taken? You need more protection than just Lysanias.”

“I guess. Come on then.”

Heading out the door Isabelle grabbed another “plain” stele (with strap) as she figured Simon would want one, and picked up a few weapons as well. “You don’t leave without weapons, that’s our motto,” she explained.

The three made their way to Simon’s house, which was outside the city and so a proper house not just an apartment. She knocked, and Simon’s mother answered.

“Oh, Clary, thank goodness you’re here. Simon has been talking about fairies in the yard of all things. Hello?” She looked over at the other two.

Actually, why call her in the first place? If he was going mad, what would Clary do about it? They should have called a hospital or something.

“Mrs. Lewis, these are two friends of mine. Lysanias and Isabelle. They’re here to help Simon, uh, transition, if you will.”

“Transition? What are you talking about?”

“Why don’t we explain to both of you at the same time?”

“Is that Clary?” Simon asked, yanking the door open. “You’ve got to come look at this! I’m not going crazy, they’re still out there. They stopped riding the squirrels but the fairies are still there!”

“I know Simon, I’ll explain everything.”

“Wait, that sounds like you’re just humoring me. Your bodyguard still hanging around? Luke must be really worried about you. And who is she?”

Lysanias raised a hand in greeting but Isabelle looked interested, like she could make Simon her boyfriend if she wanted.

“Both of them are actually friends of mine. We said he was my bodyguard before because- Look, do you want to know what’s going on, or not? I’m not explaining it here on your front step.”

“Is this some prank you’re playing on your old mom?” Elaine asked, suddenly suspicious.

“I’m telling you, I see tiny people with wings!” Simon insisted.

“Come on, we’ll never get anywhere like this,” Isabelle told them. She looked around and headed towards the back of the house. Lysanias and Clary followed, Simon and his mother after a moment. Now in the back yard those that could see the fairies were staring down at them.

“What do you guys want?” asked one, hovering before them. This was a cute little girl fairy, dressed in a green dress and having colorful butterfly wings.

“Lose the glamour,” Isabelle commanded. “I want this woman to see you.”

“You’re not my queen,” the fairy protested. “I don’t have to do anything you say.”

“Who are you talking to?” asked Elaine.

“Fairies. Look, can you just do it?”

“And what will you offer me in exchange?”

“How about a bracelet of gold?” Lysanias asked.

“Let’s see it.”

“Fine.” He put his hand down on the ground and used earth bending to find the nearest small stone. He pulled it towards himself and caught it, then reshaped it into a thick bracelet, fairy sized, then changed it to gold. Opening his hand he held it up for her.

“Oooh, pretty! Done!” She swooped down, grabbed it, and stuck it on her wrist while standing on his hand. “Yeah, it’s gold all right, and a perfectly sized for me. How

did you do that? Ah, never mind, don't care. So one deglamourization, coming up. You sure about this?"

"Just do it already," Isabelle sighed.

"Okay. Here I am!"

Elaine gasped and really looked at the fairy, hands going over her mouth in shock. "That's impossible!"

"It's not," Clary assured her. "The world is a more magical place than we ever suspected. So no more talk about Simon being crazy?"

"You can see her now?" Simon asked his mother.

"I don't know what I'm seeing."

"Hey, how about some sweets every now and again?" asked the fairy. "Now that you know we're around, I mean. Just leave them on a dish out by the tree. Maybe a small teapot and cups so we can get some fresh water? You know how hard it is to find water that a bird hasn't bathed in?"

"Uh, sure?" Elaine said doubtfully.

"And what is she getting in exchange?" Isabelle asked slyly. "That's the fairy way, isn't it?"

"Shucks, should have known you would be on the ball. How about we keep all pests away from the house? No ants, wasps, rats, mice, mosquitoes, or fleas?"

"You can do that?"

"Sure, animals listen to us."

She looked over at Isabelle, who nodded. "It's a fair deal. There isn't too much little ones like this can do anyway."

"Hey, I resent that!"

"I'll go see what I can find right now," Elaine said in a daze. "Fairies in my yard. Maybe I'm the one going crazy."

"Thanks," Lysanias said to the fairy.

"Sure. I got more out of it than she did. Thanks for the bracelet." She flew again, showing it off to the others.

"Come inside," Simon told them. "You can tell me what the heck is going on."

Moments later, after smashing some candies up with a hammer to make them more fairy sized and rigging up an old hamster water bottle so they could just push the ball and get fresh water the five were sitting in the living room.

"So why am I suddenly seeing fairies?" asked Simon. "Or not to put too fine a point on it, fairies exist?"

"The easiest way to answer that question is somewhat indirectly," Clary began. "You know how there are stories of vampires and werewolves and elves, and angels and demons, all that sort of thing?"

"Sure."

"They aren't just stories. The supernatural world is real, just like those fairies out there, and I recently learned I was a part of it. Normally anything supernatural you wouldn't see, though a werewolf or warlock walking down the street wouldn't cause any stir. My mother hid all this from me, for reasons I can't explain, but it came back to haunt us."

"Yes, ghosts are real too," Isabelle put in. "I dated one once."

"I see," Elaine said, looking her up and down and probably thinking she was the type to date just about anybody and she wasn't going to get her hooks into *her* son.

"Anyway," Clary continued, "my mother was abducted and we can't find her. Magic is real. I just talked to an angel, and he agreed to make you an artificer like me, so that's why you can see the supernatural world now."

"Wait, I think I just missed about a week's worth of exposition!" Simon complained. "Did you say an angel did this?"

Slowly Clary got her story straight and told Simon what had been happening the past few days. She explained what he could learn to do now, and Isabelle handed over the stele, telling him not to lose it. He burned a square into some paper, so there was no doubt he was an artificer now.

"So what does this mean?" Simon asked, clearly at a loss as he looked at the paper.

"It means you have some new options you didn't before," Clary told him. "You're basically like me, a shadowhunter without the shadowhunter 'kill all demons' training started when you were six or whatever. If you wanted that training you could probably get it. But if you just wanted to be an artificer, and make things, I think the new and improved organization we're trying to create would allow it."

"You mean I could be like Q, making gadgets for the field agents?"

"Something like that, yes."

"But how?" his mother asked. "It isn't black magic, is it? Or demonic in some way?"

"Nothing like that," Lysanias assured them. "Think of it as simply being allowed to harness your internal energy in a different way. Everybody can put effort into lifting something or running faster, right? Simon can use the angelic language to bind energy into objects, either short or long term, that cause things to happen. It was essentially the language that created the world, and words have power, so it all sort of fits if you think about it like that."

"Not just objects, but yourself too," Isabelle reminded them, showing her arms. "If you put a rune on your skin you can draw upon greater strength or speed."

"I haven't had any put on because the thought of physically burning myself seems painful," Clary told him, "but for those that hunt demons it's essential. I suppose you get used to it."

"I suppose," she agreed.

"I might put up with it if I could lift a car," Simon said excitedly.

"That's up to you," Clary told him.

"I have a lot to think about," he admitted. "Demons being real? Running around the world? And just what can talismans do, anyway? I mean are they like magical objects from D&D, with charges, and can only be used a few times a day?"

"You can make them that work only a set number of times, or that draw off a person's energy, or that are permanent," Clary explained. "And they can basically do anything you can imagine."

"Wicked. So I could make a suit of armor like Iron Man, make each piece a talisman, and use it to fly, shoot energy blasts, be stronger?"

"As long as you didn't fly around in plain sight, sure. You would have to make it so one talisman hid you so normal people couldn't see you. But that could work."
Whatever an 'iron' man is.

“We don’t tend to wear much armor,” Isabelle told them. “Our clothes are made tougher, but we usually go for speed and stealth over clanking around in full plate.”

“And how many injuries have you sustained that armor would have totally deflected?”

“I suppose it’s a fair point. We didn’t use guns until Clary had the idea to put runes on shotgun shells, so maybe armor would be a good idea. Now that I think about it.”

“It sounds so overwhelming. Where do I even start?” he asked.

“I wonder...” Lysanias mused, pulling his padform out. “Just a second.”

You there, Susan? Have a question for you.

I’m here, what’s up?

Can I get all the information about a topic off this thing and get it to someone here? I obviously can’t give them access to the hubPad, but they have the information normally. I just want to send it electronically to someone so they can look it all over at once.

Sure, there’s a share button in the corner. It looks like a funny arrow, just touch it and you’ll get some options. If they have similar technology you could email it, the pad will put it into a form their machines can display. Otherwise you could print it, or I guess request a hard copy be sent from the hub and you just hand it over. I’m sure they wouldn’t mind as long as you didn’t do that too often.

Ah, great, thanks.

Any time!

“Okay, I need to look for the share button...” He managed to email Simon all the notes he had about artificer related skills, plus the energy stuff he could practice. This included the local “runes” and their translation, copies of what his wards looked like, and the complete translated book he had gotten from the alchemists back home.

“Got it,” he announced. “PDF format, not a problem. There’s a lot here!”

“That there is. My advice would be to study these materials, practice a ward or two, and after you have a general idea what’s possible figure out if you want to specialize in something, like demon combat or making wards. Once things have died down around the institute and we’ve found Clary’s mother she can introduce you to Hodge and he can set you up with classes or materials to make things.”

“Is there anything I can do to help? You must be worried sick about your mom.”

“I am, but no, your being an artificer right now is a happy coincidence but not really all that useful. For now just knowing you’re safe is a big weight off my mind.”

“Humm, if demons are really running around maybe I should ward the house first so they can’t get in...”

“That’s a good goal,” Isabelle praised. “Hard to test if it works though.”

“There is that. Okay, I’ll sit tight but Clary, be careful out there, okay? It seems like this all happened pretty fast, I don’t want you vanishing like your mother did.”

“I have very good protection, don’t you worry,” she replied with a laugh, taking the arms of both people beside her. “Besides, it’s daytime, demons don’t wander around during the day, the sunlight hurts them.”

Wasn’t it just people that took your mom, though? The demon was left to impersonate Dot, but did they do the actual abducting?

"I see. I'll want information on demons and angels too, at some point."

"There's books at the institute," Isabelle told him. "Once you're official, in whatever capacity you choose, you can always come read them any time."

"Thanks."

"And now we have to get going," Clary told them, standing up. "Shadowhunters go to bed around this time, so they can be active when demons are, at night. I've gotten on their schedule so I need to get some sleep."

"Don't hesitate to call whenever," Simon told her. "I'll be reading this over as fast as I can but even if you just need me for moral support, I'm here for you."

"I know, Simon. Thanks. Mrs. Lewis, nice to see you again."

"I hope you find your mother soon. Stay safe, all right? You're always welcome here."

"Thank you."

The group left and headed back to the institute, and it seemed Dot had returned with a time for them the next day.

"Nine tomorrow," she told them. "He thinks it's a decent plan but wants to talk to you directly about it."

"Of course. I'll see you all later."

They went to their separate rooms, to sleep and wake on the day Clary hoped would mark the start of the plan to get her mother back.

Chapter 21
Baiting the Trap
When: Day 6, 9:00 AM
Where: Magnus' apartment

Magnus lived in a high-rise apartment near Sixth Avenue and Christopher Street in Manhattan. As Lysanias walked in he wondered if maybe they had gotten the wrong place because everything looked so shabby, but realized as he entered the apartment itself was somewhat of a deterrent to looters. After all, a place this spacious and full of antiques couldn't be at the top of a place that looked about to fall over, right? But it was, and Lysanias looked around with interest. With him were Clary, Dot, and Isabelle, who again insisted on coming to provide any protection Clary might need. Jace had offered to come but Isabelle told him "If you come, then Alec will have to come because he's your bond brother. Do we really need the three of us? We're discussing a plan, not trying to drive Magnus into a corner. We don't need it to look like we're strong arming him with a show of force."

"So just you need to go, because you can get whatever you want with your looks?"

"Oh Jace, he probably prefers guys anyway. I bet he would totally flip for my brother, for instance."

"Yeah, yeah, keep telling yourself that."

So they stayed behind. Naturally Clary had checked in with Simon before they had left, who said he had been too excited to sleep at all that night, and joked he had been turned into a shadowhunter, not a vampire, right? But he said the implications for wards, talismans, and circles were just too interesting and was devouring everything he had been emailed.

"I can't blame him," Clary had said, reading his texts. "I mean a guy like Simon, who's been after magic all his life? Played D&D, obsessed with the elder scrolls series, shadowrun, you hand him the closest thing to magic he'll actually get to practice and of course he's going to go nuts over it."

"What's D&D? Someone mentioned that before..."

"It's a game, dungeons and dragons. Everybody pretends to be a dwarf or an elf or whatever, and you go on adventures. Fight monsters, get treasure, you know."

"I see. So basically my life before I started wandering. And this is entertaining?"

"It can be, if done correctly. It's telling a shared story where every person gets a chance to contribute."

"I suppose sitting around in a comfortable chair *pretending* I was about to be devoured by a giant underground worm would be far preferable to actually being in that situation."

"Huh. Now that I think about it, do you think that world is actually out there? That maybe the adventures people have here actually happen there?"

"It could happen. We know you have Star Wars that I lived through," *once this whole thing is over I'll have to see if can watch those movies*, "so why not other realities too? Though the world of "D&D" might exist but I doubt every character everyone ever came up with is running around there."

"True. Even just thinking that world could exist is pretty wild."

At the door was Magnus, well dressed in a button down shirt and slacks. He ushered them into the apartment and bade them sit down, and around a low table were several couches and chairs.

“So Dot has told me you have a plan to frustrate or perhaps capture Valentine,” he began, after the usual pleasantries were out of the way. “Get rid of him and we’ll all sleep a little easier. What I’d like to know is the specifics. Why us? And how can you guarantee my warlocks won’t be harmed?”

“It has to be you because you’re the strongest faction,” Lysanias explained. “Vampires or werewolves, they wouldn’t be able to successfully track down the cup. But does anyone but a warlock know what magic can do? Valentine will believe you have it because he’ll believe magic was able to find it. Plus either faction wouldn’t be able to make demands, or at least not be taken seriously if they did.”

“While I agree on principal, the seelie would argue they were the second strongest faction after shadowhunters. In fact they might argue they were first!”

“But they would have no interest in the cup,” Isabelle countered. “Not for what it can do, anyway. Maybe for trying to get more influence here in this realm, but how would they have found it? No, some vague ‘magic’ is probably best, like he said.”

“Perhaps. So we have the cup-”

“This cup,” Lysanias interrupted, pulling it out of nowhere. He had made it that morning after seeing pictures of it, and set it on the table.

“Wait, that’s a fake, right?” Magnus asked.

“I made it, so yes. We need to display it in some kind of protected case, so the ‘shadowhunters’ can see the ‘warlocks’ really have it, but they can’t just grab it and run out of the room with it.”

“Don’t scare me like that. All right, so the fake is put somewhere and we post some guards around it, enough to be convincing. Then we say we want to meet with the clave, which gets back to Valentine.”

“Exactly, he’ll no doubt have a spy or two everywhere.”

“Are they in on it?”

“No,” he replied with a shake of his head. “We don’t know who the spy might be, so telling even one person might ruin the whole thing.”

“They’re going to be annoyed when they realize we don’t have the real one.”

“Less so when you deliver Valentine to them, and thus rescue Jocelyn, and thus get the real one.”

“How can you be sure that will happen?”

“We can come up with a number of plans, both for getting the information to the clave so Valentine hears it, and naming a date for the first meeting. I’ll ask the universe which is the best for getting what we want. Now even if we only get flunkies the first time, that’s fine. They’re not getting away, so Valentine will be forced to send more and more until he has to come himself. We capture him, and his plans are over.”

“I repeat my question, how can you be sure they won’t get away?”

“We’ll have overwhelming forces on site, and they won’t have runes,” Clary explained. “We’ll ward the place so supernatural powers don’t work, only magic does. If a bunch of warlocks can’t take a few powerless humans, okay ones with combat training but still, you deserve what you get. With no active runes they won’t be stronger or faster.”

“And you can do that?”

"I once put a bunch of Jedi inquisitors in a cell and they couldn't escape from it. It's the same thing here." *They were later blown up by the death star when it was overtaken by Leah, of all people. Maybe I should check this guy out, just to be sure. If only I could practice that skill more somehow...* He sighed.

"Jedi as in The Return Of?"

Lysanias looked to Clary, who nodded.

"Yes," he replied.

"Okay. I suppose we could seal the doors once they burst in. But wouldn't the shadowhunters there for the meeting notice they didn't have powers?"

"Why would they have active runes for a peaceful summit between our two people?" Isabelle asked sweetly. "I mean you're not going to *demand* they show up and put them on the defensive, right?"

"Er, I guess not?"

"Actually, I know just how you're going to do it," Clary told him, smiling. "We use Simon. He's the proof you have the cup, a brand new shadowhunter. He can go to the clave and deliver the message you wish to peacefully see to the transfer of the cup. Of course in good faith they will not activate any runes until they take possession of it, after a brief talk regarding reparations for finding it and keeping it safe."

"I guess we have plan number one then," Magnus mused, hopping up and getting some paper out. "Let me write that down."

The group made various plans, some with a demanding tone, some with a terrified "please take this stupid cup off our hands" tone. All involved Simon, after all they needed to have "tested" the cup to make sure it was real, and making a new shadowhunter was really the best way. There were rumors that one who held it could command demons, but given the group had recently learned exactly how it worked, that didn't seem likely. Lysanias then asked which plan was best, and got an answer. They then refined it, adding different times and methods of letting the clave know the warlocks wanted to bargain. He then got an answer again.

"Looks like we have some time," Magus remarked when it was done. This whole process had taken about two hours, and he had passed out drinks for everyone in the meantime. "Seems our best bet is a meeting between our two groups eight days from now."

"Making a fake vault that can only be opened again by the specific people who cast the spell was inspired, Clary," Isabelle praised. "They won't run off with it if they don't also capture all four people that locked it up. It would do them no good. They have to wait until we take it out of the vault to hand it over."

"We needed some excuse to have enough time that the rumor reaches Valentine, but still not hand it over immediately."

"So our story is we found the cup, verified it was the real deal by turning Simon, and then in a panic locked it up to make sure Valentine wouldn't steal it," Magnus summarized. "We'll gladly hand it over to them, but we want a seat on the clave board among other minor matters such as the promised gold for its return."

"I'll be sure to make you some fake gold in exchange for the fake cup," Lysanias told him with a grin.

“Appreciate it. By the way, what if you find the cup? I mean you’re leaving once your thing is taken care of, right? What happens to the gold you made earlier? Are you just keeping it?”

“Oh, you want it?”

“Yes please!”

“I’ll consider it. I was thinking of giving it to whatever local girl I liked best. I mean Isabelle has been hanging around a lot and she’s nice-”

“Friend!” she exclaimed, taking his arm. “Say, do you need more ice for your drink? Are you cold? I’d be happy to snuggle with you, warm you up. Can I get you anything at all?”

He laughed. “That’s what I’m talking about.”

“That’s not really fair,” he grumped.

“We’ll see. We haven’t found the cup yet, so maybe I’ll be giving it to Clary’s mom when she tells us where it’s hidden. After all, that’s who I promised to give it to, whoever returned it.”

“Yes!” Clary pumped her fist. “Easy street, here I come!”

“Down girl, you don’t have it yet either,” Magnus reminded her. “But back to the issue at hand? Once at the meeting Valentine will hopefully try to steal it, or send others to steal it when we make the exchange. That’s when we capture them.”

“If we don’t get Valentine, we just meet again, saying the transfer didn’t happen because of the attack. That gives him another chance to grab it when we meet again.”

“How do we actually secure the cup though?” Isabelle asked, dropping Lysanias’ arm. “Can you do it with magic? If we did it with runes that wouldn’t look authentic. It has to be done by magic.”

“I wonder how that would be best…” Magnus stalled.

“Actually, I know a spell to make something unbreakable, it would be perfect,” Lysanias told them. “It’s wand magic, but at least it’ll register as a spell if anyone senses it out. We just put the cup into a glass box and I charm it to be unbreakable. It can sit there in plain sight but still be protected.”

“No one would know there wasn’t some magical lock that we warlocks put on it,” Magnus agreed. “As long as we can hit it with hammers and prove it really is unbreakable, that is. And the less work I have to do, the better.”

“Why is that?” Clary asked.

“Less cost to you.”

Clary looked at him like he was melting.

“You didn’t think I was doing this for free, did you? You’re taking up a lot of my time here!”

“You’re *charging* us? After what you did to me?” she shrieked. She yanked her stele out and jammed the strap around her wrist. “How did that agony rune go again?” She held it up menacingly. “Now hold still.”

“I’m just joking, of course!” Magnus insisted with raised hands. “Only joking. No charge for you, my dear.”

“Humph, that’s better.” She put the stele away again, Isabelle and Dot both trying not to smile.

“But I would be interested in seeing magic from other realities. You want to enchant the case now, so I don’t have to bother you later once I figure out where I’m going to put it for the meeting?”

“Sure,” Lysanias agreed. “Do you have a case in mind or do I have to make that as well?”

“Come to the storage room and we’ll see.”

So with the case complete and Mangus promising to stick to the script and take care of things on his end, the others made their way back to the institute, stopping in to see how Simon was doing.

“I’ve drunk way too much coffee,” he admitted, “but I’ll go to bed early tonight.” He looked like someone who needed to get some rest, and strewn around his room were printouts of various sections of the notes Lysanias had sent him. Along with half finished wards, comic books, (for “research” he said) and scribbled questions. Naturally he had many of those, so the group stayed to answer them and tell him about his part in the upcoming plan.

“So my story is I was suggested by Clary as a forthright and macho individual worthy of drinking from the cup, and as the warlocks didn’t particularly care if I died or not said sure. I drank from the cup, my eyes were opened, and it was put into the magical case that was made unbreakable. I’m going to be escorted to the shadowhunter city in two days’ time, where I’ll give the clave a message from the warlocks that they want to bargain for the return of the cup. I’ll most likely be tested to make sure I am a shadowhunter now, and my part is done.”

“Exactly,” Clary praised. “So you’ve got until then to decide what rune you want applied to yourself, or I suppose now what ward you want to learn to make.”

“I want to protect the house from demons anyway, would that be an acceptable one?”

“I think as long as you’re seen using a stele, it doesn’t matter,” Isabelle told him. “Only we can use them.”

“Fair enough. You’ll come get me on the 31st then?”

“That’s when the universe said we have the best chance.”

Simon raised an eyebrow. “You talk to the universe? I thought you were just a shadowhunter with funny eyes, are you something else?”

“Ah. You just focus on your studies for now.”

“Okay?”

“Great. Anything else for now?”

“I guess not.”

“That’s fine. Get a good night’s sleep tonight, making wards and talismans will always be there for you now.”

“I guess. I have to figure out what I would want to make anyway. Something useful day to day, obviously, that isn’t too hard to research and doesn’t take too many exotic ingredients. At least to start. I was thinking of making a sort of workshop in the basement, but my mother and I were talking about my future. Two days ago it was what collage I wanted to attend, now it’s ‘do I become a demon hunter for a living?’ Stay here at home for a while longer than I thought, until I get a handle on making wards? Could I go to classes with you?”

“Collage? Oh man,” Clary moaned. “I haven’t even thought about that lately. How could I, with all that’s happened? Well, my mom made a living as a shadowhunter and if they allow wards and talismans to be sold to cambions that could be a good way to go.”

“Sold to who?”

“Vampires and other supernatural people.”

“Never heard that word before, but I’ll take your word for it.”

“It’s better than ‘downworlder’ believe me. Which you will hear, and it means them too. It’s the original term before Lysanias came up with cambion. And to answer your question, once you’re ‘out’ to the clave, probably. All shadowhunters are welcome at the institute, and you are one. They can’t turn you away.”

“Works for me.”

“All right, we better go,” Lysanias told them. “We’ve got a lot of wards to make for this plan, and I want to get started.”

“See you, Simon. We’ll be in touch!” Clary told him.

Back at the institute the group stayed together, Isabelle wanting to help make wards even if they were too poor to use, just to practice, and Dot to see wards being made to see if magic could do anything similar. *Wait, she didn’t think I was being serious about the gold, did she? Is she hanging around to really practice ward making or is she hoping I will give her the gold?* The three sat down to begin when Lysanias realized a bit of a flaw in his plan.

“There’s a bit of a flaw in my plan,” he realized.

“What’s that?” Clary asked.

“These wards don’t seal off powers, they keep people from spending energy. That worked for the jedi because activating powers takes energy. Not so here, the runes on anyone that come in will already be active. They’ll be stronger and faster and whatnot.”

“So now what?” Isabelle asked.

“Now we practice making a *new* ward. It takes me eight hours, but it seems Clary can do it faster, and maybe you can too, for all I know. See what you two can come up with and we’ll start making them.”

So the two girls put their heads together, Isabelle not getting much out of the process because Clary just seemed to stare off into space and then start drawing. Lysanias did explain the process he used, and his theories about how she was different.

“But why can she do it?” she asked.

“Maybe that connection to the angel he spoke of? I don’t really know. Why do some people back on my world need to study formulas for hours while other people can just shape magic into doing whatever they want without one? It’s the same thing here.”

“I guess. So does this work?”

“We can give it a try. I’ll put it into the hubPad so we can copy it after the test, as it’ll burn up. Then we’ll lose it because Clary only seems to be able to get a certain ward once. Then slap it on me and we’ll see what happens.”

Having done that Lysanias applied the ward to himself and tried to fire bend. He punched the air, and nothing happened. He tried again. Nothing. He tried levitating something and calling out his mountain spirit. Nothing. He then realized what was going on and manipulated his inner energy to “bend” around the ward, and was then able to sometimes do what he was trying.

“It’s better than nothing,” he admitted, pulling it off again. “And in reality, we’re warding a location so they should work together and magnify the effect. I doubt they’ll be able to do the same thing, given it won’t be stuck right on them. If they even have control of their spiritual energy like I do.”

“Nothing formalized like the notes you’ve given us,” Isabelle told them. “If someone learned it on their own maybe, but they would have just thought it was normal. We know differently now.”

“Good enough,” Clary announced. “Now we just have to make as many of them as we can.”

“No rush, we won’t have to apply them until later. We know from my asking the universe they won’t attack until they believe the cup is being transferred. And we want powers to work there just in case they slip in and check it out beforehand. They won’t get the fake out of the case, the unbreakable charm will see to that. But if powers don’t work in there and they check the room we’re meeting in they’ll know something is up.”

“Still, better to get them done early.”

“I don’t disagree. Let’s get to work.”

Chapter 22

Closing the Trap

When: Day 14, 9:00 AM

Where: Meeting Room

The next eight days were very busy for Lysanias as he, Clary, Simon, and Isabelle warded the place the meeting was going to take place in. He was pleased to find, looking into the past every day, that a circle member had come to try and smash the cup out of the case but was unsuccessful. *I guess the plan is going well, they'll have to wait to attack until we pass it on to the shadowhunters.*

He also met with the warlocks that were going to be there. Magnus said he picked the best, so he, Clary, and Isabelle had some fun attacking them. Clary had only the most basic sword training at this point but she wasn't going to stab herself, plus with a little magic she could be a completely competent swordswoman. It turned out being "the best" didn't directly translate to calmness under fire, as the three burst in again and again to "take them by surprise" while the warlocks tried to hit them with minor spells. They didn't exactly inspire confidence, taking far too long to get off their spells or choosing overly complex spells they didn't get a chance to finish before they had a sword at their throats. Magnus and Lysanias went over some battle strategy of maybe covering one person who was doing a long casting or just learning some faster to cast battle spells. As most warlocks hired their services out for finding lost things or people, or repairing things, most didn't have a lot of straight up combat experience. That changed in a hurry. All of them saw the advantage of the shield even if most shadowhunters didn't wear armor, Simon thinking about buying one and making it his first talisman.

"After all," he said, "I could put the armor effect on it, get the best of both worlds, and not have to drag actual armor around."

Isabelle was a virtuoso with that whip of hers, snagging people and flinging them about is no good for spellcasting so that's just what she did. They improved and talked over the best spells to use, taking it seriously.

"After all, there's only three of us, and we have to assume Valentine will send people with far more combat experience than us. He wants that cup. If you can't handle the three of us how are you going to handle five or more?"

Simon went to the main Shadowhunter city at day 12 to give the Clave the message and be tested. Clary of course wanted to be at his side, but Hodge said that wasn't exactly the best idea.

"Look, one new Shadowhunter is explainable," he told her seriously. "But no one will know you either. They'll want to know what you're doing there. Then you'll have to tell them, and tell them who your mother is... It's just a lot of hassle I'd rather spare you from. Obviously you'll have to be known at some point, but let's rescue your mother and get this shadow avatar stuff behind us before that. Okay?"

"Okay, I guess."

"I'll go with him," Isabelle promised. "He'll be safe, I'll keep him out of trouble."

"Thanks, Izzy. I suppose it's a city full of shadowhunters, it's not like he'll be attacked or anything."

"Exactly."

He went and came back after a few hours, saying the city was quite beautiful, with huge towers of metal serving as anchor points for wardings similar to what he was doing to his own house with paper wards. The Clave had no choice but to accept he was a shadowhunter, newly created by the angel, and had agreed to meet the warlocks in two days' time.

"As we expected," he said smugly.

"You didn't have anything to do with that," Isabelle scoffed, smacking his shoulder. "You just handed over a piece of paper and stood there while they argued!"

"Ow, hey, quit it!" But he was smiling, clearly they had started to become friends during his time away.

"Did you two get along?" Clary asked, clearly hoping for a "no" answer, but Isabelle smiled. "I showed him around, it was great. Simon's a nice guy. You better claim him soon or some up and coming shadowhunter girl will swoop in and snag him." She winked.

"I'm not claiming him, we're just friends!"

Lysanias felt Simon's despair at that comment. *Maybe I should give him a nudge, tell him to tell her before Isabelle decides to go after him and he has to break her heart pining for the girl that will never see him. At least get the rejection out of the way so he can move on, right?*

Lysanias also kept up marital arts lessons for those that wanted to learn chi-blocking, and lessons in spiritual energy manipulation too. Hodge gave him some pointers on teaching, being a weapons instructor himself, which helped everyone. Chi-blocking was fairly popular, especially among cambions because they were most often harassed by other humans, rather than demons. Lysanias looked harshly at the vampires who wanted to learn, as paralyzing someone with chi-blocking would make it very easy for them to feed on someone, but all swore up and down that they would never attack people. It was against the law in the first place, but the larger concern was *letting the world know vampires existed*. Nobody wanted that, especially the vampires.

"People would never leave us alone," one of them explained. "It would be all, oh, turn me into a vampire so I can be immortal too!"

"I guess." *Honestly, why don't they? They seem perfectly normal, they just can't go outside during the day. They can survive just off blood, which they can get without killing if they do it right. A bunch of cows could give blood instead of milk, isn't that more humane than killing them for meat? They can be bled once a week or so, but they can only give their meat once. Living a full life until they died of old age. Weird, I think it could work.*

So Lysanias trained them as well, starting with the basics as most didn't even know any martial arts. *I won't be able to get them up to speed, but the charts and demonstration tapes they had me make will be able to do the job. Better that they can just stun someone rather than biting them, if they get into a tight spot with a bunch of normal people. Wolves too, rather they not transform and freak everyone out. A few quick blows is far more explainable, even if they get paralyzed from them, there won't be any evidence which there certainly would be if they were bitten!*

Demon attacks continued during this time of course, forcing other areas to recruit from the “downworld” just as the New York institute had done. Despite shadowhunter grumbling, news of the New York institute successfully integrating “outsiders” into the organization gave all cambions hope that one day they could be seen as equals. No one outside the institute knew that they were all in danger from the shadow avatar, and that’s why they worked so well together. New York simply stood as a fine example for the other places to emulate. Hodge having basically told them “Get along at least until that’s taken care of, we want to show the *visitor from another reality* that we can at least work together in a crisis. After that, well, we’ll see how it goes after he goes.” They had all agreed that was probably for the best, that they make a good impression on the, as they called him, “multiverse ambassador.”

No news of anyone going nuts and trying to destroy the world had surfaced, and Lysanias had no new dreams or answers when he asked for further information. He hadn’t figured out the cup dream, having discussed it with Clary, who at least told him about Alice in Wonderland. So he was worried about that but knew sooner or later the shadow avatar would have to make a move, and he would be there to stop them.

No way to destroy whole planets here.

It was now day fourteen and Isabelle, along with a dozen others split between warlocks and shadowhunters, waited on the astral plane to pounce on whoever came through the door to steal the cup. They were in a neutral location, Taki’s Diner, a place for cambions to go and get something to eat. The menu boasted such things as fresh blood (source unspecified), whole fish (eyes in), and a variety of raw meat, none of which Lysanias felt the need to sample. He had placed the final ward, activating the entire group of them at 8:30 that morning, so everything was in place. The shadowhunters currently in the astral knew they were not able to use runes in the coming battle, but Lysanias wanted people that knew how to handle weapons to counter those that would use weapons on Valentine’s side. Even without active runes they were sure to be dangerous. Three members of the Clave stood around the table, weapons out and on high alert, while an equal number of warlocks watched them and the door at the same time. (The door was behind the shadowhunters) Another sat across from Magnus, who was doing a good job of making almost reasonable demands in exchange for the cup. He knew they had to have wiggle room so the Clave didn’t just dismiss what he was asking for as being unreasonable, but could bend on some points while Magnus bent on some of his. None of the Clave people seemed to notice their runes weren’t working, meaning they had followed Magnus’ request to not have any active during the meeting.

Of course, how would you know if you had greater strength or whatnot without testing it? My armor wards are simply invisible energy until struck, you would never know it was there until then. They could have activated everything but just don’t realize they’ve been turned off. It’s not like they glow or anything.

Lysanias himself was sitting at the table with the 10kg chunk of gold, waiting for that tingling feeling that would tell him they were about to be attacked. The group had discovered they could create the wards to block everything, even magic, or allow certain things, based on what symbols they added to each ward. So active powers like runes on people were being denied, while magic and more subtle powers like ESP were not. He had his wand at hand so he wouldn’t be helpless, and of course he could do a little

magic from his homeland in a pinch. *And skyebourne magic if it really comes to it. But if we have to go that far, something has gone terribly wrong.* He was being smart and wearing the armor at the start, given he couldn't have armor wards going. It had gotten him some odd looks by the Clave representatives, who weren't quite sure what to make of him because he wasn't a shadowhunter they had ever seen before. But he who has the gold makes the rules, as they say, so they accepted his presence. He had been there before them, standing by the chunk of gold, which he had explained was a bounty provided by the New York institute for the safe return of the cup.

"I'm here to hand it over," is all he would say about it.

The negotiation concluded to Magnus' satisfaction, the two parties shook hands and rose. Lysanias rose as well, offering the chunk of gold formally. *You just get to hold it,* he reminded the warlock, who nearly dropped it in surprise. *Don't get too used to it.*

"Er, it's heavier than it looks," he offered, shooting him a dark glance.

"How heavy do you think ten kilograms of gold is, anyway?" asked the Clave member furthest from him. "Two kilograms?"

"Very funny."

"And now the cup, if you please?" asked Jia, the dark haired woman running the meeting.

"Of course." Magnus snapped his fingers and the three warlocks carried the case over.

Here it comes.

Lysanias drew his wand and pointed it at the case.

"What are you doing?" she asked.

"Taking the enchantment off the case that makes the glass unbreakable. Don't mind the wand, I need to, uh, focus my magic. I know most don't use them."

"Wait, you're a warlock?" Jia asked, clearly confused. "I thought you were a shadowhunter. You said you were from the institute..."

"I am a shadowhunter. You thought I was an *artificer*," Lysanias corrected her. "One that makes wards, talismans, and circles. A shadowhunter is one that protects mortals from demons. Believe me when I say that describes me perfectly. A warlock can be both, just ask Hodge. End Incantation." He moved the wand, and as he was wearing the circlet and had a fair amount of practice in this the magic faded from the case. "If you would be so kind, Magnus?"

There's what I'm waiting for. That tingle on my back that means something is about to happen.

Magnus set the gold down with a thunk, then took a key out of his pocket and unlocked the lock on the case. He opened it and pulled out the cup, and was about to hand it over when suddenly, into the room burst ten people, swords out and ready. Some came pouring in through the back but they mostly just smashed through the windows of the place. This made the waitresses there scream and cower back, ducking for cover. He could hear someone in back yelling "my windows!"

"Hand the cup over, now!" a burly circle member demanded, pointing his blade at the group. "We have you outnumbered."

The shadowhunter grabbed the cup in one hand and started moving his blade back and forth to try and cover all angles.

True, but only to a certain point. Looks like ten of them. “Aw man, I’m gonna have so much work to do repairing those windows,” Lysanias whined.

“What is this?” Jia asked, hand going to her sword as she handed the cup to the man on her left. “Get that cup out of here!”

“Actually,” a sultry voice said from behind the circle members, “we have you outnumbered, and surrounded.” The man whirled, taking in the dozen of warriors, magic and weapons at the ready, who from their point of view had just stepped out of nowhere. Isabelle cracked her whip. “Who’s first?”

The man raised his sword to strike her but it caught his eye.

“Noticing something?” Lysanias asked. “Like your blade not shining anymore? Yeah, you’re gonna have a bad time, neither it nor your runes are going to work here. But you know what does? Magic. Be stunned!”

He pointed his wand at the man and a red jet of light shot out, but the man dodged to the side, making it impact the far wall.

Ah, right. I have to actually aim this magic, using the wand. It goes in a straight line so he can dodge it.

“Attack!” yelled the man. “Get that cup!”

With this many people Lysanias could hardly keep track of what was going on, and simply concentrated on what he could do. There was someone directly in front of him with his back turned, trying to cut a warlock who had just dodged out the way. “Be stunned” he repeated, just managing to hit the guy. He went down in a flash of red light. His senses warned him of a man approaching from the rear and he started to turn, but the man jumped away as a guy behind him tried to slash the blade out of his hand. He saw Isabelle flick her whip at the same time, aiming for his ankle. Her whip neatly wound around it and she yanked, pulling him off balance and making him tumble to the floor.

“Thanks,” he said to her, then caught a sword on his shield from the other guy coming slightly from his left. He then did a quick shield bash, nailing the guy in the head which would have sheared it off completely had Lysanias not been holding back to just try knocking the guy out. He went flying, the sword clattering to the ground next to him. The shadowhunter about to defend him from behind looked down, lowering his sword.

“Well, fine!” he said, and looked around for another target.

“My sword isn’t lighting up!” cried Jia. “They must have done something!”

Uh, no, look, their swords aren’t doing anything either. I just mentioned this, that it was our doing? You could have paid attention.

The shadowhunter that had just spoken saw the downed circle member trying to get up and dashed over there, kicking the sword out of his hand. He was so out of it he almost handed it over, and the blade went sailing away.

“Don’t even think about it,” said the man with a smirk, leveling his blade.

“I’m not, believe me!” the prone man agreed.

That’s taken care of. What else? He zipped over to a circle member who it looked was shaking off the influence of some kind of spell, having been pinned between two warlocks who had been pelting him. “Be stunned,” he cast, having gotten right up next to the guy so there was less chance he would miss. He just got it off, and another circle

member fell to the floor, knocked out. Looking straight ahead he saw a warlock try and fail to get a spell off on the last circle member in the area, one who was fighting a shadowhunter. The shadowhunter nicked his leg, while Magnus and another warlock blasted him with magical energy. He looked around stupidly as if forgetting why he was there, and Lysanias shrugged and ran to his side, again casting "Be stunned." He must have screwed up the wand movement, as nothing happened. That would never do so he bashed the guy in the head with his shield, not expecting the man to helpfully lean into it. Again it was a good thing he was holding back, but the guy still went flying and landed in a heap.

"You should have just done that to begin with," said the shadowhunter, looking impressed.

"I guess you're right," he agreed. *Still, I think in this case he was magically out of it, there was some kind of spell cast on him.*

That guy ran to engage the next nearest guy and Lysanias figured it was now two on one in his favor, so that was probably all right. Across the way a shadowhunter and a warlock were facing down a circle member, and he had just spun, cutting a deep gash across the shadowhunter's chest. He staggered a little but didn't go down. "Be stunned," he cast, putting extra attention into his wand movement. The man was struck, too busy trying to keep track of the two he was fighting to notice a red beam streaking towards him, and he dropped.

Liking that spell, actually. What the?

In front of him the circle member was suddenly struck by three points of light, twice on the body and once on the right arm, where he had already been struck several times during the fight. He went down, and the warlock across the tables smirked and gave a thumbs up. He raised his wand in salute, and the battle continued.

Now, however, it was completely one sided as that half of the restaurant had been cleared, and there were only two circle members left. One getting up from where he had been thrown across the room, the other had his back to the whole place and was trying to skewer a warlock. The man getting up saw there was no chance to survive and made his time, trying to escape most probably to report to his master. But none of the warlocks were having that, and a variety of spells both damaging and restrictive hit him. He wasn't going anywhere. By that time several shadow hunters surrounded the last man, who dropped his weapon and surrendered.

The battle had been won, and it seemed without a single casualty. Though at least one circle member was heavily wounded, the rest had simply been stunned.

Lysanias gave a triumphant smile, the plan had worked!

Chapter 23

Viewing the Bones

When: After the last circle member fell

Where: Restaurant

"Is anyone seriously hurt?" Lysanias called, looking around. He saw various gashes and bruises on the warlocks and assembled shadowhunters but it looked as though only circle members were down.

"What is this?" asked Jia, clutching the cup to her chest. "Who are all these people? The shadowhunters I know..."

"They're *all* shadowhunters," Lysanias corrected her with a sigh.

"I'm not," said a warlock. "It was only five, remember? Mind you, I wouldn't mind being one, it would be a steady paycheck."

"Were you keeping something safe?" he asked dryly. "Yes? Then today you're a shadowhunter. You'll have to talk to Hodge about your pay for the day though."

"I'll do that."

"I don't care if you call them pixies-"

"Hey!" said the pixie waitress, sticking her head up from behind the counter.

"What's wrong with pixies? We're people too, you know!"

"Argh, fine, whatever you call them, what are they doing here?"

"Saving your life," answered a gruff shadowhunter, wrenching a circle member's hands behind them and securing them with a restraint. "I suppose a thank you is too much to ask?"

"But how did you all get here?"

"A warlock did it," one of the warlocks said, trying not to laugh. They got smacked.

"We figured if Valentine would strike," Isabelle told her, "it would be when the cup was unlocked and handed over. We were right. We watched the place and when they attacked, we came in after them."

"Wait, we didn't actually *get* Valentine, did we?" Lysanias asked excitedly. "Tell me he came, please!"

Jia looked around. "No, none of these men are Valentine."

"Pity. That means we have to do this all over again." He put his wand away into the sword sheath and put a hand out for the cup. "Cup please."

"No!" She gripped it tighter. "I'm not letting this cup out of my grasp until it's safe behind every protection we can dream up."

"Yes," he insisted, "you are. We'll need to set a new date for the transfer, because you were worried about an ambush transporting it back to the institute after this attack. That will give them the chance to try again."

"You *want* them to have the cup?" The three around her raised their swords. "But then why help them? I saw you, knocking them out with your magic. You did better than anyone, you took out, what, three yourself? You're not making sense!"

"I am, if you just listen for a moment. I want Valentine to come himself, so we can capture them like these jokers here."

"It's the only way," Jace told her, stepping up. "Obviously you have circle members in the clave, it's the only way he would have learned about this *secret* meeting and come to steal the cup."

“A secret meeting that we had in a restaurant,” Alec added, gathering up fallen swords and other weapons.

“Where else do you have a secret meeting?” Jace asked him.

He rolled his eyes.

“Hey, it worked, didn’t it?” Lysanias asked them. “This is... ten circle members less that Valentine has.” He counted again. “Yup, ten. That’s going to be a huge blow to him, I hope. Believe me, we made a lot of plans for a lot of places, but this one had the best chance of working. It was never a secret, just secret enough that Valentine thought it was, and so made his play thinking we would be caught off guard. We were not.”

“Indeed not. Seeing some of you in action certainly was a nice bonus,” Magnus said, making eyes at Alec. “I’d like my warlocks to get more training, perhaps get some one on one training with you myself.” He nearly blushed but looked away. “I suppose I’ll have to hand this back though.” With reluctance he handed the chunk of gold over, and Lysanias made it vanish.

“Wait, you’re giving it back? And where did it just go?”

“Of course. You’re not getting the cup until Valentine is behind bars. So I’m not getting the gold. A sacrifice yes, but that was always the plan. I didn’t expect to walk out with the gold today.”

“You played us?” Jia asked. “You knew about this from the start, using the cup as bait?”

“Of course I did. We expected an attack, and one came. That’s why I picked these three as my guards. They were supposed to be the best, but I am somewhat ashamed of their performance today. Lysanias was far more effective, which shows they all have a long way to go. Still, we did win and that’s the important part.”

“Sorry boss,” the right one said. “I guess Lysanias was right. Battle casting and practice casting are two very different things. It’s something we’ll have to work on, if we’re going to be involved in more situations like this.”

“Yeah, I flubbed a spell,” agreed the one on the left. “I was trying to charm that one guy. I must have made a mistake on the wording.”

“We’ll practice it more from now on.” He got the case back up on the table. “Go ahead, put it back so we can lock it up again.”

“It’s coming with us!”

Should I tell her? “Look, it’s best if you let us try this again, further reducing Valentine’s forces,” Lysanias told her. “If you take the cup back it’s out of his reach and so is Clary’s mom. We need it as bait.”

“Who are you to decide that? I don’t even recognize you as a shadowhunter, and what warlock uses a *wand*?”

“Prejudice, it’s always the same,” Magnus told him with a shake of the head. “Don’t let her get to you.”

“I’m the person that delivered ten circle members to you, with no loss of life on our side.”

“You would really claim credit for all this?”

Lysanias started to answer but was interrupted.

“How did you do it?” one circle member demanded, a light haired man now kneeling in a line with the others. The shadowhunters were checking them for steles, hidden weapons, and the like. “How did you win? Even outnumbered by a couple of warlocks we should have easily taken you. With my runes I should have been easily

twice as fast and strong as any warlock. But I couldn't land a single hit, it was like none of them was working!"

"That's right, none of them were working. I turned them off," Lysanias bragged, coming over to the man. He knelt down in front of the man. "See, if you weren't a follower of Valentine you would know all about the new techniques I've been teaching the people here. But no, you had to follow a man based on hatred and division instead of unity and understanding. So you get nothing."

"It's impossible, you can't *turn off* somebody's runes like that! Not without just cutting them!"

"Yeah, even I don't know what you're talking about," Jia told him.

"Ah, thank you for reminding me," Jace told him. "We'll need to cut all their runes before we leave here, just in case." He got out a knife and went to the first person in the line. He made a slice, making the man wince, but he didn't cry out. He was an elite warrior after all. He wasn't going to show weakness, especially in front of *downworlders*.

"It may be impossible but I've done it. You experienced it yourself. And here's what I'm going to do for an encore, another impossible thing. Let's see what's in that head of yours." He gripped the sword in one hand and put his other on the man's hand, directing his mental energies towards him.

Inside the man's head he started poking around for information about Valentine and where he was hiding out. Naturally this guy wasn't as sophisticated as Clary, so he wasn't put into a whole inner landscape with tiny representations of people running around. He was just in a messy house, where each object had a significance to him. The man tried to block him, even tried erecting walls across the doors but Lysanias was bolstered by Ragnarok, and smashed through them. The problem was this guy didn't know anything.

"He doesn't know," he reported, coming out of it. "Valentine doesn't bring many to the main hideout, for obvious reasons. I'll check the others but it's unlikely they've seen it either. The best we can do is look at their phones, see if any 'texts' show a clue." *I did see him trying to hide that information from me, so it might be relevant. Or maybe he just has some private pictures from his girlfriend.*

"Pity," Isabelle said. "I was hoping to give Clary some good news tonight."

"I'm not dead," Jace reminded her. "Isn't that good news?"

"I'll call her now, tell her we're all okay. She must be worried." She got out her phone and started dialing.

"How are we transporting these guys?" Alec asked, looking around. "We can't exactly put them in a truck and drive them somewhere."

"I didn't make any arrangements to handle prisoners," Jia told them. "We need to take them to the city of bones. We have cells there that can hold them. The question is how."

Yes, that's what he asked. How.

"The brothers will be pleased when we drop in unannounced," the shadowhunter to her left said. "But at least we'll bring a gift."

"Fine. We can take them out of the warded area and put them in contain wards. For now, can I get a couple of those blades and steles?" *I want to have a few, and really I should start gathering things in each world I go to. Like circlets that enhance magic. I'll have to at least bring back a stele to see if artificers on my world can use them. Having*

a few to study to make more would be a big help. And if mine got broken, again a spare or three wouldn't go amiss.

"You knocked out three, I suppose their stuff is yours?" Alec told him, handing him three blades and then three steles.

"Thank you."

"Hey, you can't steal our stuff!" the one said.

Lysanias ignored him. Then got an idea and cast some magic. "Let my skill be augmented!" He then went down the line again, feeling them out to see if any felt out of place. None did. "Dang, none of them are the one I want, not that it would be some random guy. Are you going to hold that cup forever, or what?"

"But... The Mortal Cup must remain with us!"

Lysanias looked at her. "I'm going to do something, I don't want you to react to it, okay?"

"What are you..."

"It's fine." *I'm just speaking into your mind, that's all. I don't want anyone else to hear this.*

She gasped. "You can do that too? But you're not a silent brother! Who are you?"

"Maybe I'm the black sheep of the family, the really loud silent brother," he replied with a chuckle. *Anyway, the thing is, and this is very, very important, you can't react to this okay? Much depends on it. Are you ready?*

She nodded.

That cup is a fake. We still don't know where the real one is.

She gasped.

For all we know, one of your aids there is working for Valentine. If it got out at this point the cup was a fake, all other plans of ours are off. Valentine wouldn't come. He must come believing this is the real cup he so desires if we're going to capture him. He won't come after a fake. Do you understand? For now the story is the cup is back in the case that can't be smashed or unlocked expect by us, and you'll be transporting it from somewhere else you feel is safer. Naturally this will be another 'open secret' so Valentine tries again.

She looked to her sides, obviously trying to figure out what was safe to say if they were spies. "But he'll come with even more forces this time!" she decided on.

Yes. You'll notice that there were only supposed to be eight people at this meeting; four warlocks and four artificers. Valentine sent ten, a clear numeric advantage. But I figured that's what he would do, and our numbers swelled to twelve.

She looked around, counting, and as he was telling the truth, she nodded again.

So next time we make sure to have twenty people. I just hope one of them isn't working for the other side, so my ability to turn off runes stays a surprise. Do you understand? If so the cup please.

"Very well." She handed it over and Lysanias got his wand out again.

"Become Unbreakable," he cast, tracing a wand pattern over it.

"Magic, mental abilities, turning runes off... Who are you?" she repeated.

"Come to the New York institute sometime and I'll tell you. For now, let's get these guys out of here. One at a time, pass them through the door, and keep a good hold on them until I secure them."

One by one the men were stripped of cell phones, various weapons, keys, anything found on their person and buttoned up inside contain wards. Before sticking them in a ward Lysanias took a quick trip into their minds, but was disappointed to learn nothing new. The warlocks took the cup back to be “secured” again, vanishing through a portal they created. The ones left behind had been busy fixing the windows with magic, and healing their own because they couldn’t have angelic runes put on themselves. The artificers could, and everyone on the side of good was back to full health again. Jia thanked the owner for the use of the place, and Lysanias slipped him a little gold “in case they found anything else broken” and “for their trouble.”

“You’re always welcome here!” they said in return, making the blob disappear.

The group made their way to the nearest entrance to the city of bones, and Lysanias felt a chill rising up from below as he descended the staircase. The shadowhunters got out sunlight daggers or stone that glowed, something Lysanias was fairly interested in.

Have to get a sample of whatever that is, too.

The warlocks of course had to wait outside, and Jia didn’t even want Lysanias going down there but as he held the ten contain wards she had no choice. The group crept down a musty staircase, past cobwebs and rough, dirt walls, down to a landing. There they saw a statue of an angel and were met by a very tall, bald man that looked like he had at some point submitted to having his eyes and mouth *sewn shut*.

To what do we owe this visit? The man’s words rang in the minds of all present.

Ah, a silent brother. They take that sort of thing seriously, huh? A little too seriously. But really, is he an ESPer and not an artificer or is he both? I mean how did he just do that, and to so many? Practice maybe?

“We come with prisoners,” Jia informed him. “Please lead us below.”

The man leaned over, looking the shadowhunters over. *I see no prisoners. Unless some of your number have come willingly?*

“Believe me, it’s been that sort of day. Can you just do it, please?”

Very well. This way.

“What exactly is this place?” Lysanias asked Isabelle. As they walked, he looked at the stone columns carved with runes and writing he couldn’t make out in the low light. Water dripped from the walls and he wished he could take the armor off again, it was quite chilly down where they were going. More statues of angels could also be seen, and the brother turned down a staircase to a lower level.

“Lots of things,” she explained. “Our dead are buried here, and the silent brothers are keepers of lore.”

“You keep books in a damp cave?”

The library section is kept dry.

“I see.”

The cells were basically a small room covered by a rusty gate, and the brother, somewhat mockingly, bowed them down the corridor. *Are you perhaps going to walk into the cells yourself? If so I will be sure to close the doors behind you.*

“Don’t get cute,” Jia scolded him. “Even silent brothers don’t know everything. Learned that one the hard way.”

“Now, now, let’s not be too hard on them,” Lysanias cautioned her. “Get ready, I’ll let the first one out into this cell. In fact, let’s close the door first. That doesn’t matter to the ward, they’ll just appear in front of it.”

The silent brother, with as much as an expression of amazement as one that looks like a potato can, closed and locked the door. Lysanias held up the ward and said “Release,” letting the guy out. He tumbled forward, looking around like he was glad to see the inside of the cell instead of the inside of the odd space created by the ward.

“I thought I was dead,” he managed. “I really did.”

“No such luck,” Lysanias told him. “You have a lot to answer for.”

“A silent brother?” he asked, turning around. “How did I get here?”

“Oh sure, I’ll just explain it then, shall I?” He walked away, down to the next cell, and they repeated that procedure another nine times.

My apologies, it seems I don’t know everything. That was the most amazing thing I’ve seen in some time.

“That’s fine,” Jia replied with a smirk. “As long as we learn something new every day, a single page can be torn from the book of our own ignorance by the time we die.”

There’s no need to be personal about it. Who are these men?

“Circle members,” she spat. “Don’t be hesitant about draining them dry. I know,” she turned to Lysanias who was about to protest that wasn’t necessary. “You say they don’t know anything. Well, I don’t know you, so I don’t trust you. Or maybe you just missed something. Either way I want the brothers to find out.”

We shall employ the Sword of Truth at once in their interrogation.

Sword of truth... “If you can hold down your bloodthirst for just a moment, I want to make sure these people are actually secure,” Lysanias told them.

I assure you, they will not escape.

“Not on their own, perhaps. But maybe someone will come for them. Ever think of that? We just walked in here, there was a solitary guard at the door, and we passed no one else on the way down. Valentine pays a visit, what’s to stop him from just walking down here himself? You? Now maybe you’re a great fighter, but even you can’t hold off a whole group.” He went over to the bars and touched them, opening himself up to whatever impressions about the future this place had for him. “Yeah, there’s a rescue attempt. I can get an exact time if you can hold on a few minutes.”

How do you know this?

“I stopped asking,” Jia told him. “Just let the man work for now. We can get the hows and whys later.”

“Appreciate it.” Lysanias sat down on the floor, taking the time to put some augmentation magic on himself, because he didn’t want this to take all day.

Universe I ask you this question: In how many hours will an attempt be made to rescue these men?

Fourteen

“Okay, we have about thirteen hours to prepare for an assault on this place,” Lysanias told them. “Luckily for you all, I think I have a few ideas we can use to get anyone that walks in to rescue these guys to instead walk into cells of their own volition. The silent brother gave me the idea.” He smiled and started outlining the plan.

Chapter 24

Cheese in the Trap

When: No time has passed

Where: Lower level of the City of Bones

Lysanias stood before the group, eyes shining because he knew, he just knew, that he had the perfect plan. He was going to get them to turn themselves in, and capture them without risk to anyone. "For my plan to work though, we'll need some magic. I'll be back in a second." He concentrated, envisioning the outside of the city or more specifically the doorway. *As no one will be standing in the doorway, or so I hope.* He *shifted* and appeared there, the warlocks spinning to see what the noise was. "Can you come with me a second?" he asked Magnus. "I need to know if you can do some magic for me. You and the other warlocks."

"Of course. But what was that noise?"

Lysanias grabbed his arm. "Just me teleporting." He *shifted* again, back to the place they had just come from. Off to the side, just in case someone was standing where he had been.

"Yaaaa!" everyone shouted as he appeared again.

"Show off," Isabelle chided him.

"Just saving some time," he told her. "I'd have gotten lost trying to walk back up to the surface again."

"Wha? Wha?" Jia managed.

I think my senses are being- is that a warlock?

"Yes, yes, sacred space and all that. He'll be respectful, believe me. Look, come this way." Lysanias started off back down the corridor and took a different passage. Looking back he nodded, then walked to another group of cells. "Excellent. Yes, this will do nicely."

"What will do nicely?" Jia asked, finally recovering. "How did you do that?"

Thought you had given up asking? the brother mentally said, still somehow conveying a trace of amusement.

"I gave up giving up. Just answer the question! You just vanished and a second later returned with Magnus! That wasn't a portal, you just, whoosh, and then you blamb!"

"Yeah, he was right outside waiting for us. Now, as to the plan. You guys," he pointed to the silent brother, "are going to be making yourselves scarce in thirteen hours. Until then we're going to make it look like something attacked this place. Fake blood everywhere, gashes in the walls, the whole bit. Leading down to this place. I'll put ignore me wards on that passage so they for sure don't go down it, but instead go down this one. The blood will lead them this way too. That's where you come in." He turned to Magnus. "Hopefully you know some decent illusion spells and can make it look like these cells have been broken into and those circle members we captured are inside, slashed to ribbons. Not dead, mind you, still moving, but weak and inches from death."

"With enough warlocks we can probably manage that," he admitted. "We'll have to go over the spell, all of them may not know it."

"You have thirteen hours."

“Brilliant,” Alec breathed. “They’ll rush forward to try and save their companions, going into each cell. We just step out behind them and close the door we know is there. They’ll be trapped and not a single person will be injured.”

“Exactly,” Lysanias praised. “That’s the idea.”

“It was well reasoned, you’re very good at tactical thinking,” Magnus praised, putting a hand on Alec’s arm.

“Oh, well, I’m not, it’s just, you know, and, um…” He trailed off.

Do I feel a bit of embarrassment perhaps?

This man seems to be giving orders, Consul, and as far as I can tell the plan is sound, but what are your orders? Are we to open our hallowed halls to warlocks this day?

She stared at him a moment, mouth set in a line. “Today they’re shadowhunters,” she allowed. “They put themselves in the same risk we did. They helped capture dangerous men, and are working with us the same as any Nephilim. From what I can see there’s no difference us and them. Tell the others, get to work.”

He bowed and moved off to get things ready.

In the thirteen hours they had Lysanias made a few more ‘ignore me’ wards back at the institute, and had Clary make a bunch as well. He put them around the entrance to the one hallway, while the others he handed out to each person.

“Just stick it on,” he told those that didn’t know. “And will yourself not to be seen. Then don’t try to attract attention and they should walk right past you. Interact with them, and it’ll burn up and you’ll be visible, so don’t let them touch you. Warlocks will be maintaining illusions of screams and the sounds of some kind of attack, along with the nearly dead circle members in each empty cell. With some luck we’ll catch them all at once and deprive Valentine of even more people. He’ll have to come himself the next time, and he’ll be cautious because two parties have already been sent and didn’t return.”

With about an hour to go Lysanias blocked off passageways leading to the armory and the library, just in case the rescuers got it in their heads to wander around. In this way they would walk right past them without even realizing there was a way to go. He then made it look even more realistic, using earth bending to crack the walls and fire bending to scorch them.

I want these guys scared of whatever did this, like they’ve never been frightened before. They’ll be so relieved to see their people clinging to life they’ll rush forward to get them out of here before whatever is doing all this comes back to the cell area for fresh victims.

With that done he went down and absorbed energy from the circle members, put his own ‘ignore me’ ward on, and waited for the show to begin.

Not long after five people cautiously made their way into the dungeon area in a tight formation. They felt and looked nervous, but their relief was clear as they looked into the cells. The warlocks were really going all out, making the illusionary circle members stretch out their hands pleadingly, faces and clothing torn so it was a wonder they were still alive. Four went for the bait immediately leaving one man standing guard in the passageway, sword out and trying to look in both directions at once. When he was looking the other way Lysanias reached out with the force and easily yanked the

man off his feet and into the air. He cried out as the bars of the cells clanged shut, four hands smoothly twisting the key that was already in the lock. The four sprang up to rattle the door, the illusion vanishing from each room.

“I don’t suppose this is Valentine?” Lysanias asked hopefully.

“It’s not him, none of these people are,” Jia answered tiredly.

“Pity.” Lysanias tossed him in the nearest cell and closed the door, and he sprang for the bars.

“What’s going on?” he demanded.

“Thanks for coming,” he told the man. “Your compassion for your fellow circle members does you credit. But you’ll be a guest here for a while. Get comfortable.”

“What are you talking about?” the man screamed. “Something attacked this place! You can’t just stand there!”

Lysanias couldn’t help himself, he started laughing.

“It was all a trick, wasn’t it? And we walked right into it.”

“Afraid so. Fifteen circle members in one day. Not a bad little showing if I do say so myself. And no deaths, on either side. Well done, all of you.”

“I still would have preferred a straight up fight,” Jace complained.

“A fact that no doubt makes you a terrible shadowhunter,” Lysanias told him. “You have to be flexible, and use direct force as a last resort. You can’t tell me you would prefer the risk of actually dying to what you saw happen just now, where they imprisoned themselves.”

“It’s worked for me so far.”

“But Sebastian,” one of the men said. “I saw him here. Where is he?”

“Safe, just in another hallway,” Lysanias promised him. “Now, if you would be so kind as to toss out any weapons, stele, phones, etc?”

“And if we refuse?” asked another.

“Well, you can keep the weapons but there will be guards. Trying to use a stele or a phone may get you...” He gestured to Alec, who was pulling back an arrow.

“Just asking!” they assured him, tossing stuff out of the cell.

“We can really keep our weapons though?” another asked.

“Sure. You can trade them for your next meal. Those that give them up right now will be fed on a regular schedule. Think it over. How many weapons do you have? That’s how many meals you get if you hang on to them.”

The weapons came flying out too.

“Well done. Now.” He went over to one and again opened himself up to the impressions of the future. He stood a moment, sifting through things. “No, I don’t think there will be a rescue any time soon. Valentine will want to know what happened today before he tries again. The normal guard can be posted.”

“I’ll tell the brothers,” Isabelle offered, moving off in that direction.

Not much more needed to be said to them, but Lysanias did rattle the doors, make sure they would hold. *After all, if they can hold up against my strength, they can hold up against just about anything.*

“Warlocks, in the City of Bones?” one of them said as Magnus passed. “I never thought I would see the day. Unbelievable, that shadowhunters have fallen so low. Valentine is right, the clave is weak and corrupt!”

He stopped. "You do recall how it was warlock magic that tricked you into going into that cell in the first place, right? We're stronger together."

"That's what a weakling *would* say."

"And yet, I can walk out of here a free man. Strange definition of strength you have there."

"Valentine will come for us. We'll see all you downworlders dead so the mortal world really is safe. You'll see."

Really is what? Safe? From what, demons? Does he think killing cambions will stop demons from coming into the world? I'll have to remember to ask Valentine what this guy meant after we capture him.

"Boy, I've been alive a long time, and I've heard a lot of people claim a lot of things. But I'm still here. So you just keep telling yourself that."

"I'll get out of here and kill you myself!"

"Heard it before. Oh, I've got an idea!" He snapped his fingers. "I know this charming fey girl, known her forever, and she makes the most delicious vegetarian food. With her own two hands. Why don't I have her make all your meals, and deliver them too? When she's holding your very survival in her hands will you thank her for the effort she put in, or keep talking like you're talking to me? The fey aren't as forgiving as cambions are, you know."

"I'd rather die than eat food prepared by a fairy!"

"Die then, it makes no difference to me. But then how you will escape this cell and fulfill your promise? Are your words nothing but dust? I thought you were going to take my life? Eat the food, thank the girl for it so she brings you more, and remember your oath. I'll be waiting." He walked off.

"That was mean," Alec said to him.

"You think so? Maybe I went too far, but he does have a choice to make. Thank the girl, and maybe a grudging thanks may turn into a real one someday, when he realizes what she makes really is the best. Or die, for his pride and stubbornness against one he feels is beneath him. Perhaps, now that this is over for the moment, we could discuss it over a drink? I know this quaint little place not too far from here..."

"Uh, okay?"

"Splendid! Let's get out of this dreary place and go celebrate our victory!"

Alec found himself being whisked away, and Lysanias hid a grin. *I wonder if he knows what he's in for? What I was feeling from that warlock...*

The brothers now out of hiding and the passageways cleared of wards the group broke up, heading back to their respective lives. "Don't go too far, I'll want all your help again for round 3. Hopefully the knockout round."

They agreed fighting by his side would be an honor and left, leaving the New York shadowhunters to head back to the institute for some rest. Jia made it clear she was heading there with them.

"It's fine with us," Jace told her.

"I wasn't asking."

Now back, she dismissed her guards and told them to get some rest, then practically dragged Lysanias to a conference room and locked the door.

“You’re that angel my inquisitor was babbling about, aren’t you?” she demanded without preamble.

“Unless she regularly babbles about angels, probably,” he admitted. “But I’m no angel, not really. Just a little closer to the angelic template, if you will, than most humans.”

“So she said. She said we should reinforce you, but we had no one to spare. And I didn’t quite believe her, not really. Oh, the fact that downworlders-”

Lysanias scowled.

“The fact that those that are not Nephilim-”

“Cambions.”

“All right, cambions then. The fact they were being trained as ‘shadowhunters’ concerned me, but honestly I see how working together, at least with warlocks, can produce some astonishing results. And once the other cities started requesting reinforcements and we had none to spare, the inquisitor said ‘Ask any cambions in the area, I bet they’ll be more than willing to help.’ *And that worked.* We’re holding our own again, despite the fact they can’t finish demons off. It’s getting worse out there, with demonic attacks all over the place almost every night. Honestly, what were we thinking when we put ourselves above them just because we can use runes? This world is just as much theirs as it is ours, why shouldn’t they help protect it?”

“Strangely, I seem to recall saying something similar some time ago.”

“So it’s all true then, what she said? The wings, and the shadow avatar, and all of it?”

“I’m afraid so. This increase in demon attacks is probably the shadow avatar, but all the information I have is on this Valentine character. I think we’re close to bringing him in, which should get us the cup back. With that out of the way we can make more artificers, train them to make wards, which will help everyone stay alive. They don’t need combat training to help, so there’s no risk of losing them sending them against demons. Then we worry about your demon problem and the source of it.”

“You really think you’re close?”

“He just lost fifteen followers today. That’s got to be a blow, I mean how many people can he really have? Until he has the cup I would guess losing even one is a setback. It’s also telling that he sent ten to get the cup, but only five to rescue the ten.”

“Which either says he places less value on their lives, or he didn’t have more to spare.”

Or he thought they would be practically unguarded, which they would have been. So five would be enough. “Exactly. We don’t know which it was, true, but either way he’s hurting. He’ll want to come himself next time to make sure there are no screw ups.”

She considered. “I can’t fault your confidence, or what I’ve seen you do today. Plus getting Nephilim to work with Cambions, I never thought that would happen no matter the circumstances. It seems you have been the catalyst of much change since you arrived here.”

Is my sword purring? I could swear it was purring. “I’m just trying to give you the best chance of survival. Working together accomplishes that.”

“To be sure. I have a request.”

“Yes?”

“These wards? Will you share with me the secret of their creation? The reason I ask is because we have an as yet untapped resource. Children. There are many

children too young to fight, but who are still shadowhunters. If they could learn to make these wards, and make a few a day, more lives could be saved. We could start a class in them, then just hand out the ones that they make should they prove to be good enough.”

Ah, unpaid labor, for the experience I guess. “That’s not a bad idea,” he admitted, pulling out his padform. *Insofar as getting them thinking with wards and starting the next generation off on the right foot.* “Give me your email address, and I’ll send you the information I sent Simon. It’s not hard, but it does take practice to make them super effective.” *As I found out when that one guard saw me that one time. That was scary.* “Focus on shotgun shells, we’ve found they work and can let Cambions kill demons.”

“All right, shotguns it is...” She gave him the address and he forwarded the packet. “Wait a second. Simon!”

“What about him? He’s fine, last I heard, warding his house against demonic intrusion.”

“No, no. If the cup is fake, how did you make Simon into a shadowhunter? We tested him- was that you under some kind of glamor?” She looked horrified. “Can *you* make people shadowhunters?”

“No, nothing like that. But I do have an answer, if you want it. Oh boy, are you sure you’re ready for this? You’ve had a lot of shocks today.”

“Just tell me,” she told him, defeated. “What’s one more bombshell?”

“The cup is not what makes people artificers. Only the angel can do that. Holding the cup gets his attention, allows him to know someone is ready to be given the power. Drinking from it is pointless. If he feels the person is worthy, they get the power, otherwise they get dead. That’s how it really works. Honestly, how would a cup, even a talisman, give people the power to make wards and such? That wouldn’t even make sense.”

“But the cup is still lost. Yet Simon was given the power, that implies that you had the angel-” She broke off, a horrified look on her face.

Lysanias nodded his head, grinning. “He was very understanding when we spoke to him. We rescued one of his angels from Valentine, so he rewarded us with a few things. Simon was one of them, at Clary’s request.”

“You’re right, I shouldn’t have asked. Get me the time for the next meeting, I’ll see you later.” She stumbled out of the room.

Hope she’s all right. “Of course.”

It had been a long day so Lysanias went to go get some sleep, having missed the normal time due to all the excitement of the day. But he was up the next morning asking when the next attack would come and he got an answer of

Seventy Two

when he asked the universe “How many hours until the next attack?”

Guess there’s work to do.

Chapter 25

Face to Face

When: Three days later

Where: An empty warehouse by the docks

The last three days had again been busy for Lysanias, but at least this time he had basically all the help he wanted. The story had spread that fifteen circle members had been captured and that wards had been at least partly responsible. Interest in them was quite high, so there was an almost fevered rush to come up with new ones to help the shadowhunters do their jobs better. Most popular were the sunlight bursts, in both forms, which were credited with saving more than one shadowhunter life as demonic attacks in the city continued. Clary, he found, was typically swarmed with well-wishers, telling how one demon or another had been driven off or killed thanks to them. She seemed pleased with the attention. *Almost greedy for it, one might say?*

The next “secret” meeting was scheduled to be held by the river, basically a neutral point to hand the cup over. As the warlocks and shadowhunters had already accepted the “terms” for it being returned the one faction simply had to hand it over to the other in a place and time the circle “wouldn’t know about.” Naturally Jia “carelessly” left a draft of the note on her desk for several hours after she needed to step out, and the universe told Lysanias that had done it. They would attack the place on schedule, just like last time.

It’s only after that we’ll ask who the spy is. Don’t want them missing a check in time or something and blowing the whole thing.

“But why here?” Clary had asked, while putting the wards up inside the warehouse. Dim lights swung overhead and the place was dusty and empty. “This place is huge, it’ll take twice the wards to cover it.”

“For the same reason,” he explained. “At least, that’s what I think. If we had done it out in the country someplace could Valentine be so bold as to attack? Say we picked a lonely farmhouse a mile from anywhere and the time was noon. Okay, put a spotter balloon in the air and you can see anyone coming a mile away. Who would be foolish enough to attack a place like that? Plus the roads could be trapped, there’s probably only two doors because the windows will probably be blocked off. All sorts of ways to prevent a lot of people from getting in at once. But here, I mean look at the number of windows this place has? And the size of the loading doors- you can get several people through with them open. Plus even empty there’s a lot of places to hide in here, you can use the support beams for cover for example. Many approaches to the place with lots of cover so it’s hard to guard all of them.”

“So you’re saying if we were transferring the real cup we would meet in a park someplace, or a bridge over a small stream or on the roof of a building, during the day. Then just hand over a wrapped package, and quietly go our separate ways. Maybe just wander around Disney World all day looking for a guy with a particular shirt on, but there’s a dozen people in the park with that shirt on, all shadowhunters, all spaced out. Each warlock, only one with the real cup, sits next to the first shadowhunter he sees and “accidentally” switches bags with them, so no one is even sure where the real cup is. As long as the bag with the real cup, which has a marking of some kind the warlocks know of is the hands of a shadowhunter when the park closes, boom, mission accomplished. But because we *want* him to show up here, we do it at night, where there’s plenty of ways he can approach the place? Basically it’s an invitation to attack.”

“Exactly. We want them to think they can get in and get out, when really we’re in control of the whole situation.”

"I almost wish we could let him get away with the cup," she sighed. "I would pay a lot to see his face when the first person goes to drink from it and nothing happens."

"Clary, that would be so mean!" he teased her. "You're a terrible person!"

"I know! But couldn't you see it? He's made some grand speech to a bunch of hopeful shadowhunters, and the first person has stepped up, and taken a sip, and they just stand there looking like an idiot. You think they would turn on him?"

"Maybe. It would be pretty funny. If we could put something on the cup that let it be tracked, that would be ideal."

"Er, how are we getting the location from him? He's not dragging my mother around, I don't think. And he won't just tell us."

"Same way I helped you. Entering your mind."

"Oh right, that would work. I forget you can do stuff like that."

Simon was also a common sight around the institute, now that he had been "outed" as an artificer. Naturally he had exclaimed over the whole operation, from the weapons to the demon tracking systems they employed by running their own camera network around the city. He didn't feel confident enough in his ward making skills to contribute to the warehouse warding but threw himself into the various lessons he was offered with a passion. His enthusiasm was somewhat infectious, with other artificers now seeing the place through the eyes of someone coming from outside their world. He seemed a fairly intelligent person, never needing to have something explained twice, and had good ideas all around.

One of these was a D&D campaign, of all things, which he called a "tactical demon hunting simulator." He wanted to get artificers to "role play" vampires or other cambions for a time in order to get them working more as a team. As the real demons of the world could be substituted for the imaginary (some of them anyway) creatures of the game, he felt it might reveal certain tactics and ways of working together in a non-life threatening way by forcing, for example, artificers to think like a werewolf and what they could do in a situation. Several people were interested so he said he would work on a "campaign" for them.

Strangely, Isabelle signed up right away, though Jace said he couldn't be bothered. Alec said he would look into it if the first time went well, but couldn't understand why Isabelle was so excited about it.

"To tell the truth, I'm not sure either," she admitted. "I mean, Simon? Come on, he's Clary's friend right? But I still feel..."

She couldn't really put into words what she was feeling. This of course made Lysanias sigh and think *Great, I probably changed their history somehow...*

But once again the time came, and once again Lysanias sat with Jia and the chunk of gold ready to unlock the case. The warlocks portled it in, appearing at the far wall and walking towards the table they had set up.

"Perhaps we won't be interrupted this time," Magnus chided the shadowhunters that were guarding Jia. "That is, if your tight lipped buddies there have kept their lips tight. And speaking of tight lips, is Alec around here someplace? I'd like to see him again once we hand the cup over and this whole business is behind us."

"We're not a dating service, Magnus. Get that case open so we can conclude our business here." Jia gestured to Lysanias, snapping and pointing at it.

"Ah, but work and pleasure combined?" he countered. "That seems like the way to go. But very well, get it unlocked. Of course, I'll hang onto the gold." He held his hand out.

"Careful, it's heavy," Lysanias teased, pointing to his head.

"I remember from the last time."

He handed it over and got his wand out. "End incantation," he cast, pointing it. Magnus nodded, set the gold down and took out his key. Slipping it in he gave the key a twist but as he did something strange started happening. The room started to darken, and magical energy crackled a little distance from the table.

"Save my gold!" Magnus over acted, throwing himself over the chunk.

"What's happening?" Jia demanded.

"Demonic teleportation," Magnus told them, straightening up. He raised his hands, which were now glowing with magical energy. "Be ready for anything!"

With a boom figures appeared in the room, what looked like several circle members in a ring pointing arrows (that were also on fire) outward. Inside the ring were various demonic forms, each looking large, dangerous, and all too eager to take on a bunch of puny mages and shadowhunters that didn't have any active runes.

The circle members loosed, but as powers were cut off, Lysanias couldn't use bending or the force to knock them off course. They didn't speed towards anyone in the room, however, instead they sailed outward-

"Towards the wards!" Lysanias shouted. *We didn't bother hiding them, there was no need.* "They're going to-" At least one arrow struck a ward and caught it on fire, making it burn and taking out the whole set.

All that work for nothing. I don't believe- now what?

Another demon was using magic, Lysanias could feel it. He started to shout "Stop that demon!" but the demon wasn't casting a spell, just releasing a magic they had already cast. In a blink, everything changed. The circle members now had swords rather than bows in their hands, and Lysanias could feel active powers from them. They were also in position around the room, having instantly (so it seemed to him) gone from one place to the other.

Crap, crap, crap, crap! What the heck just happened?

There were also three demons before him, smiling and poised to strike. One looked like a giant snake with many heads, another a "typical" demon with leathery wings and goat's legs, while the third was simply a hideous looking creature about his height but with with bony protrusions all over its body. It carried a strange looking weapon that looked hand crafted, with many jagged edges and the bones and teeth of animals stuck to it in various locations. Also there was an older man, scowling at him as though he wanted to skewer Lysanias personally. He saw the other demons and the circle members moving to engage those that were there, when suddenly his reinforcements stepped into the place.

Good thing I insisted many more shadowhunters accompany us this time. We're going to need the help.

With his abilities restored Lysanias figured his best first move would be to get a bit more protection between himself and these demons. So he threw up the strongest lifestreaming barrier he could, shimmering green around himself, Isabelle, and the nearest shadowhunter, one of Jia's guards.

"You can attack through it!" he called to them.

"Got it," called the guy behind him, whipping a knife at the circle member. The man sidestepped it.

"If only your runes were working!" he taunted.

"Will it hold?" Magnus shouted, magic ready to release.

"You better believe it!"

“Don’t blame me if you die!” He flourished his hands and a ball of fire erupted from just behind the three demons, splashing against the barrier. The devil looking demon didn’t seem to even care, the ugly one to the right looked pleased and cried “yes, hurt me more!” while the nine serpent heads of the snake looking demon swiveled to look at Magnus. It didn’t even look scratched.

“Oh dear,” he muttered.

Little help here? Lysanias requested of his spirit.

You’re kidding, right? the spirit answered, but appeared behind them.

Good, now for the other, because I’ll probably want the sword. “Rosalina, let our spirits work together to protect all people! Bankai!”

Humm? was the only sense he got that she was paying attention to his call.

Come on, I need you!

“Can’t let you do that, warlock,” said the man near Lysanias, turning to look over at Magnus. He swung, but Magnus knocked the blade away with magic.

“You’re two hundred years too young to fight me.”

The demon before Lysanias shot fire at the barrier, but it splashed off harmlessly. Meanwhile the snake demon had turned away, since the warlock was being dealt with, and was pounding it with its nine heads, trying to get through.

Yeah, keep trying, this barrier was augmented by the sword.

Suddenly the dog looking demon howled, and three wolves appeared behind the three that had surrounded it.

Wonderful. Well, can’t help you, so hope you can deal.

The mountain spirit, facing the serpent which towered over it, started to grow.

Good plan, that thing is going to be a pain to take down. Come on, Rosalina, get out here!

I hear you.

The wand vanished, replaced by the figure of Rosalina, dressed for battle. She was wearing a variant of her kart racing outfit rather than her gown, which wasn’t really practical for the situation. “I agree, let’s save the world!” She twirled around.

Meanwhile the serpent noticed the spirit and whirled around, heads striking but bouncing off the invulnerability enjoyed by the spirit.

Whew.

So it simply lunged, trying to wrap it up and keep the spirit occupied.

The winged demon, realizing the fire wasn’t getting it anywhere stopped, and gave a wicked grin. It started casting, and Lysanias realized magic was now gathering inside the barrier.

“Barrier is breached!” he shouted, lunging for the thing. The barrier winked out as he did, and he hoped this worked. *Only chance to disrupt the casting and save Isabelle and that other guy is get him before he gets the spell off!*

As he had the wand in his hand a second ago and hadn’t had time to get the sword out yet he prayed his skill with the shield was enough and slashed at the thing with the edge of it. He was, and by sheer chance caught the demon’s head, slicing through it like it wasn’t even there. The demon managed a raised eyebrow of surprise and vanished into arid smoke. With his other hand, Lysanias grabbed the sword and was ready to take on anything.

Thank you, increased strength, and Terra’s world for making it possible.

He saw before him an artificer trying to fend off the claws and magic of a second winged demon, only a few meters away. While he wasn't wearing the shoes at the moment, having chosen both the ring and the bracelet for this fight, he was still more than fast enough to get over there and chop that demon's head off with the sword. He couldn't miss with it, and the demon had nothing to block with so a second later it vanished into smoke too.

"You all right?" he asked.

"Get going, I'll use some healing runes and get back into it," said the artificer, realizing quite rightly that tying this guy up with trying to heal him would be a total waste.

"Got it."

He turned to see how his spirit was doing. It had grown again, ignoring the fangs of the serpent. He noticed a cloud of gas was starting to build up around the creature so the spirit saw it too. He started dragging the serpent away from the battle so whatever that was didn't start affecting anyone. This allowed him a straight shot to the demon fighting Isabelle, who was managing to stay far enough away given her longer range weapon.

So he dashed forward, sword at the ready. He swung, but the demon had a weapon of their own and knew how to use it. The two clashed, but Ragnarok easily sliced it in two and kept going. The edge wasn't quite right anymore and simply scratched the demon, who threw the now useless lower piece of their weapon away.

"You know how long I spent making that thing?" it complained.

"Don't know, don't care."

Isabelle's whip snaked out again, causing the demon to jump back, so Lysanias took this opportunity to slash it again. But the sword bounced off nothing, and Lysanias felt something akin to the force had just been used. *Man, this one is a tricky one.*

"Sleep," Rosalina cast, pointing her wand.

The demon dropped.

Ah, that works. He raised his sword, ready to plunge it into the chest of the demon.

"Wait!" Rosalina called, dashing to his side and grabbing his hand. "It's helpless."

"Yeah, hence I make with the stab-stab before he wakes up again."

"I know it came with the circle members, but maybe it's being compelled to do this. Just banish it, okay?"

He lowered the sword. "It's all the same to me, in the end. In the name of the emperor, depart from this place!"

The demon vanished.

"Great," Isabelle told him, snapping her whip. "But what do we do about that huge snake thing?"

"Ah." They all looked over at it, and the spirit was now as big as it could be, having to stoop so as to not bust out of the warehouse. It towered over the snake now, but the snake had nine heads while the spirit only two hands. Neither seemed to have an advantage.

"Look, you go help that guy," he told her, pointing to the right where a fey warrior was facing down a circle member. "All of me will handle this guy."

"I hope you know what you're doing." She moved off.

Yeah, me too. He looked around, the man that had been nearest him was now tied up with glowing ropes from Magnus and another warlock while two artificers slashed any runes they saw, making blood flow. *Is that really necessary to do right this second?* Several others were down, but it looked like with the more dangerous demons gone, their side had the advantage. He could safely take the snake on without needing to watch his back. *Somehow. Wait, of course! How did I learn to deal with angry spirits we couldn't reason with?*

He concentrated, resisting the urge to do the fluid like dance movements the originator of the technique did. There was no water to bend around here anyway. But energy started to flow from the demon into him, totally recharging him. It seemed the creature, as big as it was, didn't have a lot of energy to spare because Lysanias felt he had just captured half of it. So he threw energy into his will and tried again, so he would have "space" for the rest of it.

The demon slumped over, no longer struggling against the mountain spirit.

Gee, that was a lot easier than I thought it was going to be. I guess you just have to attack somebody where they're weakest, huh? "In the emperor's name, I command you to begone from this place!"

As it didn't matter how big the demon was, and as it couldn't resist as it was unconscious from the energy drain, the snake demon vanished as well. Lysanias looked around, noticing the group dispatching the dog looking demon, and the fight was basically over as the wolf like creatures vanished as it did. The circle members were now outnumbered, even with the losses their side had sustained, and all threw down their weapons and started to be tied up.

As Lysanias rushed to the side of his forces that were hurt or on the floor dying Jia stepped up to the man being bound by the two warlocks. "Valentine, we have you at last."

Chapter 26

Reluctant Truths

When: No time has passed

Where: Warehouse

“It seems you do,” the man named Valentine agreed, nodding to Jia. “Have me prisoner, that is. And it seems my demonic sources were correct. You’ve allied with the underworld and with a man from beyond our world.”

“The one you can plainly see,” Jia agreed, indicating Magnus. “But what’s this about a man from beyond our world?”

“Don’t play games with me. The demon world is in an uproar about the whole situation. When I summoned that demon of information they tripped all over themselves telling me the whole story. Usually they’re so tight lipped you have to summon them with a ready supply of crowbars to get their mouths open. But now? Not so much. They’re scared. And if demons of information are scared, the demon world hears about it, and everybody’s scared.”

“Of what?”

“Whatever that guy is.” He looked over at Lysanias, who was healing a warlock that had fallen in the combat. Another was dragging themselves over, arm shattered, and Lysanias hoped he could save it. He was being supported by two others, and his face was twisted in pain.

“Lysanias?”

“That’s right. Why do you think I’m here?”

“For the cup, of course!”

He snorted. “That fake? You can keep it.”

“What?”

“Oh, don’t act so surprised. I know you know it’s a fake. No, my goal changed once that demon started telling me what was going on. I need him.”

“So you were here to abduct him?”

“That’s right. He wouldn’t be expecting it, he would be expecting me to go for the cup. Not that it mattered, how did he get rid of those demons so fast? I picked some that were supposed to be good fighters. I mean, by the angel, if I had that kind of fighter from the beginning I would be ruling the Earth right now! Did you see him move?”

“Yes, he has various abilities. Look, I don’t care what kind of story you’re telling, you and your followers are going to prison.”

“Fine. Whatever. If we win at least it’ll mean there’s a prison for me to rot in. Just get to Jocelyn, have that guy wake her up, and get the cup back. We’re going to need all the help we can get.”

“Where is she?”

“Chernobyl. There’s some pictures of the place in my pocket, the demon said he would need them to teleport there. Take them and go, please.”

“Sounds like a trap,” Magnus cautioned.

“See? This is why I didn’t just show up and ask to join you!” Valentine told them, exasperated. “You wouldn’t believe me no matter what I said.”

“You’ve given us no reason to.” She checked his pockets and pulled out what looked like some photos. “These do look like Chernobyl would look, I suppose. How did you do it, anyway?”

“Do what?”

“The whole getting into position thing.”

“Oh, that. Those demons with the wings can do magic. I had one teleport us here, then the other was working on a spell to stop time. Once the wards were down we reactivated our runes, got into position, and he dropped the spell.”

“Time magic. Great.” She rolled her eyes. “What will they think of next?”

“I wouldn’t mind that spell,” Magnus offered.

“Me either,” the other agreed.

Me either. It might be one I could use all the time, too, meaning I wouldn’t mind having it bouncing around my head as a skyebourne spell. I could use it, get everything prepared for a fight, like getting my spirit and Rosalina out, put my armor on if it isn’t... Have to think about that one.

“Can we focus? Lysanias, get over here!”

“This guy’s arm was shattered, I’m rebuilding it, give me a second.”

With the wounded taken care of, moments later Lysanias stood before Valentine. Naturally the first thing, because he wouldn’t forget, the absolute first thing was to cheat his skill at determining who the shadow avatar was and check Valentine out very carefully.

“It’s not him,” he said cryptically. Jia knew what he meant, and nodded.

Which means there’s some demon out there, or some other person more feared than this guy who the shadow avatar took over. We’re still at square one. Wonderful.

“I don’t see Clary here, by the way,” he remarked into the silence. “Where is my daughter? I hope you’re keeping her safe.”

“Clary’s your-” He blinked. *Of course she is. Guy who was thought dead shows up. He’s considered an evil person. Turns out he’s the father of the girl I’m here to help, just like a certain black masked fellow was the father of Luke. But just how far do the similarities run? “I suppose she has a brother?”*

“Of course she does. Jace there.”

Jace looked over at him. “Say that again?”

“I’m your father, Jace.”

He laughed.

“You don’t believe me? But I can tell you things-”

“Save it,” Jace barked. “Clary has very red hair. Even I know how that works. You have brown hair, and I saw pictures of her mother who also had brown hair. I have *totally blond* hair. Not strawberry blond. Not light red. Your kids would be either brown haired three quarters of the time, or red haired one quarter of the time, because you obviously both carry recessive red haired genes. Not blond.”

“Oh. Really?”

“I’ve no idea,” Jia told him.

“Anyway, she does have a brother. You’ll all meet him soon enough, don’t worry. But back to Clary?”

What’s that supposed to mean?

“She’s not here. What, did you think I would include her in a mission where runes weren’t supposed to be working? She doesn’t have the training for that.”

“I see. Can I see her?”

“No. She’s not even going to be told. Is that clear?” Jia shouted. Everyone nodded. “If it’s even true, and not some lie for your own ends. We’ll look into it sometime. For now, Lysanias, if you would?”

“Of course.” He reached out and touched the man, going into his mind to see what was what. Valentine didn’t resist, and when he came out of it he had a grim expression. “He

believes Clary is his daughter, so she probably is. Jocelyn is at this Chernobyl place, there's no traps there. Apparently, with my end incantation spell from outside the world I can wake her up a lot more easily than they can. Apparently it's a really potent spell that's keeping her under. While he still has no more love for cambions than he did before, he doesn't want the world to end. He spoke to a very knowledgeable demon about it, and he has the facts correct. So he took this one last chance and is willing to drop out of things, for now, so that your efforts can be refocused on protecting humanity."

"That's noble of you," Jia told him, not sounding like she meant it at all.

"I want to keep the world safe, nothing more," Valentine insisted. "It's all I ever wanted, despite what despite what you may believe about me."

"The scary thing is, he means it," Lysanias told them. "He sees cambions as a disease that is spreading through humanity. That shadowhunters waste their energy dealing with politics and such when they should be fighting demons. If he could wipe out every werewolf and vampire no more would appear in the world, because that condition is literally passed from person to person."

"You cut out a tumor," Valentine insisted. "You don't welcome it into the body."

"Your tumor is living, breathing people," Jia told him.

"Vampires aren't alive."

"That's beside the point!"

"I don't think it is. Vampires and werewolves are what is wrong with the world!"

Jia barked a laugh. "No wait, I've heard that before someplace. Like Jewish people are what is wrong with the world. Or gay people are what is wrong with the world. You really think if those people were just slightly different, the world would be free of problems? It doesn't work like that!"

"Well, when you put it that way, it sounds like I'm Hitler."

"You are!"

He blinked at her, unable to dispute the point immediately.

"Whoever he is, you're not going to change his mind, and especially not here. Let me head to Chernobyl and get Jocelyn out, along with all the experiments he had going. Then we can get the cup and talk about our next move."

"Please, let me help!" Valentine insisted. "I want to protect the world!"

"Sadly, you lost that right. For now you're going inside a contain ward and we're delivering you to the silent brothers." She pulled one out. "Amazing how easily I say that, isn't it?" She slapped it on and he vanished. "So handy," she remarked, picking it up from where it had fluttered to the ground. "No matter what else you do, we owe you a huge debt just for these." She pocketed it. "Let's clean this place up and get out of here."

Some time later Lysanias, flanked by his mountain spirit, Rosalina, Clary, Isabelle, Magnus, Jace, and Alec appeared out of nowhere. Lysanias looked up from the picture he had been concentrating on, and nodded. "This seems to be the place." Making their way inside, but still alert for traps and such just in case, the group made their way inside. There were cages where half human shapes gibbered and wailed, and there, floating in mid-air, was Jocelyn. She had a shell of energy around herself and looked to be sleeping.

"Looks like she's sleeping! Do you think she's sleeping?" Clary asked anxiously.

"She's alive, I can feel it," Lysanias assured her. "Let's see about moving her to the table there, so she doesn't slam into the ground when we get that spell off her."

"Can you do it?" Magnus asked, waving his hands dramatically over the floating form of Jocelyn. She began to move and floated over to the table. "This does seem like a fairly strong spell."

“Good thing the wand magic I learned is equally powerful. Besides, Rosalina here is literally a wand, so I’m sure she can handle it.”

“The spell just cancels out all active spells,” she explained. “Some might say that’s overpowered, but I call it just right. Are we ready?”

“Please, get my mother back!” Clary pleaded.

“Of course, my dear. End incantation.” The bubble around Jocelyn popped, and she smacked the table, eyes flying open. She threw her legs over her head, intending to (Lysanias supposed) roll over and come to her feet. Sadly there was a metal cart right there which she smashed into, and instead went flying.

“Mom!” Clary called, as her mother groaned and stared up at the ceiling.

“Clary?” The others looked away as Clary embraced her mother, and Lysanias could feel the relief and happiness replacing worry and fear inside her. “Clary, you have to get out of here. The circle-”

“The circle is over,” she interrupted. “Valentine is behind bars by now, oh yeah, before I forget.” She pulled back and smacked her mother’s face, driving her to the ground again.

“What?” she croaked, shock and surprise radiating from her. Her hand was at her cheek, and she looked up at Clary who was now towering over her.

“That was for paying this guy,” she pointed at Magnus, “to feed my memories *to a demon*. And for not telling me about the supernatural world.”

“I was just trying to keep you safe,” she insisted, eyes starting to tear up.

“No, *training* me is keeping me safe. Ignorance is not safety. Knowledge is safety. Training is safety. I can do so many amazing things, *how could you keep that world from me?*”

Ah, this must be the dragon part of her talking. She’s greedy for the supernatural world and the power it can bring her. I hope I didn’t do wrong, installing that part of her in the booth.

“I’m so sorry, Clary. I really am, you have to believe me.”

“Come on,” Lysanias told her, giving Clary a shove. “Let’s give your mom some space, here, okay? Let’s get you off the floor, she won’t slap you again, I promise.”

“I don’t,” Clary muttered.

“Yes, you do.” He held out a hand and she took it. Easily hauling her up Jocelyn looked around. “Hi, Magnus,” she managed weakly.

“Jocelyn,” he allowed, not taking sides.

“Who are your friends? And why are you wearing a ball gown?”

Everyone looked back at Rosalina, who was back in her “default” outfit.

“What, I love this dress!” she insisted.

So she got introduced to everyone and Magnus suggested not staying there any longer than they had to. Lysanias agreed, the place felt wrong to him, and they “took care of” the experiments as needed. Banishing the demons, or outright killing anything that couldn’t be banished and didn’t show any signs of intelligence. Clary and her mom stood off to one side, talking, and finally Lysanias teleported the whole group back to the institute.

“Ah, you must be Jocelyn,” Jia greeted her, holding out a hand. “I’ve heard a lot about you from Clary. Good things. Glad to see you safe.”

“Thank you. Good to be... back?” She looked around, dropping Jia’s hand.

“Yes, this is the New York institute. The way Lysanias does things does take a little bit of getting used to. Anyway, I’m Jia Penhallow, current Consul of the clave.”

“Is it true? Is Valentine locked up?”

"It's true. He's alive so we'll have to figure out how he originally faked his death, but more importantly no longer a danger to the shadow world. Lysanias here has offered to track down any circle members that are left uncaught, and this institute has been offering what we used to call 'downworlders' a place as shadowhunters. So with luck, a man like him will never arise again."

"You've done what?"

"I know, it's a lot to take in. Things have been busy around here in the weeks you've been away. We'll get you back up to speed though, don't worry."

"Am I dreaming? Is this some trick by Valentine?"

"No trick. Though I could see how you might be skeptical. I'm not sure how I could really prove it to you."

"Come to think of it, when my daughter slapped me it was painful, so it can't be a dream."

"Clary slapped you?"

"And I'd do it again," she grumbled.

"Er, yes. Well, sorry to rush you, but nice as it is having a former shadowhunter back, you are here for one reason only. Where is the cup?"

She sighed. "I should have known. Clary, what did Luke get you for your tenth birthday?"

"My what?"

"It's something Valentine wouldn't know. You had known Luke for five years by then, what did he get you?"

"Let's see, two thousand and one, what was I into? I knew Simon by that time, wait, duh! Wasn't that the monster movie? That big hairy guy, the blue one. What was his name?"

"That's good enough, you're you."

"We can take you to the city of bones, show you Valentine in a cell," Jia suggested.

Jocelyn laughed. "Even if this was a dream, and I showed you, you would still have to convince me to get the cup for you. Just knowing where it is won't do you any good."

"Okay?"

"Clary, do you have those tarot cards I made?"

"What, those ugly things? I threw them into the fire, they reminded me of you."

"You did?!?" Jocelyn stepped back in shock, hands flying over her mouth. "Oh no!"

Now it was Clary's turn to laugh. "Gotcha, mom. I'll go get them." She headed to her room. Jocelyn stared at her retreating form, totally unsure how to feel if Lysanias was feeling her out correctly.

"She really was upset about all this," he told her. "That's going to take some time to heal."

"I'm getting that impression, thanks. You're her friend, right? Please, help me convince her I was doing it for her!"

"Were you?" he asked, eyes narrowing. "Because from what Jia said, everyone thought Valentine was dead. So there would have been no need to further hide the cup. But yet, you did. Why? There was no way to make new artificers expect by having kids, and in the last eighteen years their numbers have fallen. You knew the truth, knew that demons were out there. Yet you did nothing. That speaks of selfish reasons, not altruistic ones."

"Yes, why didn't you come forward with the cup?" Jia asked suspiciously. "Did you enjoy having that power to yourself? Did you plan to one day ransom it back to us? The longer you waited, the more we would have paid, is that it?"

"No, I... you have to understand... there were signs..." Jocelyn was clearly taken aback, trying to explain herself but actually not coming up with any really good reasons for why she

had done the things she had done. She was saved further grilling by Clary coming back, holding the mortal cup in her hands.

“How did you do that?” Jocelyn demanded.

Clary smirked at her. “Looks like putting things into paper runs in the family. Here.” She handed it to Jia, who took it most reverently, eyes wide. “Put it into a contain ward. In a warded box. Inside a larger warded box. Underground. Something.”

“We’ll keep a better eye on it this time, believe me,” she assured her. “On behalf of all artificers, thank you for the safe return of the cup.”

“I believe I’m owed a huge chunk of gold, and a talisman?” Clary said sweetly.

“In that case, Valentine gets the choice of the gold or a talisman, as he was the one that gave information leading to your mother.”

Her face fell. “Oh. I guess you’re right. Still, it’s only what, a kilogram? He can have it, brighten up his cell a little.”

“Gold? What’s this about gold? And what’s that word you keep using? Art a facer?”

“I’ll explain later, mom. Well?” She held her hand out.

“Very well. I can see a tiny dragon inside your eyes, you know. I know you’re in there, greed. Step away from the console, put Joy back on.”

“Wha?”

He handed the gold over. “Make your own talisman though, I’m busy.”

“I suppose I’ll have to.” She took the notebook from under her arm, shoved the chunk of gold into it, and snapped it shut again.

“You really can do it. The same thing as me. Also, how much gold *was* that?”

“Just ten kilograms.”

“*Ten kilograms of gold?* Wait, how many pounds is that? What am I saying, gold is usually measured in *ounces*. How much is *one* pound of gold worth?”

“Yeah, I won’t have to work for a living if I don’t want to. I can just be an artificer. You can’t make my choices for me anymore, mom. I know the truth, and I have powers you can’t even imagine, and now I’m rich. I’m not sure which feels the best, by the way.”

“Oh, hello Mrs. Fray,” Simon said, walking by. “You got found? That’s great news!”

“Simon?” she gasped. “No, he can’t be here, honey, he’s a mundane-”

“He’s an artificer, like me. Believe me mom, it’s fine.”

“I have to go secure this,” Jia said. “I’ll be back tomorrow to see what your next plan is, Lysanias. Your avatar is still out there.”

“I haven’t forgotten. But with Valentine’s defeat I’m sure they’ll make a move.”

“I both dread that occurrence and hope you’re right. The sooner you’re on your way, the better I’ll feel. No offense.”

“None taken.”

Jia nodded to her guards and they went off with Magnus to portal someplace to secure the cup.

“Can someone tell me what’s going on?” Jocelyn asked quietly.

Chapter 27

Preparations

When: Day 21 in the shadowhunter universe

Where: Institute meeting room

“We have a problem,” Hodge announced to the assembled shadowhunters. This included Jace and gang, the cambions for full transparency, and several other artificers who would fit.

“The media found out how gorgeous I am, and won’t move from the front of the institute until I start handing out signed photos?” Jace guessed.

“You’re half right,” Hodge admitted. “It does have to do with the media. They’re starting to *notice*.”

“Notice what?” asked a vampire.

“Our fights with demons. We can be glamoured, and the cambions can be hidden with the ‘ignore me’ wards, thank you Lysanias.”

“Of course.”

“But when people’s cars get smashed up, or dissolved by acid, or blown up with magic in our fights with demons, even the most mundane of mundanes is going to notice something is wrong.”

“So what you’re saying is, it’s time to figure out how they’re getting here, and put a stop to it?” Lysanias asked.

“Exactly. Ideas?”

“Don’t look at me,” Lysanias told them, as everyone looked at him. “I’ve asked. But I’m asking about beings from another world. My abilities can’t lock on to them from here.”

“None that we’ve captured have been all that helpful either,” Isabelle complained.

“They all have the same story. They were sitting around peacefully in their world, and suddenly found themselves here.”

“From there they do whatever it is the type of demon they are does,” Alec agreed. “Be it hunt for food, fly around making trouble, or seduce someone and then eat them.”

“What if we went there?” a warlock asked.

“What, the demon’s world? Hell?” a werewolf asked.

“Exactly. Could Lysanias ask from that side how demons are getting into our world?”

Again, everyone looked at him. “I don’t know, it’s the same issue though, isn’t it? I can’t ask about this world because at that point I’m in Hell.”

“Good point,” the warlock agreed.

“How would we even get there?” asked Hodge. “Can magic do it?”

“Not that I know of.”

Isabelle and Lysanias shared a look. They knew magic could step them up to the astral, certainly it could step them down to Hell, right?

“What about Valentine?” asked an artificer.

“We’re not asking *him* for help,” Hodge assured them.

“No, what I mean is, he was going on about information demons, right? How that one he summoned was falling all over itself to be helpful.”

“So he said,” another said. “What about it?”

“We know it’s possible. Why don’t *we* try it?”

“Because summoning demons is a terrible idea in the best of times?” offered a warlock.

“Could you do it?” Hodge asked Lysanias. “You got an angel here, and that actually worked out.”

“I got a very minor Heavenly denizen here, *not* an angel,” he reminded them. “And that was with Clary’s help, and the spirits, and cheating with magic. I’ve never summoned a demon and have no directions on how to do so. I could ask, but we might run into the same problem. The demon just being too powerful for me to get without months of practice. Would it be safer? Yes. Practical? No. If demon attacks are being noticed we need a solution in the next few days, before more come through than we can handle in a night.”

“I see. Actually we could probably ward someplace, a small room, with wards that turn off powers. They would be helpless.”

“That’s an idea. Make it safer to summon them, so even if they resent it the most they can do is insult us.”

“For now, let’s look into it. Valentine said he summoned one, Lysanias would you be willing to go back to his base and look for any notes he had? We should try and get the same one.”

“Because that worked out really great for him,” muttered someone.

“Meanwhile,” Hodge continued, “we’ll think of other ideas.”

But none were put forward, so the group broke up. Lysanias went to find Clary to tell her to start warding a room they would use to summon in.

“Hey Lysanias, what’s up?” she asked, happy to see him. The past few days she had been getting her mother up to speed on what was going on, and showing her how to make wards. Like follows like, Jocelyn was a decent artist as well and had no trouble grasping the concept, and while she couldn’t create new ones out of thin air like her daughter could, she could create copies of existing ones that worked just fine. So she figured she could do it the “slow” way Lysanias had showed, with research into the runes and some trial and error. She had also been telling her daughter about the memories she had lost, even having Lysanias hook the two together to share them more directly. So they hadn’t seen much of each other, as Lysanias went out on patrols now to practice banishing.

“We’re going to summon a demon, so we need to seal a room off from any powers it might use. Can you get on that? I’m headed to Valentine’s hideout, see if there are any notes he left on the one he was talking about.”

“Sure, there’s that area in the basement that doesn’t have anything in it. We can use that.”

“Thanks.”

Lysanias then got out the pictures Valentine had given him and teleported back to his base, where he ransacked the place for anything interesting. He found books detailing the (somewhat sick) experiments Valentine had performed trying to create a better warrior, and Lysanias just shook his head. *Just use a ward or two, dummy. You don’t need demon blood or whatever. Just a few talismans and some wards. Honestly.*

He did find notes on demons and brought the stack back with him for someone to look over. They did find notes on summoning information demons, so the warlocks got busy preparing the area. The books on what Valentine had done to Jace, coded to not be completely obvious what he was doing, sat at the bottom of the pile. As they were not relevant to the situation someone figured they would be looked over later, but for now the demon was the important thing. So that would probably come out, but for now Jace was still blissfully unaware. How lucky for him.

A few hours later Lysanias was summoned to the basement, they were ready to begin.

“Normally an information demon will tell you something if you can tell it something it doesn’t already know,” one warlock explained. “Hopefully Valentine was right and this one will not be so greedy.”

“I guess we’ll know soon,” Isabelle proclaimed, hand tracing the design of her whip, now in bracelet form.

“Let’s begin.”

The summoning went fine because these were professionals, after all, and a very large demon appeared in the space. It was almost a huge bird, but it had the face of a dog, and the paws of a lion.

“I knew you would summon me,” it bragged. “Valentine’s defeat was inevitable.”

“Was it?” asked Hodge.

“Is *that* your question for me?” it asked, peering down at him. “Don’t you have a world to save?” It fixed an eye on Lysanias that said “I know who you are.”

“No. Our question is, how are the demons getting from your world to ours?”

“And how can we stop it,” added a warlock.

“Right. Our two questions are how are demons getting into this world, and how do we stop it?”

“And prevent it from happening again,” added another.

“Right. Our three... among our questions-”

“All right, I did actually expect the Spanish Inquisition. I’ll tell you what you want to know, I’ve seen that unless this force from beyond our world is stopped, we’re all dead. But don’t expect this kind of information dump about anything else in the future.”

“Fine. So, how are they doing it?” Lysanias pressed.

“They aren’t. Not on their own. Someone is opening portals and throwing them through with magic.”

“Someone? The shadow avatar?”

“I can’t say. Someone that doesn’t belong there. Actually seems human, if you want to put a label on him. But he can open portals, and so he’s dumping demons from my world to yours. Demons seem to like him, at least I’ve heard they do, I can’t see him directly. But I’ve had spies nearby, watching him, that I can communicate with. He’s almost a demon himself, but not quite. That’s all I know.”

“So we have to confront him in Hell? How are we supposed to do that?” Hodge asked.

“Magic?” the demon asked, as if it was obvious. “How did I get here?”

“We don’t have anything like that,” protested a warlock. “Summoning demons is the best we can do. It’s a one way street!”

But there’s something you don’t know-

“But what if you had the book of the white?”

The warlocks gasped and started to look a lot more interested than they had a second ago. “Then it could be a different story,” one agreed. “You know where it is?”

“Of course I do. But so does one here. Ask her. I’ve given enough free information, my reputation is ruined. Just save the world so this is all worth it.”

“Done,” Hodge promised. “Thank you.”

“Yeah, yeah.”

The warlocks released the spell and the demon vanished.

“What’s the book of the white?” Lysanias asked.

“Legendary spellbook,” one warlock explained. “Contains all sorts of spells lost over the years. And someone around here knows where it is? Things are starting to look up. For us, at least.”

Hodge looked at Lysanias.

"I'm not a girl. The demon said ask *her*. Let's split up and ask around."

"I'll ask my mom," Clary told them. "Given her tendency to hide things I wouldn't be surprised if she knew."

She did.

"Seriously?" Clary asked, exasperated.

"What? I needed to keep it away-"

"From Valentine, right, I get it. Keep it safe, as it were?"

"You're never going to let me live that down, are you?"

"Probably not." She had her arms folded across her chest and was looking away from her mother.

"I can show you where I hid it. It's in Idris."

It turned out the book was hidden at the home of the Wayland family, which apparently Valentine had used as a base for a while. All sorts of things were coming out of that quarter given Valentine wouldn't shut up about the horrible things he had done to try and get some leniency with the Clave. As if proudly admitting you injected demon blood into people was going to endear you to your captives. But he was coming clean, the end of the world will apparently do that to a man. *Probably wants to die having admitted his 'mistakes' and hoping for some forgiveness?* Obviously Lysanias and the group knew about the angel, but he had been involved in some pretty twisted stuff before learning the world was in danger. Even pretending to be Jace's father, not that any of the silent brothers listening to him babble on and on would tell him that. Many of them were going around in circles in their minds, trying to work out who was who, who had replaced who, and who Jace actually was. All felt it best to just let sleeping dogs lie. Plenty of time to tell him. Eventually. Maybe.

So the group portled to Idris, the shadowhunter city, and Lysanias had to admit the descriptions Simon had come back with were fairly accurate. He could feel the power given off by the towers in the distance that kept demons at bay, and the entire place seemed to represent a slice of heaven. White buildings, clean streets, artificers walking proudly in a place that was totally theirs.

The group made their way quickly to the mansion and started looking around. They found the evidence of the angel's escape from there, runes being melted by what Lysanias guessed was his light saber. Clary said they would probably keep an angel bound, though the chains that now hung empty in the basement were a good indicator that was the point. Jocelyn wasted no time, going to a bookshelf and opening a cookbook of all things, pulling out a small leather bound book that she claimed was the book they were looking for.

"And anything else hidden away over the years?" Clary asked icily. "Doomsday weapons kept from Valentine? Objects of power we would now call talismans? Brothers or sisters I never knew I had?"

"Er, no, nothing like that," she answered uncomfortably. "Nope, nothing else hidden from you at all."

"Great." But she didn't sound convinced.

Back at the institute Magnus poured over the book, growing quite excited over what he found within.

“Good news,” he announced. “There’s a spell to open a portal to the demon world. It has a long series of warning, after the spell oddly enough, usually they’re at the beginning, but I should be able to perform it.”

“Then we need to decide who’s going,” Lysanias told them. “It could be fairly-”

“Not it,” Clary announced, hand raised.

“Indeed,” he agreed dryly. “Train for five years and make a bunch of talismans, and maybe you can stop in there for a visit.”

“I just wanted it said.”

“Noted. The question is do we take a large force and risk easier detection, but be more able to defend ourselves? Or a small force that moves quickly, finds the avatar of shadow, and gets back here?”

“They will probably control tons of demons,” Magnus warned. “They’ll know you’re coming, and promising demons the chance to rip some humans apart? Some would hang around just for that.”

“Maybe a mix?” suggested Isabelle. “One each cambion, and a few of the more experienced and deadly shadowhunters, such as myself?”

“Just one each is six,” Lysanias mused. “That’s already a pretty large group.” *My max party size is four, after all. Heheheh.*

“If I may ask a question?” Magnus posed. “Say I open this portal and a bunch of us step through. Then what? How do we find the shadow avatar? We’ve seen demons using magic with our own eyes, certainly they will have employed some to mask their location. That information demon didn’t tell us, but did say he couldn’t be seen directly. That implies wards.”

“I guess it depends on the terrain we find there,” Lysanias decided. “If it’s a flat, empty plain they’ll stick out like a-”

“Fart in a bath?” Magnus asked.

“Boy at a baby shower?” Isabelle asked.

“The first stroke on a canvas?” Clary asked.

“Something like that,” he admitted. “If they’re in a city we just, I don’t know, ask around or whatever? Actually we should be wearing two or three ‘ignore me’ wards so we’ll just have to listen in. Someone would know where the human was. That demon we talked to said they were human. Worst comes to worst I cheat my skill at sensing life energy up and just feel them out that way. The only thing alive in that place would be us, and them. Warding probably can’t disguise the fact they’re alive.”

“Fair enough,” Magnus admitted.

“And at the absolute worst I get out Rosalina, who lights the entire place up with her miniature sun. Demons start freaking out and dying, the shadow avatar is sure to come and investigate. There’s probably other ways we can think of before we leave.”

“Actually, you could just ask about the agents of the information demon. They won’t be warded,” Clary suggested. “You could find them easily enough. Then just ask them where this guy is. If they’re watching him, he should be nearby.”

“True, that’s another option.”

“So who’s going?” Magnus again asked.

“You are.”

“I was afraid you were going to say that. Any particular reason why, apart from my being the most powerful warlock around?”

“Yeah, you need to open the door and get us home. I can leave from there with my marble and go to the next reality, but you guys aren’t so lucky.” *Actually, I need to head back to Inari’s place, she’s sending me to the first ‘exam’ world. A guy that can basically do anything he can imagine. Going to need to come up with a talisman before I leave...*

“Fine. Who else?”

“Maybe you should just take all warlocks,” Isabelle suggested. “Get all the magic in one place you can.”

Lysanias shook his head. “It makes us too vulnerable. Something that might hurt them might not work on a vampire or werewolf. I think diversity rather than sheer power is the order of the day. Leave the power stuff to me.”

“Fair enough. I guess we just ask for a volunteer from the ranks, then.”

So the announcement was made, that a team was heading into the world of demons and that one volunteer from each faction would be ideal. The mage portion of the team was, of course, already decided. That left four slots. Several artificers volunteered but Lysanias pointed to Alec.

“You use a bow, right?”

“That’s right.”

“I wonder.” He turned to the crowd. “Is there any way, short of a talisman we don’t have, to make a vampire able to stand sunlight?”

Everyone there looked around at the others, but everyone was shaking their heads. Vampires burned in the sun, everyone knew that. Nothing you could do about it. Nothing. At all. Ever.

“Pity. How about this? Alec and Jace, you come along but Jace takes the place of the vampire volunteer.”

“Hey, what do you have against vampires?” a vampire asked.

“Nothing. But we’re going to need our most potent weapons there, and we can’t use them if you’re around. You all like, ‘ooh, sunshine makes me burst into flames!’”

“It does do that. Maybe we should just stay here after all.”

“So I’m thinking Alec because he uses a bow. It’s a little more long range than the guns, which we might need. Thus we have one long range fighter, one close range fighter, one magic user, one gun user, whatever the fey bring to the table, and me that can fulfill any role. It’s a good mix.”

There were general nods of agreement and Luke stepped forward. “As I’m pack leader, it falls to me to go.”

“Glad to have you, Luke. Jace? Alec? You turning me down?”

They glanced at the other and gave a curt nod. “We’re in,” Jace told him.

“So that just leaves the fey representative,” he said, looking in that direction.

In the end a fey man named Emiture joined them, and the party was complete.

“Get some sleep, get everything together you think we might need, we’ll leave tomorrow. Maybe noon? That might help keep demons off our backs, if there’s a sun there they might be in hiding. Don’t pack food or water, I can make either with magic.”

“How about I pack some anyway,” Luke suggested. “In case you get killed?”

“If I get killed, your reality will probably be consumed by the shadow avatar. Food will be the least of your worries.”

“Oh. Anything else?”

“Weapons, that’s what we’ll need. I don’t think any talismans have been finished, but any objects that have been imbued with power, get them out now. Alec, get boxes of arrows ready, we can carry them in contain wards. Same with bullets, hand over all of them that have been made so far. Extra swords, steles, guns, maybe that judge thing someone talked about at some point? All the sunlight wards too.”

“We know what we’re doing,” Jace protested, obviously affronted at having to be told what to pack as though he was going on a school trip.

“Do you? Been to the demon world a lot, have you? How do you even know it has air? Solid ground? I can probably deal with just about anything one way or another, but you can’t. Prepare for everything you can think of!”

“Gas masks,” Alec agreed. “Ski goggles. Night vision goggles. Good footwear.”

“Now you’ve got it. Go!”

So the group prepared. Lysanias and Clary made several armor wards each, paying careful attention to detail so hopefully they would be extra effective. “Even super effective,” she joked, though Lysanias didn’t get it. Also ‘ignore me’ wards, plus she had more bullets soaking up sunshine that day. In the end each would carry a pack and a contain ward with a box that had camping gear, weapons, and rations, in case they were separated. The pack and the box had the same stuff, the ward was in case they lost the pack. Then other contain wards with boxes of general gear like snowshoes, in case it was sandy or snowy, and other odds and ends they dreamed up just in case.

“Too bad none of us know how to use SCUBA gear, you could bring some of that,” Clary told them, packing everything away into boxes to put into contain wards.

“I don’t know what that is, but we should bring some just in case!” Lysanias agreed.

“Never mind,” Alec told him. “This is already overkill.”

“Just my specialty!” Jace chirped.

And so finally the day arrived, and loaded up with gear and the well wishes of everyone there, the group stepped through the portal Magnus made. Into Hell.

To save the world.

Chapter 28

Party in Hell

When: No time has passed

Where: Through the veil

Lysanias, having gone first in their decent into Hell, looked around. He was fully prepared to be attacked and had mountain spirit and Rosalina at his side. Both wore armor wards and had jumped through holding his hands, in case “another dimension” was too far away from them to be, causing them to vanish again. His sword was active, he was wearing armor, armor wards, ‘ignore me’ wards, and was feeling around for life energy, spiritual energy, and anything the force could tell him about the future.

He got nothing.

The place was quiet. In fact, as he looked around in the dimness cast by his sword hilt and the sunlight orb at his belt (which was the style at the time) he wondered if he had moved into Hell at all. This place seemed exactly the same, at least superficially. The stairs were there, and he could see various doors right where he expected them to be. *That’s odd.*

“Clear,” he shouted back through the portal, because even he knew that’s what one shouted in a case like this. Luke was through next, shotgun at the ready, sweeping it this way and that like he knew what he was doing. Emiture was next, that strange pistol that carried shotgun ammo out and ready.

“Strange,” they remarked, looking around.

“You know, I was thinking the same-” Luke started to say, but Jace and Alec jumped through and both immediately cried out and went down.

“What is it, a sniper?” Luke asked, stepping before them. “Did anyone see a shot? Where are they hurt? Get them back through the portal!”

“Wait,” managed Alec, “I’m feeling something through my bond brother bond. It’s not an attack. It’s Jace.”

“Jace?” He set the shotgun down and rolled Jace over onto his side. “What is it? What’s wrong?”

“Don’t know,” he managed. “Something about this place. Caught me unaware. It’s fine, it’s passing.”

“If you aren’t at your best, perhaps someone else should come in your place?” Emiture suggested.

“I’m fine,” he growled. “I can handle it.”

“Your face says otherwise.”

Magnus stepped through and the portal vanished. “Oh, what’s this? Alec, are you all right?”

“I’m fine,” he assured him, standing. “It’s Jace.”

“Was he hurt? My goodness was he Yamcha’d already? That must be some kind of record.”

“Who?” “What?” Luke and Emiture said at the same time.

He waved them off. “Never mind. Does he need healing?”

“It’s not that, it’s this place. Don’t you feel it?” He sat up, looking around.

“I don’t feel anything.” He looked to Alec.

“I feel it through him,” he admitted. “But if it’s something that affects humans, shouldn’t I be feeling it twice as badly? Once myself and once from Jace?”

“Little is known about this place,” Magnus admitted. “Though with this spell, perhaps it can be studied in more detail later. Do you need to go back? I can reopen the portal.”

"I keep telling people I'm fine." He got to his feet. "See? Fine. It's passing, it was just a shock, that's all. I wasn't expecting it."

"If you're not at your best—"

"Yes, already heard that from the fairy, thanks. Don't need it from you, too."

"I'm not a fairy," grumped Emiture.

"Elf then."

Emiture looked like someone had called his queen a dog or something. "I beg your pardon! What did you—"

"Can we focus, please?" Luke pleaded. "We are in Hell. We can't see more than a dozen yards. Anything could be waiting out there. Keep it down!"

"Eh, if these wards work as advertised we'll be fine," Magnus said, but he helped Alec up and looked around. "Say, isn't this the institute?"

"It seems that way," Lysanias agreed. "If so, door should be that way, right?" He pointed. "Let's check it out."

The group slowly moved through the place, weapons ready. They met no resistance on the way through the building which, while similar in layout to the institute they knew, was different in style. Where the institute had statues of angels, this place had statues of angels in pieces. Or disfigured. Or performing lewd acts. Or were simply replaced by demons instead. Crosses hung upside down, and there was a sickly red light coming in from the windows that gave everything a blood red appearance. The place was obviously unused. It was dusty, dark, silent, and spooky. They cracked the front door open and peered out, and everyone had to blink and try to reorient themselves as they did.

There was no "sky" as such, though a strange red ball hung "up" there which explained the light they had been seeing. It carried with it a sense of corruption and "wrongness" none of the group could put their finger on, and Lysanias wondered if Jace wasn't just more sensitive to it somehow. Past that was more land, as though the entire place was on the inside of a ball rather than the outside.

"It's like a Halo ring," Magnus decided. "The world curves up, not down. So that's what it really looks like."

"What are you talking about?" Alec asked.

"Sorry. When you're an immortal warlock you have time to watch things like Dragon Ball Z and play video games. I'll show you when we get back."

"If we get back," he clarified, looking around. "Look at this place."

They did, and again while superficially the New York they had left there were many differences. Buildings were twisted and bent at impossible angles. Birds in the sky flew backwards or upside down. Even the vegetation was blackened and twisted, and the nearest tree almost seemed *hungry* somehow, if that could be a thing. Then some ways away, for the institute was set in a clearing so people weren't bumping up against it all the time, were the demons. As varied as humans they walked and slithered and flew around the city, doing who knows what.

"We couldn't fight that many, not with every shadowhunter on Earth here!" complained Jace.

"So now what?" Alec asked.

"The plan is the same," Lysanias told them. "We don't call attention to ourselves, we find out where the shadow avatar is—"

But suddenly there were shadows on the ground from flying demons, and the group brought their weapons up in case they were rushed. There were four, naked, with grayish

skin. They all had horns coming up from their heads, and a thin tail. They settled their wings and looked around.

“Do you feel it?” asked the one.

“I do,” answered another. “Holy power!”

“Hated, despised holy power!” a third went on. “But where?”

“I feel it,” the fourth also admitted. “But I do not see the source. Where could it be? Come out, come out, little holy man!”

“Holy man!” the other cried, cackling.

“Or even better, a holy woman!” said one.

“So much better!” the others agreed, grins on all their faces.

They obviously can't see us. Lysanias looked to the others to say maybe they could move on, but noticed Luke, Alec, and to a certain extent Magnus looking out of it. “What is it?” he hissed.

“They’re speaking a demonic language,” Magnus managed. “It’s not meant for human ears. My heritage lets me withstand it but not for long. We have to move.”

“I completely agree,” Emiture agreed, completely. “At least the wards seem to be working, they haven’t seen us despite us just standing here.”

“Come on.” Those that were still in control of themselves grabbed someone and dragged them, as the demons went on about where the holy power was. They finally went into the building, sniffing around and calling out for the ‘holy man.’

“Okay, what was that about?” Alec asked, recovering.

Odd, Jace didn't seem to have the same reaction. “They were saying something about holy power. They could feel it, but not see us, obviously,” Lysanias explained.

“Holy power? They mean our seraph blades?”

He shook his head. “They were calling out for a man. A holy man.”

“Wait, you could understand them? Even I, who have studied the language, didn’t get any of that!” protested Magnus.

“I can understand all languages. Not a big deal.”

“I suppose. A holy man... Odd. Have any of you recently become pope and didn’t tell me?”

Everyone chuckled and shook their heads.

“I can’t imagine any of us exuding holy power,” he went on. “I mean most of us are demonic in nature, even you, Emiture. Equal parts perhaps, but they should cancel each other out.”

“I’m aware of what I am.”

“Of course you are. Maybe it’s just the blessing of the angel that makes you two artificers? Probably something that would stand out around here. A problem, in any case. If we can’t move five feet without demons looking in our direction, someone is going to lob acid or an area effect spell because they’ll know something is up almost at once!”

Lysanias eyed the two boys critically. “Actually, you two have been practicing your energy manipulation, right? You could try muting it down, making it harder to sense you. That should help hide this “holy power” they were talking about.”

“How do you know it’s not you?” Jace countered.

“Good point. If you will all stand back I’m going to try *science!*” He motioned for the others to follow, but at a distance, and they moved away from the demonic institute building and towards the street. As they got closer he told them to stop and moved ahead by himself. Standing at the edge of the alley he waited for a reaction as demons streamed by, but none so much as glanced at him.

“Next,” he chirped, rejoining the group.

It turned out to be Jace. *That explains why he didn't cringe away from the demon language, but raises the larger question of how and why.* Various demons had looked his way, squinted down the alley, and shook their heads like they were crazy. But only when Jace had been standing there. Now back with the group he looked down at himself and patted his pockets. “Something I'm carrying? But we all have holy water.”

“Please do not strip down to test that theory,” Luke pleaded.

“Oh, I wouldn't mind,” Magnus told them. “Alec should too, just in case.”

“So we try to keep ourselves between any demons and Jace,” Emiture suggested.

“The massed wards may help, no?”

“I'm still thinking he can just hide his power level. Go ahead, give it a try.”

He did, and where it had been maybe one in four demons that looked his way, it was now up to one in ten or so. “It seems to have worked,” he admitted, concentrating on muting his internal energies.

“Never thought that aspect of the technique would actually come in handy,” Lysanias admitted. “Just goes to show, you never know.”

“We should get a move on,” Luke suggested, looking back towards the institute.

“Those four came out again and are still sniffing around.”

“Careful not to bump into anybody. We'll head over there and down that alley.”

Lysanias pointed. “Let's go.”

They made it across the “street” with no incident, then moved down another and then another. They weren't followed, and crouching down they decided it was time to figure out their next move.

“I say we light this place up,” Jace suggested.

“How do we do that?” asked Emiture.

“She has that sunlight spell, right?” He pointed to Rosalina. “Let's use it. Right here, right now.”

“We didn't bring vampires for a reason,” Luke agreed. “But doesn't that just draw attention to us?”

“She might become visible, but we wouldn't,” Lysanias told them. “We could wait and see what happened. But apart from maybe frying some demons, I don't see the point.”

“The point is you're all forgetting something. Demons have been seen in all major cities, luckily most have a shadowhunter presence as well. But that suggests our mystery friend can teleport, probably using demon magic. So the odds the shadow avatar is *here* right now are almost nil. Why would they be? We need to get them back here, so that means we need to give them something to investigate. Why not a huge ball of light in the sky?”

“It would keep most demons away as well,” Magnus admitted. “So when they do show up it'll be an easier fight, because demons won't be able to join in. But why would they?”

“Come here? Because a huge sun where none can be signals the presence of the one person the avatar would want to destroy over all others,” Jace explained. “Lysanias. He's the bait in the trap.”

They all looked over at him. “It's true,” he agreed. “The more we, by that I mean wanderers, cause the avatar problems, the more he wants us stopped. Each one of us represents worlds he's been chased out of. Right now I only represent a few, but that number should grow. He'll want me stopped before I get more practice in the skills I've taken with me.”

“So let's stop all this sneaking around and announce ourselves!”

No one else had any bright ideas so Rosalina set her mini sun in the sky, then lifted it high to burn as wide an area as she could. The screams of demons filled the streets, making Lysanias feel a little bit bad for them but Jace and Alec didn't seem bothered.

Of course. Their whole job is killing these guys. This is like being hired to cut down a tree, but when you get there you find out the tree caught fire the day before and your job is already done.

Finally the demons got under cover and shades were drawn, leaving the streets empty. Minutes passed. Finally, about twenty minutes later there was a loud bang, and under the sun appeared several figures. All looked up at the orb and then looked around, but the smallest one looked right at the group.

"I can see you, you know," he called over to them. "Come out, let's have a look at you."

The group traded a look and cautiously stepped out, coming close enough to see who they were facing. The one in the lead was a man in armor, at least a man's shape, because the skin of the "creature" was blackened and burned. It had no hair, but a feeling of wrongness emanated from him.

Next to him was a demon that looked like the winged demons that had done magic in their last encounter, only bigger. Across from him was a sort of cat looking thing, floating in air with electricity sparking all around them. It too was fairly huge. But not as huge as the being next to them, which towered over the humans. It looked human, at least on top, but in place of legs had maybe fifty snake bodies holding it up, and they were in constant motion as it stood there. It had six arms, each holding a wicked looking sword (apart from the one that was holding a shield), and three heads. But even *that* unholy creature was dwarfed by the *freaking dragon* that was behind them all, looking down with interest at who would be foolish enough to challenge it.

You know, I'm beginning to think we didn't bring enough people on this little expedition. That's just my take on things.

"Hello, what's this?" the man said. "Honestly, this is all you brought? I'm beginning to think you aren't taking this seriously, Lysanias. Didn't they warn you that the demons you've been seeing in the other world were basically pansies?"

"Uh..."

"I know, it's a bit of a shock. That dragon, am I right? Say hello, Gutharian!"

"Hello!" it said down to them.

"Yes, stabilizing the portals so more powerful demons could come through was proving a right pain. Almost like the 'god' of this reality didn't want it to happen! Can you believe it? And who is this lovely creature?" He walked over to Rosalina, who had her wand pointed at the man. "Oh my goodness, is she... did you... Oh my gosh!" He cutely put his hands together like a Japanese schoolgirl (you know what it looks like) which was terribly creepy on something that looked like he did. "You picked her as your ultimate release, didn't you? Not the sword! That is such a relief you have no idea. It's like you're begging me to kill you, Lysanias. You are really off your game, I mean it. What possessed you to- it's her looks, isn't it?"

"What are you talking about? I still don't know what the sword does! Why should I pick it over her? She's a living being, and can do magic. I wouldn't have been able to make that sun!" *Well, okay, I could with skybourne magic but whatever.*

"You really don't know? You haven't hit anybody with it? Inari didn't tell you?"

"She said she wasn't sure either."

"Bah, probably a lie so she could laugh at you. Man, this is such a relief, I've been so worried about that stupid blade and now here you are. It's so much less powerful than it should be, it's a joke! I shouldn't have worried at all." He chuckled and shook his head.

“You really think the sword was the better choice over Rosalina? She’s an independent magic user! With my spirit going I’ve got two fighters at my side by default. It’s perfect for me.”

“You have no idea. But I’m not going to tell you. What else do we have, a werewolf holding a gun, a fey holding a gun, odd choice, a couple of shadowhunters, and a warlock. Pathetic. What were you *thinking?*”

“That we were going to sneak around, actually. That went out the window right away though.”

“What happened to your face?” Jace asked him, unable to contain himself.

“My dad, actually. Well, the father of this body, I mean. Sent him here because he was growing too powerful for even him to contain. Then he got captured by demons, and burned and tortured because he was ‘too pretty’ for the demon world. As he resolved to see the world that had abandoned him burn, that’s when I slipped in. I killed those that were torturing the body, claimed my full power as granted by this body’s demonic blood, and started my campaign to wipe this reality clean.”

So someone else knew how to open a demon portal, or was the book not as hidden as she thought? But then why put it back? How did he get here, really? “You hear that,” Lysanias called to the demons behind the avatar. “Your reality goes away if we lose. Might want to think carefully about what side you’re on.”

“Oh, they’re with me,” he assured them. “These are demon lords, you’ll notice they’re larger than their kind usually get. And immune to your little ball of happiness up there.” He pointed up. “Usually unkillable, but I can kill them. I made them a deal. Whichever one kills you gets to leave this reality with their followers and instead live someplace I already control. Any of you who want the same deal, offer’s open.” He looked over at the others. “I mean, come on, be reasonable. Look at these guys!”

Oh, I’m looking all right. Great, if these guys are like that prince I tried to get, who knows what powers and abilities they have. Apart from just being wicked looking fighters. I mean I could take the one big one with my mountain spirit, but a dragon? What the heck am I going to do with that?

“No takers? Too bad.” He went back over to them. “I guess we have to fight now. If you had the sword you might have won. Pity. Unless, you want to join me? I should have asked, actually. Manners, am I right? I’ll give you another chance, join my team and you can just leave here. No?” He sighed. “Very well. Kill them.”

The demons surged forward.

Chapter 29

Round 1: Fight!

When: Just then

Where: Demon world

"I'll follow your lead," Emiture told them, and Lysanias felt he was not feeling confident at all. To be fair, neither was he, all of his enemies apart from the shadow avatar himself ranged from enormous to gigantic, and would no doubt take a lot of punishment to take down.

"Aim your shots carefully," he cautioned, "I'll get us some cover." A green barrier formed around them, again created as strongly and with as much energy as he could throw into it.

"Both the devil and Sebastian could be spell casters," Magnus warned. "Disrupt them first!"

"Good plan!" Emiture agreed, and started aiming down the sights at the devil.

The spirit grew, knowing it would be facing off against the tentacled thing or the dragon before long.

"If you've got some sure kill spell that takes a bit to get going, now's your chance," Lysanias cautioned.

"Right."

"What are we going to do about that barrier?" the avatar asked rhetorically. He started casting something, energy shimmering along the ground. "Oh look, it's not *under* you."

Crap, that's a glaring weakness I wish I had noticed earlier.

Luke shouldered past Alec and leveled the shotgun. "Oh no you don't," he growled, pulling the trigger. The slug hit his body and bounced off the armor.

"Oh yes I do," he taunted.

Luke readied another shot.

The flying demon flew higher into the air and shot lightning at the party, and Lysanias could see energy crackling along the edge, almost pushing through but being grounded.

Whew.

Alec, arrow already ready, decided to not risk hitting the armor, and aimed for the avatar's head. The avatar jerked his head, nearly causing it to miss but he got scratched.

The three headed guy started forward, and the spirit by now was just as big, so it stepped out of the barrier that wasn't going to protect it anymore anyway. The plan was, whatever the thing did to try and block it first. It had the clear advantage in weapons, but if they couldn't get through the spirit's rocky exterior, he wouldn't care. If, however, he felt the spirit get damaged because of it, well, he would probably be dead?

The thing swung a blade, and the spirit put up an arm to block it. Lysanias winced, expecting to have his arm lopped off and thinking maybe this was a terrible idea after all and why had he even had it in the first place but it was too late.

The blade smashed into the upraised arm... and nothing happened.

Oh thank goodness.

The giant did a double take with one of its heads but the center one and the one to the left took it in stride and took a deep breath, breathing out fire that sped towards the spirit. The force warned him that would be a terrible thing to let hit him, and the spirit smacked the fire out of the way and towards the other demons. It passed over them harmlessly.

Great, are they all immune to- "Rosalina, your sun isn't going to do anything to them!"

"Got it." She had just pointed the wand down to move her sun, but then changed her mind. She started casting something, pointing her wand at the avatar.

The devil started casting, but Lysanias didn't think he was trying to pierce the barrier, he wasn't even looking at them.

What are you up to?

The flying demon tried again, but this time Lysanias was certain his barrier took it, no electricity got through and it dissipated harmlessly. He stood there on air, glaring down at them.

Magnus started casting, making Lysanias wonder what he had doing up until this point. *That cat creature has attacked twice and Magnus is just standing there? Get a grip, man!*

Luke reoriented his gun as Rosalina finished casting her spell. He now went for a headshot as well, muttering "dodge this" as he pulled the trigger. Sebastian didn't bother, not that he saw the slug coming, as it totally went wide and hit nothing.

Rosalina made a better showing, smiling in relief as she felt her spell go off. Not a moment too soon as .2 seconds after that, the shadow avatar finished casting his spell. He laughed, believing the battle to be all but over, and the ground started trembling. For a second Lysanias was worried, but his earth bending senses, even through his shoes, told him it might go differently for the avatar than he expected.

The mountain spirit, also possessing earth bending, decided maybe he should take a few precautions of his own against what was coming and stepped back from the demon, slamming his foot down on the ground. The earth was torn up in a sheet where he had just left, an almost 5m tall wall of it.

"That won't save you!" the demon promised. He started smashing into it with his swords and trying to melt it with fire, but the spirit kept it together with bending, taking another step back to try and get away from the area that was about to erupt.

And erupt it did. From beneath the shadow avatar, which for a split second he looked down at like "what just happened." Then a 2m hole ripped open and magma spewed forth, catching all the demons (who were of course immune to fire!) by surprise. But they were not immune to being bowled over, though sadly only the devil was near enough to really have to worry about it. He was engulfed.

Lysanias wasted no time, dropping the barrier and shifting his feet to be more solidly planted on the ground. He had a decent sense of where the lava had been, and simply willed more up from below. He wanted to catch the demons in it and make it fill as large an area as he could. He managed it quite nicely, his strength augmented by the sword so even manipulating hot rock, he pulled up a ton of it and spattered it against everything there.

The flying demon shrugged and shot lighting at the group which was now unprotected. He targeted Lysanias, wanting to get him back for the barrier from earlier, but the attack actually filled a 4m circle around him.

What he didn't know is that Lysanias could simply absorb the strike and redirect it, which he attempted with fire bending. It wasn't pleasant, but he was wearing metal armor, which helped attract the power. The others were astonished to find themselves unhurt, (they had forgotten about the armor wards, they weren't used to them) and with a shout, Lysanias shot the lighting back at the demon. Naturally, a demon that uses an element is probably immune to it, which was the case here. So it harmlessly passed over the demon, who was by this time getting quite annoyed because these people were not going down like they should!

Then it had to start dodging rocks thrown by Rosalina and the mountain spirit, chunks of the wall the spirit had previously made winging through the air to try and knock it out of the sky. Both rocks hit, they were too large to dodge even for a creature as fast as the demon, but they just glanced off.

"You can't hurt me that way!" the demon sneered.

Lysanias waited for another blast, putting up another barrier like the last one would bring him dangerously close to running out of spiritual energy, and then he really would be helpless.

The devil, now a bit enraged and encased in rock teleported himself behind the group, hand poised to strike at Lysainas. It seemed that for some reason he wanted to rip Lysanias' throat out personally. He miscalculated with this move, however, because Magnus finished casting his spell at that exact instant. The only thing he could see to target with it was the flying demon, so the flying demon it was. However, Rosalina hadn't stopped maintaining her spell, which was redirecting all magic in the area to the shadow avatar.

The shadow avatar that was *currently possessing the demon*, because while everyone on that side enjoyed immunity to fire, they were not immune to crushing or suffocating. So the avatar had used the body's powers to possess the demon as the lava hit, and was now free again.

The spell hit the demon/man combo somehow, with all the various powers in play from other realities here it was tough to know exactly how, but it cried out and vanished. As demon lords can only truly be killed by their subordinates (at least that's what Lysanias' notes said about them) he would probably be back, but the shadow avatar could not. Even possessing something the spell targeted him, and we all know death spells can't be resisted. Green light, and all that. Can't just will magic away, it's magic. Rosalina felt him die, her spell winking out of existence.

The spirit felt the tentacle demon struggling to get out of the lava and smashed the rest of the wall into it, further slowing it.

Now Luke, Emiture, and Alec had a clear shot at the flying demon, and opened fire. It dodged all of them.

Rosalina pointed her wand at the demon which was zipping back and forth to avoid being hit by gunfire. "Sleep," she cast, hoping to hit it. She missed.

Magnus, meanwhile, was wondering what the heck happened. He had seen sort of a flash, and his magic had done *something*, but the demon he was aiming at was still flying around up there. There was a bit of an afterimage of the devil standing next to him, and he didn't see it stuck out of the lava anymore, but it could be anywhere. He decided to try something else, and began casting again.

Suddenly the dragon decided he had seen enough, and flapped his wings, taking off just enough to land atop the rubble pile, which he dropped onto with enough force to shake the ground. "Enough!" he cried, causing the action to momentarily halt. "Oh, sorry about that, didn't see you there," he apologized to the tentacle demon he had squished.

"I bet you didn't," it managed.

"That boy that got us together, where's he gone?" the dragon asked. "I saw him do something when that lava showed up but I haven't seen him since. Without him this fight is pointless."

Everyone looked around, beginning to wonder the same thing.

"Did we get him?" Magnus asked, still holding his spell just in case this was a trick of some kind.

"I can check. Truce until then?" he shouted up to the dragon.

"Truce," the dragon agreed.

I suppose I'll have to trust it. Besides, the force will warn me if it attacks again. Thank goodness that creature hung back a little and decided to see which way the wind was blowing. That or it just hadn't gotten a clear shot yet.

The flying demon perched on the dragon's head. "Be quick about it."

"I am not to be sat upon!" the dragon insisted, sounding a little hurt.

"Deal with it."

"Perhaps I will." The mighty tail whipped forward, stopping inches from the demon.

"Yeah, you better stop," the demon told him.

Lysanias put up a hand to try and calm these demons down but a little voice inside him cried *what are you doing? You idiot! Let them tear each other to pieces if they want.*

So instead he got out the marble, which was shining.

"Huh," he said, looking down at it. "We got him. I have no idea how..."

"You're certain?" asked the dragon.

He held it up. "This is a detector for that guy. When he's alive, it's dim, like this one."

He held up a world he had yet to go to. "See how this one shines? Your world is safe."

"That is all I require," the dragon told them. "I will depart. These other two, well, you'll have to deal with them." Again the mighty wings pumped, and the lightning demon took off as the dragon winged away. It hung in the air, regarding them.

"One against eight," Lysanias cautioned, as weapons were brought up again.

"None of you can hit me, I'm too fast," the demon bragged. "And it's seven to two at best, that guy has just stood there." He pointed to Jace.

"Yeah Jace," teased Alec. "You're useless. Do something, will you?"

"I was supposed to be close quarters combat guy!" he reminded them, shaking his puny sword at them. "Fat lot of good that would do us against these guys!"

"Exactly," the demon agreed. "Bah, you're not worth it. See ya!" He flew off.

"And now for you," Lysanias said to the trapped demon. The magma was still burning, not that it seemed to bother him much. "Shall we complete the job, bury you alive?"

"He might crawl out with a knife and kill us while we're sleeping," Magnus warned.

"That's why I can't decide if he should live or die," Lysanias told him.

"Live! Live!" insisted the demon. "I'll be good. I won't attack any more. Promise. Just get me out of this stuff!"

"Someone get its weapons away from it," Lysanias said. Rosalina was able to, with her spell to make an object do something. She teleported the swords, point down in the ground, some distance away from the demon. With that the two used earth bending to tear it free. It moved off. "Go ahead and leave, but I do want my weapons back."

"That's fine. Magnus?"

"We can't leave from here," he reminded them. "We're in the middle of the city. We open a portal here and who knows what might happen. There might be a bus right there."

"We'll head back to the institute," Luke suggested. "We can go back where we came from."

"Fine. You stay there," Lysanias told it.

"Of course," he agreed, somewhat petulantly.

The others moved off, the sun winking out because it wasn't needed any more. "Aren't you forgetting something?" Rosalina asked him.

"Am I?"

"Ignore me wards? Yours all burned up when you attacked, and with the sun gone demons will start coming out again. We don't want to have to fight our way back there."

He looked, and indeed all of them but Jace had no wards as they had attacked. "Ah yes, silly of me."

So the group walked back.

"How did we win?" Jace asked, somewhat put out as he had contributed nothing, because really he was quite useless wasn't he? How were artificers that couldn't do wards the

dominant faction in the world and not warlocks, that could do magic? Numbers? It was hard to say.

"I'm still not sure," Magnus told them. "I want to know how that spell of *his* went wrong. Imagine if that lava had opened below us, the shield wouldn't have done a thing!"

"That would be me," Rosalina told them. "My spell made it so any magic cast in the area instead was directed at the shadow avatar."

"That's what redirected my death spell, must be!"

"That's right."

"Huh. Nicely done."

"Thank you."

The group returned to a hero's welcome, doubly so because for a time, demon attacks on the city would stop because the shadow avatar wasn't around to send them through. So that night no one went on patrol (they watched the cameras of course) instead having a party. The group told about what they faced, and how Lysanias had defended them.

"And the lighting went woosh!" Magnus was saying. "And the demon went wash!"

I think he forgot he was wearing an armor ward set. He probably would have been fine even if I hadn't absorbed the attack and redirected it. I'm just glad it was lighting and not acid or something. I should look into learning a skill that can absorb any elemental attack. I can absorb energy from people and lines, why not attacks? Hate to miss and have something like that hit me though.

Lysanias stayed in that reality for another month, helping everyone complete a talisman. After all, until someone native to that reality made one he couldn't be sure they *could*. *Just making wards isn't good enough. People back home that make wards also make talismans, but that doesn't guarantee people around here can.* But he worked on his own and oversaw the others making theirs, and now that patrols returned to their normal levels one after another was finished. It took him the entire month, working about 2 hours a day, but at the end he had a ring on his left hand that could stop time by saying "pause."

After all, it takes me forever in combat terms to get anything ready. Get my spirit out, get the wand out, get the sword fired up, apply wards, make the spirit grow. It's endless. That time spell Valentine used was a fantastic idea, I should send him a thank you gift. Maybe a file? That would be somewhat hilarious, I bet Inari would approve. Besides, think of who I'm facing next. Inari said they could do just about anything, so stopping time to have a second to think about my response could be the difference between life and death.

"Do you have everything?" Clary asked, as Lysanias was about to leave that reality. All the people he had met were clustered around him, having held a farewell party the night before.

"I think so. Stele strapped to sword, new talisman, books graciously donated by the clave for my friends back home to pour over." *If I ever see them again. No, I will see them, and they'll be astonished at the changes in me.* "I took the magitek armor and the Korra armor you guys were studying back. That should be everything."

"We owed you a lot," she admitted. "I owe you a lot. Getting my mother back, getting Simon in on things, I guess you saved the world?"

He laughed. "I guess. Take good care of it, okay?"

"We will. Oh, did you hear? There are plenty of new artificers in the world, and there's talk of massive projects in the future. We want to start warding whole *cities*, keep demons out of them. We're not sure how to do it, I suggested a combination of demon repelling wards and

'ignore me' wards so they would never be moved. But who knows? We have the tools now, it's up to us."

"I'm glad to hear it. You all have bright future ahead, so get to it."

"We will." She hugged him. "Be safe out there."

The others all wished him well, hugging, shaking hands, and even a quick kiss by Isabelle. *These are good people. I'm glad we were able to help each other. The stele was worth coming here for, but actually bringing these people the full extent of their powers? Priceless.*

"Goodbye everyone," he said, looking the group over. *Will it ever get easier to say that? I guess I hope not, that would mean I was hard and jaded.* "It was great meeting you all." *Except for you, Jace. Learn how to use a gun, at least! Something. Honestly.*

He vanished.