

Greenhouse Scene, Jace's PoV

A City of Bones Extra

I kissed your lips and broke your heart

The Institute's bell begins to toll, the deep loud heartbeat of the apex of the night. Jace sets his knife down. It's a neat little pocketknife, bone-handled, that Alec gave him when they became parabatai. He's used it constantly and the grip is worn smooth from the pressure of his fingers.

"Midnight," he says. He can feel Clary beside him, sitting back amongst the remains of their picnic, her breathing soft in the cool, leaf-smelling air of the greenhouse. He doesn't look at her, but straight ahead, at the shining closed buds of the medianox plant. He isn't sure why he doesn't want to look at her. He remembers the first time he saw the flower bloom, during horticulture class, sitting on a stone bench with Alec and Izzy on either side of him, and Hodge's fingers on the stem of the blossom — he had woken them up at nearly midnight to show them the marvel, a plant that normally grew only in Idris — and remembered his breath catching in the wintery midnight air, at the sight of something so surprising and so beautiful. Alec and Isabelle had been interested but not, he remembers, caught by the beauty of it as he had been. He was worried even now, as the bells rang on, that Clary would be the same: interested or even pleased, but not enchanted. He wanted her to feel the way he had about the medianox, though he could not have said why.

A sound escapes her lips, a soft "Oh!" The flower is blooming: opening like the birth of a star, all shimmering pollen and white-gold petals. "Do they bloom every night?"

A wave of relief goes through him. Her green eyes are shining, fixed on it. She is flexing her fingers unconsciously, the way he has come to understand she does when she is wishing she had a pen or pencils to capture the image of something in front of her. Sometimes he wishes he could see as she did: see the world as a canvas to be captured in paint, chalks and watercolors. Sometimes when she looks at him that way he finds himself almost blushing; a feeling so strange he almost doesn't recognize it. Jace Wayland doesn't blush.

"Happy birthday, Clarissa Fray," he says, and her mouth curves into a smile. "I have something for you." He fumbles, a little, reaching into his pocket, though he doesn't think she notices. When he presses the witchlight runestone into her hand, he is conscious of how small her fingers are under his — delicate but strong, callused from hours of holding pencils and paintbrushes. The calluses tickle his fingertips. He wonders if contact with his skin speeds her pulse the way his does when he touches hers.

Apparently not, because she draws away from him, her expression showing only curiosity. "You know, when most girls say they want a big rock, they don't mean, you know, literally a big rock."

He smiles without meaning to. Which is unusual in and of itself; usually only Alec or Isabelle can startle laughter out of him. He had known Clary was brave the first time he'd met her — walking into that room after Isabelle, unarmed and unprepared, took the kind of guts he didn't associate with mundanes — but the fact that she made him laugh still surprised him. "Very amusing, my sarcastic friend. It's not a rock, precisely. All Shadowhunters have a witchlight rune-stone. It will bring you light even among the darkest shadows of this world and others." They were the same words his father had spoken to him, upon giving him his first runestone. What other worlds? Jace had asked, and his father had only laughed. There are more worlds a breath away from this one than there are grains of sand on a beach.

She smiles at him and makes a joke about birthday presents, but he senses that she is touched; she slips the stone into her pocket carefully. The medianox flower is already shedding petals like a shower of stars, lighting her face with a soft illumination. "When I was twelve, I wanted a tattoo," she says. A strand of red hair falls across her eyes; Jace fights the urge to reach out and push it back.

"Most Shadowhunters get their first Marks at twelve. It must have been in your blood."

"Maybe. Although I doubt most Shadowhunters get a tattoo of Donatello from the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles on their left shoulder." She is smiling, in that way she does when she says things that are totally inexplicable to him, as if she is fondly remembering. It sends a jealous twinge sparking through his veins, though he isn't even sure what he is jealous of. Simon, who understands her references to a mundane world Jace can never be a part of? The mundane world itself that she could one day return to, leaving him and his universe of demons and

hunters, scars and battle, gratefully behind?

He clears his throat. "You wanted a turtle on your shoulder?"

She nods, and her hair falls back into place. "I wanted to cover my chicken pox scar." She draws the strap of her tank top aside. "See?"

And he sees: there is some sort of mark on her shoulder, a scar, but he sees more than that: he sees the curve of her collarbone, the light dusting freckles on her skin like a dusting of gold, the downy curve of her shoulder, the pulse at the base of her throat. He sees the shape of her mouth, her lips slightly parted. Her coppery lashes as she lowers them. And he is swept through with a wave of desire, a kind he has never experienced before. He's desired girls before, certainly, and satisfied that desire: he had always thought of it as hunger, a need for a sort of fuel that the body wanted.

He has never felt desire like this, a clean fire that burned away thought, that made his hands — not tremble, exactly, but thrum with nervous energy. He tears his eyes away from her, hastily. "It's getting late," he says. "We should go back downstairs."

She looks at him, curiously, and he cannot help the feeling that those green eyes can see through him. "Have you and Isabelle ever dated?" she asks.

His heart is still pounding. He doesn't quite understand the question. "Isabelle?" he echoes. Isabelle? What did Isabelle have to do with anything?

"Simon was wondering," she says, and he hates the way she says Simon's name. He has never felt anything like this before: anything that unnerved him like she does. He remembers coming to her in that alleyway behind the coffee shop, the way he had wanted to draw her outside, away from the dark-haired boy she was always with, into his world of shadows. He had felt even then that she belonged where he did, not to the mundane world where people weren't real, where they passed just beyond his vision like puppets on a stage. But this girl, with her green eyes that pinned him like a butterfly, she was real. Like a voice heard in a dream, that you know comes from the waking world, she was real, piercing the distance he has set so carefully about himself like armor.

"The answer is no. I mean, there may have been a time when one or the other of us considered it, but she's almost a sister to me. It would be strange."

"You mean Isabelle and you never—"

"Never."

"She hates me," says Clary.

Despite everything, Jace almost laughs; like a brother might, he takes a certain delight in observing Izzy when she's frustrated. "You just make her nervous, because she's always been the only girl in a crowd of adoring boys, and now she isn't anymore."

"But she's so beautiful."

"So are you," Jace says, automatically, and sees Clary's expression change. He cannot read her face. It is hardly as if he has never told a girl she's beautiful before, but he can't remember a time it wasn't calculated. That it was accidental. That it made him feel like going to the training room and throwing knives, and kicking and punching and fighting shadows until he was bloody and exhausted and if his skin was flayed open, it was only in the way he was used to.

She just looks at him, quietly. The training room it is, then.

"We should probably go downstairs," he says again.

"All right." He can't tell what she's thinking from her voice, either; his ability to read people seems to have deserted him and he doesn't understand why. Moonlight spears down through the glass panes of the greenhouse as they make their way out, Clary slightly in front of him. Something moves ahead of them — a white spark of light — and suddenly she stops short and half-turns to him, already in the circle of his arm, and she is warm and soft and delicate and he is kissing her.

And he is astonished. He doesn't work like this; his body doesn't do things without his permission. It is his instrument as much as the piano, and he has always been in perfect command of it. But she tastes sweet, like apples and copper, and her body in his arms is trembling. She is so small; his arms go around her, to steady her, and he is lost. He understands now why kisses in movies are filmed the way they are, with the camera endlessly circling, circling: the ground is unsteady under his feet and he clings to her, small as she is, as if she could hold him up.

His palms smooth down her back. He can feel her breathing against him; a gasp in between kisses. Her thin fingers are in his hair, on the back of his neck, tangling gently, and he remembers the medianox flower and the first time he saw it and thought: here is something

too beautiful to properly belong in this world.

The rush of wind is audible to him first, trained as he is to hear it. He draws back from Clary and sees Hugo, perched in the crook of a nearby dwarf cypress. His arms are still around Clary, her weight light against him. Her eyes are half-closed. "Don't panic, but we've got an audience," he whispers to her. "If Hugo's here, Hodge won't be far behind. We should go."

Her green eyes flutter all the way open, and she looks amused. It pricks his ego slightly. After that kiss, shouldn't she be fainting at his feet? But she's grinning. She wants to know if Hodge is spying on them. He reassures her, but he feels her soft laughter travel through their joined hands — how did that happen? — as they make their way downstairs.

And he understands. He understands why people hold hands: he'd always thought it was about possessiveness, saying This is mine. But it's about maintaining contact. It is about speaking without words. It is about I want you with me and don't go.

He wants her in his bedroom. And not in that way — no girl has ever been in his bedroom that way. It is his private space, his sanctuary. But he wants Clary there. He wants her to see him, the reality of him, not the image he shows the world. He wants to lie down on the bed with her and have her curl into him. He wants to hold her as she breathes softly through the night; to see her as no one else sees her: vulnerable and asleep. To see her and to be seen.

So when they reach her door, and she thanks him for the birthday picnic, he still doesn't let go of her hand. "Are you going to sleep?"

She tilts her head up and he can see that her mouth bears the imprint of his kisses: a flush of pink, like the carnations in the greenhouse, and it knots his stomach. By the Angel, he thinks, I am so...

"Aren't you tired?" she asks, breaking into his thoughts.

There is a hollow in the pit of his stomach, a nervous edginess. He wants to pull her back to himself, to pour into her everything he is feeling: his admiration, his new-born knowledge, his devotion, his need. "I've never been more awake."

She lifts her chin, a quick unconscious movement, and he leans down, cupping her face with her free hand. He doesn't mean to kiss her here — too public, too easy to be interrupted — but he can't stop touching his mouth to hers lightly. Her lips part under his and he leans into her and he can't stop.