

He would look so young. They were *both* so young. Tessa knew it was unusual to marry at seventeen and eighteen, but they were racing a clock.

The clock of Jem's life, before it wound down.

She put her hand to her throat, and felt the familiar vibration of her clockwork angel, its wings scratching her palm. The seamstress looked up at her anxiously. She was mundane, not Nephilim, but had the Sight, as all who served the Shadowhunters did. "Would you like the lace removed, miss?"

Before Tessa could answer, there was a knock at the door, and a familiar voice. "It's Jem. Tessa, are you there?"

Charlotte sat bolt upright. "Oh! He mustn't see you in your dress!"

Tessa stood dumbfounded. "Whyever not?"

"It's a Shadowhunter custom—bad luck!" Charlotte rose to her feet. "Quickly! Hide behind the wardrobe!"

"The wardrobe? But—" Tessa broke off with a yelp as Charlotte seized her about the waist and frog-marched her behind the wardrobe like a policeman with a particularly resistant criminal. Released, Tessa dusted off her dress and made a face at Charlotte, and they both peeked around the side of the furniture as the seamstress, after a bewildered look, opened the door.

Jem's silvery head appeared in the gap. He looked a bit disheveled, his jacket askew. He glanced around in puzzlement before his gaze lighted on Charlotte and Tessa, half-concealed behind the wardrobe. "Thank goodness," he said. "I'd no idea where any of you had gone. Gabriel Lightwood's downstairs, and he's making the most dreadful row."

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“Write to them, Will,” said Cecily Herondale. “Please. Just one letter.”

Will tossed his sweat-soaked dark hair back and glared at her. “Get your feet into position,” was all he said. He pointed, with the tip of his dagger. “There, and there.”

Cecily sighed, and moved her feet. She had known she was out of position; she’d been doing in intentionally, to needle Will. It was easy to needle her brother. That much she remembered about him from when he was twelve years old. Even then daring him to do something, like climb the steeply pitched roof of their manor house, had resulted in the same thing: an angry blue flame in his eyes, a set jaw, and sometimes Will with a broken leg or arm at the end of it.

Of course this brother, the nearly adult Will, was not the brother she remembered from her childhood. He had grown both more explosive and more withdrawn. He had all their mother’s beauty, and all their father’s stubbornness—and, she feared, their father’s propensity for vices, though she had guessed that only from whispers among the occupants of the Institute.

“Raise your blade,” Will said. His voice was as cool and professional as her governess’s.

Cecily raised it. It had taken her some time to get used to the feel of gear against her skin: the loose tunic and trousers, the belt around her waist. Now she moved in it as comfortably as she had ever moved in the loosest nightgown. “I don’t understand why you won’t consider writing a letter. A single letter.”

“I don’t understand why you won’t consider going home,” Will said. “If you would just agree to return to Yorkshire yourself, you could stop worrying about our parents and I could arrange—”

Cecily interrupted him, having heard this speech a thousand times. “Would you consider a wager, Will?”

Cecily was both pleased and a little disappointed to see Will’s eyes spark, just the way her father’s always did when a gentleman’s bet was suggested. Men were so easy to predict.

“What sort of a wager?” Will took a step forward. He was wearing gear; Cecily could see the Marks that twined his wrists, the *mnemosyne* rune on his throat. It had taken her some time to see the Marks as something other than disfiguring, but she was used to them now—as she had grown used to the gear, to the great echoing halls of the Institute, and to its peculiar denizens.

She pointed at the wall in front of them. An ancient target had been painted on the wall in black: a bull’s-eye inside a larger circle. “If I hit the center of that three times, you have to write a letter to Dad and Mam and tell them how you are. You must tell them of the curse and why you left.”

Will’s face closed like a door, the way it always did when she made this request. But, “You’ll never hit it three times without missing, Cecy.”

“Well, then it should be no great concern to you to make the bet, William.” She used his full name purposefully. She knew it bothered him, coming from her, though when his best friend—no, his *parabatai*; she had learned since coming to the Institute that these were quite different things—Jem did it, Will seemed to take it as a term of affection. Possibly it was because he still had memories of her toddling after him on chubby legs, calling *Will, Will*, after him in breathless Welsh. She had never called him “William,” only ever “Will” or his Welsh name, *Gwilym*.

His eyes narrowed, those dark blue eyes the same color as her own. When their mother had said affectionately that Will would be a breaker of hearts when he was grown, Cecily had always looked at her dubiously. Will had been all arms and legs then, skinny and disheveled and always dirty. She could see it now, though, had seen it when she had first walked into the dining room of the Institute and he had stood up in astonishment, and she had thought: *That can't be Will.*

He had turned those eyes on her, her mother's eyes, and she had seen the anger in them. He had not been pleased to see her, not at all. And where in her memories there had been a skinny boy with a wild tangle of black hair like a Gypsy's and leaves in his clothes, there was now this tall, frightening *man* instead. The words she had wanted to say had dissolved on her tongue, and she had matched him, glare for glare. And so it had been since, Will barely enduring her presence as if she were a stone in his shoe, a constant but minor annoyance.

Cecily took a deep breath, raised her chin, and prepared to throw the first knife. Will did not know, would never know, of the hours she had spent in this room, alone, practicing, learning to balance the weight of the knife in her hand, discovering that a good knife throw began from behind the body. She held both arms straight down and drew her right arm back, behind her head, before bringing it, and the weight of her body, forward. The tip of the knife was in line with the target. She released it and snapped her hand back, sucking in a gasp.

The knife stuck, point-down in the wall, exactly in the center of the target.

"One," Cecily said, giving Will a superior smile.

He looked at her stonily, yanked the knife from the wall, and handed it to her again.

Cecily threw it. The second throw, like the first, flew directly to its target and stuck there, vibrating like a mocking finger.

“Two,” Cecily said in a sepulchral tone.

Will’s jaw set as he took the knife again and presented it to her. She took it with a smile. Confidence was flowing through her veins like new blood. She knew she could do this. She had always been able to climb as high as Will, run as fast, hold her breath as long...

She threw the knife. It struck its target, and she leaped into the air, clapping her hands, forgetting herself for a moment in the thrill of victory. Her hair came down from its pins and spilled into her face; she pushed it back and grinned at Will. “*You shall write that letter. You agreed to the bet!*”

To her surprise he smiled at her. “Oh, I will write it,” he said. “I will write it, and then I will throw it into the fire.” He held up a hand against her outburst of indignation. “I said I would write it. I never said I would *send* it.”

Cecily’s breath went out of her in a gasp. “How *dare* you trick me like that!”

“I told you that you were not made of Shadowhunter stuff, or you would not be so easily fooled. I am not going to write a letter, Cecy. It’s against the Law, and that’s the end of it.”

“As if *you* care about the Law!” Cecily stamped her foot, and was immediately more annoyed than ever; she detested girls who stamped their feet.

Will’s eyes narrowed. “And *you* don’t care about being a Shadowhunter. How is this? I shall write a letter and give it

to you if you promise to deliver it home yourself—and not to return.”

Cecily recoiled. She had many memories of shouting matches with Will, of the china dolls she had owned that he had broken by dropping them out an attic window, but there was also kindness in her memories—the brother who had bandaged up a cut knee, or retied her hair ribbons when they had come loose. That kindness was absent from the Will who stood before her now. Mam used to cry for the first year or two after Will went; she had said, holding Cecily to her, that the Shadowhunters would “take all the love out of him.” A cold people, she had told Cecily, a people who had forbidden her marriage to her husband. What could he want with them, her Will, her little one?

“I will *not* go,” Cecily said, staring her brother down. “And if you insist that I must, I will—I will—”

The door of the attic slid open, and Jem stood silhouetted in the doorway. “Ah,” he said, “threatening each other, I see. Has this been going on all afternoon, or did it just begin?”

“He began it,” Cecily said, jerking her chin at Will, though she knew it was pointless. Jem, Will’s *parabatai*, treated her with the distant sweet kindness reserved for the little sisters of one’s friends, but he would always side with Will. Kindly, but firmly, he put Will above everything else in the world.

Well, nearly everything. She had been most struck by Jem when she first came to the Institute—he had an unearthly, unusual beauty, with his silvery hair and eyes and delicate features. He looked like a prince in a fairy-tale book, and she might have considered developing an attachment to him,

were it not so absolutely clear that he was entirely in love with Tessa Gray. His eyes followed her where she went, and his voice changed when he spoke to her. Cecily had once heard her mother say in amusement that one of their neighbors' boys looked at a girl as if she were "the only star in the sky" and that was the way Jem looked at Tessa.

Cecily didn't resent it: Tessa was pleasant and kind to her, if a little shy, and with her face always stuck in a book, like Will. If that was the sort of girl Jem wanted, she and he never would have suited—and the longer she remained at the Institute, the more she realized how awkward it would have made things with Will. He was ferociously protective of Jem, and he would have watched her constantly in case she ever distressed or hurt him in any way. No—she was far better out of the whole thing.

"I was just thinking of bundling up Cecily and feeding her to the ducks in Hyde Park," said Will, pushing his wet hair back and favoring Jem with a rare smile. "I could use your assistance."

"Unfortunately, you may have to delay your plans for sororicide a bit longer. Gabriel Lightwood is downstairs, and I have two words for you. Two of your *favorite* words, at least when you put them together."

"Utter simpleton?" inquired Will. "Worthless upstart?"

Jem grinned. "*Demon pox,*" he said.

Sophie balanced the salver on one hand with the ease of long practice while she rapped on Gideon Lightwood's door with the other.

She heard the sound of a hurried shuffle, and the door swung open. Gideon stood before her in trousers, braces, and

a white shirt rolled up to the elbows. His hands were wet, as if he had just run quick fingers through his hair, which was also damp. Her heart took a little leap inside her chest before settling. She forced herself to frown at him.

“Mr. Lightwood,” she said. “I’ve brought the scones you rang for, and Bridget’s made you up a plate of sandwiches as well.”

Gideon took a step back to allow her into the room. It was like all the other rooms in the Institute: heavy dark furniture, a great four-poster bed, a wide fireplace, and high windows, which in this case looked down upon the courtyard below. Sophie could feel his gaze on her as she moved across the room to place the salver on the table before the fire. She straightened up and turned to him, her hands folded in front of her apron.

“Sophie—” he began.

“Mr. Lightwood,” she interrupted. “Is there anything else you require?”

He looked at her half-mutinously, half-sadly. “I wish you would call me Gideon.”

“I have told you, I cannot call you by your Christian name.”

“I am a Shadowhunter; I do not have a Christian name. Sophie, please.” He took a step toward her. “Before I took up residence in the Institute, I had thought we were well on our way to a friendship. Yet since the day I arrived, you have been cold to me.”

Sophie’s hand went involuntarily to her face. She remembered Master Teddy, the son of her old employer, and the horrible way he would catch her in dark corners and press her up against the wall, hands creeping under her bodice, murmuring in her ear that she had better be friendlier to him, if she knew what was good for her. The thought filled her with sickness, even now.

“Sophie.” Gideon’s eyes crinkled worriedly at the corners. “What is it? If there is some wrong I have done you, some slight, please tell me what it is that I may remedy it—”

“There is no wrong, no slight. You are a gentleman and I am a servant; anything more would be a familiarity. Please do not make me uncomfortable, Mr. Lightwood.”

Gideon, who had half-raised his hand, let it drop to his side. He looked so woebegone that Sophie’s heart softened. *I have everything to lose, and he has nothing to lose*, she reminded herself. It was what she told herself late at night, lying in her narrow bed, with the memory of a pair of storm-colored eyes hovering in her mind. “I had thought we were friends,” he said.

“I cannot be your friend.”

He took a step forward. “What if I were to ask you—”

“Gideon!” It was Henry, at the open door, breathless, wearing one of his terrible green-and-orange-striped waistcoats. “Your brother’s here. Downstairs—”

Gideon’s eyes widened. “Gabriel’s here?”

“Yes. Shouting something about your father, but he won’t tell us anything more unless you’re there. He swears it. Come along.”

Gideon hesitated, his eyes moving from Henry to Sophie, who tried to look invisible. “I..”

“Come now, Gideon.” Henry rarely spoke sharply, and when he did, the effect was startling. “He’s covered in blood.”

Gideon paled, and he reached for the sword that hung on a set of double pegs by his door. “I’m on my way.”

Gabriel Lightwood leaned against the wall inside the Institute doors, his jacket gone, his shirt and trousers drenched in scarlet.

Outside, through the open doors, Tessa could see the Lightwood carriage, with its flame blazon on the side, drawn up at the foot of the steps. Gabriel must have driven it here himself.

“Gabriel,” Charlotte said soothingly, as if she were trying to gentle a wild horse. “Gabriel, tell us what happened, please.”

Gabriel—tall and slender, brown hair sticky with blood—scrubbed at his face, wild-eyed. His hands were bloody too. “Where’s my brother? I have to talk to my brother.”

“He’s coming down. I sent Henry to fetch him, and Cyril to ready the Institute’s carriage. Gabriel, are you injured? Do you need an *iratze*?” Charlotte sounded as motherly as if this boy had never faced her down from behind Benedict Lightwood’s chair, had never conspired with his father to take the Institute away from her.

“That is a great deal of blood,” said Tessa, pushing forward. “Gabriel, it is not all yours, is it?”

Gabriel looked at her. It was the first time, Tessa thought, that she had seen him behave with no posturing at all. There was only stunned fear in his eyes, fear and—confusion. “No... It’s *theirs*—”

“Theirs? Who are *they*?” It was Gideon, hurrying down the stairs, a sword in his right hand. Along with him came Henry, and Jem, and behind him, Will and Cecily. Jem paused on the steps in startlement, and Tessa realized that he had caught sight of her in her wedding dress. His eyes widened, but the others were already pushing by, and he was carried down the steps like a leaf in a current.

“Is Father hurt?” Gideon went on, coming to a stop before his brother. “Are you?” He put his hand up and took his brother’s face, his hand cupping Gabriel’s chin and turning it toward

him. Though Gabriel was taller, the look of a younger sibling was clear in his face—relief that his brother was there, and a flicker of resentment at his peremptory tone.

“Father...” Gabriel began. “Father is a worm.”

Will gave a short laugh. He was in gear as if he had just come from the practice room, and his hair curled damply against his temples. He was not looking at Tessa, but she had grown used to that. Will hardly ever looked at her unless he had to. “It’s good to see you’ve come round to our view of things, Gabriel, but this is an unusual way of announcing it.”

Gideon shot Will a reproachful look before turning back to his brother. “What do you mean, Gabriel? What did Father do?”

Gabriel shook his head. “He’s a worm,” he said again, tonelessly.

“I know. He has brought shame on the name of Lightwood, and lied to both of us. He shamed and destroyed our mother. But we need not be like him.”

Gabriel pulled away from his brother’s grip, his teeth suddenly flashing in an angry scowl. “You’re not listening to me,” he said. “He’s a worm. A *worm*. A bloody great serpentlike thing. Since Mortmain stopped sending the medicine, he’s been getting worse. Changing. Those sores upon his arms, they started to cover him. His hands, his neck, h-his *face*...” Gabriel’s green eyes sought Will. “It was the pox, wasn’t it? You know all about it, don’t you? Aren’t you some sort of expert?”

“Well, you needn’t act as if I invented it,” said Will. “Just because I believed it existed. There are accounts of it—old stories in the library—”