

Stephen Herondale's Letter to Jace ***A City of Lost Souls Extra***

To my son,

If you are reading this letter, then I am dead.

I expect to die, if not today, then soon. I expect that Valentine will kill me. For all his talk of loving me, for all his desire for a right-hand man, he knows that I have doubts. And he is a man who cannot abide doubt.

I do not know how you will be brought up. I do not know what they will tell you about me. I do not even know who will give you this letter. I entrust it to Amatis, but I cannot see what the future holds. All I know is that this is my chance to give you an accounting of a man you may well hate.

There are three things you must know about me. The first is that I have been a coward. Throughout my life I have made the wrong decisions, because they were easy, because they were self-serving, because I was afraid.

At first I believed in Valentine's cause. I turned from my family and to the Circle because I fancied myself better than Downworlders and the Clave and my suffocating parents. My anger against them was a tool Valentine bent to his will as he bent and changed so many of us. When he drove Lucian away I did not question it but gladly took his place for my own. When he demanded I leave Amatis, the woman I love, and marry Celine, a girl I did not know, I did as he asked, to my everlasting shame.

I cannot imagine what you might be thinking now, knowing that the girl I speak of was your mother. The second thing you must know is this. Do not blame Celine for any of this, whatever you do. It was not her fault, but mine. Your mother was an innocent from a family that brutalized her. She wanted only kindness, to feel safe and loved. And though my heart had been given already, I loved her, in my fashion, just as in my heart, I was faithful to Amatis. *Non sum qualis eram bonae sub regno Cynarae.* I wonder if you love Latin as I do, and poetry. I wonder who has taught you.

The third and hardest thing you must know is that I was prepared to hate you. The son of myself and the child-bride I barely knew, you seemed to be the culmination of all the wrong decisions I had made, all the small compromises that led to my dissolution. Yet as you grew inside my mind, as you grew in the world, a blameless innocent, I began to realize that I did not hate you. It is the nature of parents to see their own image in their children, and it was myself I hated, not you.

For there is only one thing I want from you, my son — one thing from you, and of you. I want you to be a better man than I was. Let no one else tell you who you are or should be. Love where you wish to. Believe as you wish to. Take freedom as your right. I don't ask that you save the world, my boy, my child, the only child I will ever have. I ask only that you be happy.

Stephen