



THE BANE CHRONICLES

The Runaway Queen

Companion to the bestselling series
THE MORTAL INSTRUMENTS and THE INFERNAL DEVICES

CASSANDRA CLARE
MAUREEN JOHNSON

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PARIS

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There was a smell to Paris in the summer mornings that Magnus enjoyed. This was surprising, because on summer mornings Paris smelled of cheese that had sat in the sun all day, and fish and the less desirable parts of fish. It smelled of people and all the things that people produce (this does not refer to art or culture but to the baser things that were dumped out of windows in buckets). But these were punctuated by other odors, and the odors would shift rapidly from street to street, or building to building. That heady whiff of a bakery might be followed by an unexpected flush of gardenias in a garden, which gave way to the iron-rich pong of a slaughterhouse. Paris was nothing if not alive—the Seine pumping along like a great artery, the vessels of the wider streets, narrowing down to the tiniest alleys . . . and every inch of it had a smell.

It all smelled of *life*—life in every form and degree.

The smells today, however, were a bit strong. Magnus was taking an unfamiliar route, one that took him through quite a rough patch of Paris. The road here was not as smooth. It was brutally hot inside his cabriolet as it bumped its way along. Magnus had animated one of his magnificent Chinese fans, and it flapped ineffectively at him, barely stirring the breeze. It was, if he was completely honest with himself (and he did not want to be), a bit too hot for this new striped blue-and-rose-colored coat, made of taffeta and satin, and the silk faille waistcoat embroidered with a scene of birds and cherubs. The wing collar, and the wig, and the silk breeches, the wonderful new gloves in the most delicate lemon yellow . . . it was all a bit *warm*.

Still. If one could look this fabulous, one had an obligation to. One should wear *everything*, or one should wear nothing at all.

He settled back into his seat and accepted the sweat proudly, glad that he lived by his principles, principles which were widely embraced in Paris. In Paris people were always after the latest fashion. Wigs that hit the ceiling and had miniature boats in them; outrageous silks; white paint and high, blushed cheeks on the men and the women; the decorative beauty spots; the tailoring; the colors . . . In Paris one could have the eyes of a cat (as he did) and tell people it was a trick of fashion.

In a world such as this, there was much work for an enterprising warlock. The aristocracy loved a bit of magic and were willing to pay for it. They paid for luck at the faro table. They paid him to make their monkeys speak, to make their birds sing their favorite arias from the opera, to make their diamonds glow in different colors. They wanted beauty spots in the shapes of hearts, champagne glasses, and stars to spontaneously appear on their cheeks. They wanted to dazzle their guests by having fire shoot from their fountains, and then to amuse those same guests by having their chaise longues wander across the room. And their lists of requests for the bedroom—well, he kept careful notes on those. They were nothing if not imaginative.

In short, the people of Paris and the neighboring royal town of Versailles were the most decadent people Magnus had ever met, and for this he revered them deeply.

Of course, the revolution had put a damper on some of this. Magnus was daily reminded of that fact—even now, as he pulled back the blue silk curtains of the carriage. He received a few penetrating

looks from the *sans-culottes* pushing their carts or selling their cat meat. Magnus kept apartments in the Marais, on the rue Barbette, quite near the Hôtel de Soubise, home of his old (and recently deceased) friend the Prince of Soubise. Magnus had an open invitation to wander the gardens or entertain himself there anytime he chose. In fact, he could walk into any number of great houses in Paris and be warmly greeted. His aristocratic friends were silly but mostly harmless. But now it was problematic to be seen in their company. Sometimes it was problematic to be seen at all. It was no longer a good thing to be very rich or well connected. The unwashed masses, producers of the stink, had taken over France, overturning everything in their unwashed path.

His feelings about the revolution were mixed. People *were* hungry. The price of bread was still very high. It did not help that the queen, Marie Antoinette, when told that her people could not afford bread, had suggested that they eat cake instead. It was sensible to him that the people should demand and receive food, and firewood, and all the basic needs of life. Magnus always felt for the poor and the wretched. But at the same time, never had there been a society quite as wonderful as that of France at its dizzying heights and excesses. And while he liked excitement, he also liked to have some sense of what was going on, and that feeling was in short supply. No one quite knew who was in charge of the country. The revolutionaries squabbled all the time. The constitution was always being written. The king and queen were alive and supposedly still somewhat in power, but they were controlled by the revolutionaries. Periodically there would be killings, fires, or attacks, all in the name of liberation. Living in Paris was like living in a powder keg that was stacked on top of several other powder kegs, which were in a ship tossing blindly at sea. There was always the feeling that one day the people—the undefined *people*—just might decide to kill everyone who could afford a hat.

Magnus sighed and leaned back out of the range of prying eyes and put a jasmine-scented cloth to his nose. Enough stink and bother. He was off to see a balloon.



Of course, Magnus had flown before. He'd animated carpets and rested upon the backs of migrating flocks of birds. But he'd never flown by a human hand. This ballooning thing was new and, frankly, a little alarming. Just shooting up into the air in a fabulous and garish creation, with the whole of Paris staring at you . . .

This, of course, was why he had to try it.

The hot air balloon craze had largely passed him by when it had first been the rage of Paris, almost ten years before. But just the other day, when Magnus had had perhaps a little too much wine, he'd looked up and seen one of the sky-blue, egg-shaped wonders drifting past, with its gold illustrations of zodiacal signs and fleurs-de-lis, and all at once he'd been overcome with the desire to get into its basket and ride over the city. It had been a whim, and there was nothing Magnus attached more importance to than a whim. He'd managed to track down one of the Montgolfier brothers that very day and had paid far too many *louis d'or* for a private ride.

And now that Magnus was on his way to take said ride on this hot afternoon, he reflected back on just how much wine he had drunk on the afternoon when he had set this all up.

It had been quite a lot of wine.

His carriage finally came to a stop near the Château de la Muette, once a beautiful little palace, now falling apart. Magnus stepped out into the swampy afternoon and walked into the park. There was a heavy, oppressive feel to the air that made Magnus's wonderful clothes hang heavily. He walked along the path until he came to the meeting spot, where his balloon and its crew awaited him. The balloon was deflated on the grass—the silk just as beautiful as ever, but the overall effect not as

impressive as he had hoped. He had better dressing gowns, when it came down to it.

One of the Montgolfiers (Magnus could not remember which one he had hired) came rushing up to him with a flushed face.

“Monsieur Bane! *Je suis désolé*, monsieur, but the weather . . . today it will not cooperate. It is most annoying. I have seen a flash of lightning in the distance.”

Sure enough, as soon as these words were spoken, there was a distant rumble. And the sky did have a greenish cast.

“Flight is not possible today. Tomorrow, perhaps. Alain! The balloon! Move it at once!”

And with that, the balloon was rolled up and carried to a small gazebo.

Dismayed, Magnus decided to have a turn around the park before the weather deteriorated. One could see the most fetching ladies and gentlemen walking there, and it did seem to be a place that people came to when they were feeling . . . amorous. No longer a private wooded area and park, the Bois de Boulogne was now open to the people, who used the wonderful grounds for growing potatoes for food. They also wore cotton and proudly called themselves *sans-culottes*, meaning “without knee breeches.” They wore long, workmanlike pants, and they cast long, judgmental looks at Magnus’s own exquisite breeches, which matched the rose-colored stripe in his jacket, and his faintly silver stockings. It really was getting difficult to be wonderful.

Also, the park seemed singularly devoid of handsome, love-struck persons. It was all long trousers and long looks and people mumbling about the latest revolutionary craze. The more noble sorts all looked nervous and turned their gazes to the path whenever a member of the Third Estate walked by.

But Magnus did see someone he knew, and he wasn’t happy about it. Coming toward him at great speed was Henri de Polignac, dressed in black and silver. Henri was a darkling of Marcel Saint Cloud’s, who was the head of the most powerful clan of vampires in Paris. Henri was also a terrible bore. Most subjugates were. It was hard to have a conversation with someone who was always saying, “Master says this” and “Master says that.” Always groveling. Always lingering about, waiting to be bitten. Magnus had to wonder what Henri was doing out in the park during the day—the answer was certainly something bad. Hunting. Recruiting. And now, bothering Magnus.

“Monsieur Bane,” he said, with a short bow.

“Henri.”

“It’s been some time since we’ve seen you.”

“Oh,” Magnus said airily. “I’ve been quite busy. Business, you know. Revolution.”

“Of course. But Master was just saying how long it’s been since he’s seen you. He was wondering if you’d fallen off the face of the earth.”

“No, no,” Magnus said. “Just keeping busy.”

“As is Master,” Henri said with a twisted little smile. “You really must come by. Master is having a party on Monday evening. He would be very cross with me if I did not invite you.”

“Would he?” Magnus said, swallowing down the slightly bitter taste that had risen in his mouth.

“He would indeed.”

One did not turn down an invitation from Saint Cloud. At least, one didn’t if one wanted to continue living contentedly in Paris. Vampires took offense *so* easily—and Parisian vampires were the worst of all.

“Of course,” Magnus said, delicately peeling one of his lemon-yellow gloves from his hand, simply for something to do. “Of course. I would be delighted. Most delighted.”

“I will tell Master you will be in attendance,” Henri replied.

The first drops of rain began to fall, landing heavily on Magnus’s delicate jacket. At least this

allowed him to say his good-byes quickly. As he hurried across the grass, Magnus put up his hand. Blue sparks webbed between his fingers, and instantly the rain no longer struck him. It rolled off an invisible canopy he had conjured just over his head.

Paris. It was problematic sometimes. So political. (Oh, his shoes . . . his shoes! Why had he worn the silk ones with the curled toes today? He had *known* he'd be in a park. But they were new and pretty and by Jacques of the rue des Balais and could not be resisted.) Perhaps it was best, in the current climate, to consider retiring to somewhere simpler. London was always a good retreat. Not as fashionable, but not without its charms. Or he could go to the Alps. . . . Yes, he did love the clean, fresh air. He could frolic through the edelweiss and enjoy the thermal baths of Schinznach-Bad. Or farther afield. It had been too long since he'd been to India, after all. And he could never resist the joys of Peru. . . .

Perhaps it was best to stay in Paris.

He got inside the cabriolet just as the skies truly opened and the rain drummed down so hard on the roof that he could no longer hear his thoughts. The balloon-maker's assistants hurriedly covered the balloon works, and the people scurried for cover under trees. The flowers seemed to brighten in the splash of the rain, and Magnus took a great, deep breath of the Paris air he loved so well.

As they drove off, a potato hit the side of his carriage.



The day, in a very literal sense, appeared to be a wash. There was only one thing for it—a long, cool bath with a cup of hot lapsang souchong. He would bathe by the window and drink in the smoky tea, and watch the rain drench Paris. Then he would recline and read *Le Pied de Fanchette* and Shakespeare for several hours. Then, some violet champagne and an hour or two to dress for the opera.

“Marie!” Magnus called as he entered the house. “Bath!”

He kept as staff an older couple, Marie and Claude. They were extremely good at their jobs, and years of service in Paris had left them completely unsurprised by anything.

Of the many places he had lived, Magnus found his Paris house to be one of the most pleasing abodes. Certainly there were places of greater natural beauty—but Paris had *unnatural* beauty, which was arguably better. Everything in the house gave him pleasure. The silk wallpaper in yellow and rose and silver and blue, the ormolu tables and giltwood armchairs, the clocks and mirrors and porcelains. . . . With every step he took farther into the house, to his main salon, he was reminded of the good of the place.

Many Downworlders stayed away from Paris. There were certainly many werewolves in the country, and every wooded glen had its fey. But Paris, it seemed, was the terrain of the vampire. It made sense, in many ways. Vampires were courtly creatures. They were pale and elegant. They enjoyed darkness and pleasure. Their hypnotic gazes—the *encanto*—enchanted many a noble. And there was nothing quite as pleasurable, decadent, and dangerous as letting a vampire drink your blood.

It had all gotten a bit out of hand during the vampire craze of 1787, though. That's when the blood parties had started. That's when all the children had gone missing and some other young people first returned home pale and with the absent look of the subjugate. Like Henri, and his sister, Brigitte. They were the nephew and niece of the Duke de Polignac. Once beloved members of one of the great families of France, they now lived with Saint Cloud and did his bidding. And Saint Cloud's bidding could be a strange thing indeed. Magnus didn't mind a little decadence—but Saint Cloud was evil.

Classic, straightforward evil of the most old-fashioned type. The Shadowhunters of the Paris Institute seemed to have little effect on the goings-on, possibly because in Paris there were many places to hide. There were miles of catacombs, and it was extremely easy to snatch someone from the street and drag them below. Saint Cloud had friends in places high and low, and it would have been very difficult to go after him.

Magnus did all he could to avoid the Parisian vampires and the vampires who appeared on the edges of the court at Versailles. No good ever came of an encounter.

But enough of that. Time for the bath, which Marie was already filling. Magnus kept a large tub in his main salon, right by the window, so he could watch the street below as he bathed. When the water was ready, he submerged himself and began reading. An hour or so later he had dropped his book bathside and was watching some clouds pass overhead while absently thinking about the story of Cleopatra dissolving an invaluable pearl in a glass of wine. There was a knock on his chamber door, and Claude entered.

“There is a man here to see you, Monsieur Bane.”

Claude understood that in Magnus’s business it was not necessary to take names.

“All right,” Magnus said with a sigh. “Show him in.”

“Will monsieur be receiving his visitor in the bath?”

“Monsieur is considering it,” Magnus said, with an even deeper sigh. It was annoying, but professional appearances had to be kept. He stepped out, dripping, and put on a silk dressing gown embroidered on the back with the picture of a peacock. He threw himself petulantly into a chair by the window.

“Claude!” he yelled. “Now! Send him in!”

A moment later the door opened again, and there stood a very attractive man with black hair and blue eyes. He wore clothes of an obviously fine quality. The tailoring was absolutely delicious. This was the sort of thing Magnus wanted to happen more often. How generous the universe could be, when she wanted to be! After denying him his balloon ride and giving him such an unpleasant encounter with Henri.

“You are Monsieur Magnus Bane,” the man said with certainty. Magnus was rarely misidentified. Tall, golden-skinned, cat-eyed men were rare.

“I am,” Magnus replied.

Many nobles Magnus had met had the absentminded air of people who had never had to take care of any matters of importance. This man was different. He had a very erect bearing, and a look of purpose. Also, he spoke French with a faint accent, but what kind of accent, Magnus could not immediately place.

“I have come to speak to you on a matter of some urgency. I wouldn’t normally . . . I . . .”

Magnus knew this hesitation well. Some people were nervous in the presence of warlocks.

“You are uncomfortable, monsieur,” Magnus said with a smile. “Allow me to make you comfortable. I have a great talent in these matters. Please sit. Have some champagne.”

“I prefer to stand, monsieur.”

“As you wish. But may I have the pleasure of learning your name?” Magnus asked.

“My name is Count Axel von Fersen.”

A count! Named Axel! A military man! With black hair and blue eyes! And in a state of distress! Oh, the universe had outdone herself. The universe would be sent flowers.

“Monsieur Bane, I have heard of your talents. I can’t say whether I believe what I’ve heard, but rational, intelligent, sensible people swear to me that you are capable of wonderful things beyond my

understanding.”

Magnus spread his hands in false modesty.

“It’s all true,” he said. “As long as it was wonderful.”

“They say you can alter a person’s appearance by some sort of . . . conjuring trick.”

Magnus allowed this insult to pass.

“Monsieur,” von Fersen said, “what are your feelings on the revolution?”

“The revolution will happen regardless of my feelings on the matter,” Magnus said coolly. “I am not a native son of France, so I do not presume to have opinions on how the nation conducts itself.”

“And I am not a son of France either. I am from Sweden. But I do have feelings on this, very strong feelings. . . .”

Magnus liked it when von Fersen talked about his very strong feelings. He liked it very much.

“I come here because I must, and because you are the only person who can help. By coming here today and telling you what I am going to tell you, I put my life in your hands. I also risk lives much more valuable than mine. But I do not do so blindly. I have learned much about you, Monsieur Bane. I know you have many aristocratic friends. I know you have been in Paris for six years, and you are well liked and well known. And you are said to be a man of your word. Are you, monsieur, a man of your word?”

“It really depends upon the word,” Magnus said. “There are so many wonderful words out there . . .”

Magnus silently cursed himself on his poor knowledge of Swedish. He could have added another witty line. He tried to learn seductive phrases in all languages, but the only Swedish he had ever really needed was, “Do you serve anything aside from pickled fish?” and “If you wrap me in furs, I can pretend to be your little fuzzy bear.”

Von Fersen visibly steadied himself before speaking again.

“I need you to save the king and queen. I need you to preserve the royal family of France.”

Well. That was certainly an unexpected turn. As if in reply, the sky darkened again and there was another rumble of thunder.

“I see,” Magnus replied after a moment.

“How does that statement make you feel, monsieur?”

“Quite the same as always,” Magnus replied, making sure to keep his calm demeanor. “With my hands.”

But he felt anything but calm. The peasant women had broken into the palace of Versailles and thrown out the king and queen, who now lived at the Tuileries, that broken-down old palace in the middle of Paris. The people had produced pamphlets detailing the supposed crimes of the royal family. They seemed to focus quite heavily on Queen Marie Antoinette, accusing her of the most terrible things—often sexual. (There was no way possible she could have done all of the things the pamphleteers claimed. The crimes were too gross, too immoral, and far too physically challenging. Magnus himself had never attempted half of them.)

Anything relating to the royal family was bad and dangerous to know.

Which made it as appealing as it was frightening.

“Obviously, monsieur, I’ve just taken a great risk in saying that much to you.”

“I realize that,” Magnus said. “But save the royal family? No one has harmed them.”

“It is only a matter of time,” von Fersen said. His emotion brought a flush to his cheeks that made Magnus’s heart flutter a bit. “They are prisoners. Kings and queens who are imprisoned are generally not freed to rule again. No . . . no. It is only a matter of time before the situation grows very dire. It is

already intolerable, the conditions under which they are forced to live. The palace is dirty. The servants are cruel and mocking. Every day their possessions and natural entitlements are diminished. I am certain . . . I am quite, quite certain . . . if they are not freed, they shall not live. And I cannot live with that knowledge. When they were dragged from Versailles, I sold everything and followed them to Paris. I will follow them anywhere.”

“What is it you want me to do?” Magnus said.

“I am told you can alter a person’s appearance through . . . some kind of . . . marvel.”

Magnus was happy to accept *that* description of his talents.

“Whatever price you wish, it shall be paid. The royal family of Sweden will also be informed of your great service.”

“With all due respect, monsieur,” Magnus said, “I do not live in Sweden. I live here. And if I do this . . .”

“If you do this, you do the greatest service to France. And when the family is restored to their proper place, you will be honored as a great hero.”

Again, this made little difference. But what did make a difference was von Fersen himself. It was the blue eyes and the dark hair and the passion and the obvious courage. It was the way he stood, tall and strong . . .

“Monsieur, will you stand with us? Do we have your word, monsieur?”

It was also a very bad idea.

It was a terrible idea.

It was the worst idea he had ever heard.

It was irresistible.

“Your word, monsieur,” Axel said again.

“You have it,” Magnus said.

“Then I will come again tomorrow night and lay the plan out in front of you,” von Fersen said. “I will show you what must happen.”

“I insist we dine together,” Magnus said. “If we are to undertake this great adventure together.”

There was a momentary pause, and then Axel gave a sharp nod.

“Yes,” he said. “Yes. I agree. We will dine together.”

When von Fersen left, Magnus looked at himself in the mirror for a long time, looking for signs of madness. The actual magic involved was very simple. He could easily get himself in and out of the palace and cast a simple glamour. No one would ever know.

He shook his head. This was Paris. Everyone knew everything, somehow.

He took a long sip of the now warm violet champagne and swished it round his mouth. Any logical doubts he had were drowned out by the beating of his heart. It had been so long since he’d felt the rush. In his mind now there was only von Fersen.



The next night, Magnus had dinner brought in, courtesy of the chef at the Hôtel de Soubise. Magnus’s friends permitted his use of the kitchen staff and their excellent foodstuffs when he needed to set an especially fine table. Tonight he had a delicate pigeon bisque, turbot, Rouen duckling with orange, spit-roasted veal, green beans au jus, artichokes, and a table full of cream puffs, fruit, and tiny cakes. The meal was simple enough to arrange—getting dressed, however, was not. Absolutely nothing was right. He needed something that was flirtatious and fetching, yet businesslike and serious. And at first it seemed that the lemon-yellow coat and breeches with the purple waistcoat fit the bill precisely, but

these were discarded for the lime-green waistcoat, and then the violet breeches. He settled on an entire ensemble in a simple cerulean blue, but not before he had emptied out the entire contents of his wardrobe.

Waiting was a delicious agony. Magnus could only pace, looking out the window, waiting for von Fersen's carriage to appear. He made countless trips to the mirror, and then to the table Claude and Marie had so carefully laid before he'd sent them away for the evening. Axel had insisted on privacy, and Magnus was happy to oblige.

At precisely eight o'clock a carriage stopped in front of Magnus's door, and out he stepped. Axel. He even looked up, as if he knew that Magnus would be looking down, waiting for him. He smiled a greeting, and Magnus felt a pleasant kind of sickness, a panic. . . .

He hurried down the steps to admit Axel himself.

"I've dismissed my staff for the evening, as you asked," he said, trying to regain his composure. "Do come in. Our dinner is ready for us. You'll excuse the informality of my service."

"Of course, monsieur," Axel said.

But Axel did not linger over his food, or allow himself the pleasures of sipping his wine and taking in Magnus's charms. He launched right into the business at hand. He even had maps, which he unrolled on the sofa.

"The escape plan has been developed over several months," he said, picking an artichoke from a silver dish. "By me, some friends of the cause, and the queen herself."

"And the king?" Magnus asked.

"His Majesty has . . . removed himself from the situation somewhat. He is very despondent over the state of things. Her Majesty has assumed much responsibility."

"You seem to be very . . . fond of Her Majesty," Magnus noted carefully.

"She is to be admired," Axel said, dabbing at his lips with his napkin.

"And clearly she trusts you. You must be very close."

"She has graciously allowed me into her confidence."

Magnus could read between the lines. Axel didn't kiss and tell, which made him only more attractive.

"The escape is to be made on Sunday," Alex went on. "The plan is simple, but exacting. We have arranged it so the guards have seen certain people leaving by certain exits at certain times. On the night of the escape, we will substitute the family for these people. The children will be woken at ten thirty. The dauphin will be dressed as a young girl. He and his sister will be removed from the palace by the royal governess, the Marquise de Tourzel, and will walk to meet me at the Grand Carrousel. I will be driving the traveling carriage. We will then wait for Madame Elisabeth, sister of the king. She shall leave by the same door as the children. When His Majesty finishes his *coucher* for the evening and is left alone, he will leave as well, disguised as the Chevalier de Coigny. Her Majesty . . . will escape last."

"Marie Antoinette will leave *last*?"

"It was her decision," von Fersen said quickly. "She is extremely courageous. She demands to go last. If the others are discovered missing, she wishes to sacrifice herself in order to aid their escape."

There was that frisson of passion in his voice again. But this time when he looked at Magnus, his gaze stayed there for a moment, fixed on the catlike pupils.

"So why do you want only the queen glamourised?"

"Partially it has to do with timing," Axel said. "The order in which people must be seen coming and going. His Majesty will be with people right up until his *coucher*, and he departs instantly after

that. Only Her Majesty will be alone in the palace for some time. She is also more recognizable.”

“Than the king?”

“But of course! His Majesty is not . . . a handsome man. Gazes do not linger on his face. What people recognize are his clothes, and carriage, all the external signs of his royal status. But Her Majesty . . . her face is known. Her face is studied and drawn and painted. Her style is copied. She is beautiful, and her face has been committed to many a memory.”

“I see,” Magnus said, wanting to move away from the subject of the queen’s beauty. “And what will happen to you?”

“I will drive the carriage as far as Bondy,” he said, his gaze still fixed on Magnus. He continued to list details—troop movements, stations to change the horses, things of that nature. Magnus had no interest in these details. They could not hold his attention like the way the elegant ruff of shirt fabric brushed Axel’s chin as he spoke. The heavy plumpness of his lower lip. No king or queen or palace or work of art had anything that could compare with that lower lip.

“As for your payment . . .”

These words drew Magnus back in.

“The matter of payment is quite simple,” Magnus said. “I require no money—”

“Monsieur,” Axel said, leaning forward, “you do this as a true patriot of France!”

“I do this,” Magnus continued calmly, “to develop our friendship. I ask only to see you again when the thing is done.”

“To see me?”

“To see you, monsieur.”

Axel’s shoulders drew back a bit, and he looked down at his plate. For a moment Magnus thought it was all for nothing, that he had made the wrong move. But then Axel looked back up, and the candlelight flickered in his blue eyes.

“Monsieur,” he said, taking Magnus’s hand across the table, “we shall be the closest of friends evermore.”

This was precisely what Magnus wanted to hear.



On Sunday morning, the day of the escape, Magnus woke to the usual clamor of church bells ringing all over Paris. His head was a bit thick and clouded from a long evening with the Count de —— and a group of actors from the Comédie-Italienne. It seemed that during the night he had also acquired a monkey. It sat on the footboard of his bed, happily eating Magnus’s morning bread. It had already tipped over the pot of tea that Claude had brought in, and there was a pile of shredded ostrich feathers in the middle of the floor.

“Hello,” Magnus said to the monkey.

The monkey did not reply.

“I shall call you Ragnor,” Magnus added, leaning back against the pillows gently. “Claude!”

The door opened, and Claude came in. He did not appear in the least bit surprised about Ragnor’s presence. He just immediately set to work cleaning up the spilled tea.

“I’ll need you to get a leash for my monkey, Claude, and also a hat.”

“Of course, monsieur.”

“Do you think he needs a little coat as well?”

“Perhaps not in this weather, monsieur.”

“You’re right,” Magnus said with a sigh. “Make it a simple dressing gown, just like mine.”

“Which one, monsieur?”

“The one in rose and silver.”

“An excellent choice, monsieur,” Claude said, getting to work on the feathers.

“And take him to the kitchen and get him a proper breakfast, will you? He’ll need fruit and water, and perhaps a cool bath.”

By this point Ragnor had hopped down from the foot of the bed and was making his way toward an exquisite Sevres porcelain vase, when Claude plucked him up like he’d been monkey-plucking all his life.

“Ah,” Claude added, reaching into his coat, “a note came for you this morning.”

He made his quiet exit with the monkey. Magnus tore open the note. It read:

There is a problem. It is to be delayed until tomorrow.

—Axel

Well, that was the evening’s plans ruined.

Tomorrow was Saint Cloud’s party. Both of these obligations needed to be met. But it could be done. He would take his carriage to the edge of the Tuileries palace, attend to the business with the queen, get back into the carriage, and get to the party. He’d had busier nights.

And Axel was worth it.



Magnus spent far more of the next day and evening worrying about Saint Cloud’s party than about his business with the royal family. The glamour would be easy. The party would likely be fraught and uncomfortable. All he had to do was put in an appearance, smile, and chat for a bit, and then he could be on his way. But he couldn’t escape the feeling that somehow this evening was going to go wrong.

But first, the small matter of the queen.

Magnus took his bath and dressed after dinner, and then quietly left his apartments at nine, instructing his driver to take him to the vicinity of the Tuileries garden and return at midnight. This was a familiar enough trip. Many people went to the garden for a “chance encounter” amongst the topiaries. He walked around for a bit, making his way through the shadowy garden, listening to the snuffling noises of lovers in the shrubbery, occasionally peeking through the leaves to have a little look.

At ten thirty he made his way, by following Axel’s map, to the outside of the apartments of the long-departed Duc de Villequier. If all went to plan, the young princess and dauphin would be exiting those unguarded doors soon, with the dauphin disguised as a little girl. If they did not exit, the plan was already foiled.

But only a few minutes later than expected, the children came out with their nurses, all in the disguises. Magnus followed them quietly as they walked through the north-facing courtyard, down the rue de l’Échelle, and to the Grand Carrousel. And there, with a plain carriage, was Axel. He was dressed as a rough Parisian coachman. He was even smoking a pipe and making jokes, all in a perfect low Paris accent, all traces of his Swedishness gone. There was Axel in the moonlight, lifting the children into the carriage— Magnus was struck speechless for a moment. Axel’s bravery, his talent, his gentleness . . . it tugged on Magnus’s heart in a way that was slightly unfamiliar, and it made it very difficult to be cynical.

He watched them drive away, and then returned to his task. He would enter through that same door. Even though the door was unguarded, Magnus needed his glamour to protect him, so that anyone

looking over would see only a large cat sneaking into the palace through a door that seemed to blow open.

With thousands of people coming in and out—and no royal staff of hundreds of cleaners—the floors were grimy, with clumps of dried mud and footprints. There was a musty smell about the place, a mix of damp, smoke, mold, and a few unemptied chamber pots, some of which sat in the halls. There was no light, save what was reflected from windows, off mirrors, and weakly amplified with crystal chandeliers that were thick with spiderwebs and dimmed by soot.

Axel had given Magnus a hand-drawn map with very clear instructions on how to get through the seemingly endless series of arches and largely empty grand rooms, their gilded furnishings either absent or having been roughly appropriated by guards. There were a few secret doors hidden in the paneling, which Magnus quietly passed through. As he went deeper into the palace, the rooms grew a bit cleaner, the candles a bit more frequent. There were smells of cooking food and pipe smoke and more people passing by.

And then he arrived at the royal chambers. At the door he'd been instructed to enter, a guard sat by, idly whistling and kicking back on his chair. Magnus sent up a small spark in the corner of the room, and the guard got up to examine it. Magnus slipped the key into the lock and entered. These rooms had a velvety silence about them that felt unnatural and uncomfortable. He smelled smoke from a recently extinguished candle. Magnus was not cowed by royalty, but his heart began to beat a bit more quickly as he reached for the second key Axel had given him. Axel had a key to the queen's private rooms. The fact was both exciting and unsettling.

And there she was—Queen Marie Antoinette. He'd seen her image many times, but now she was in front of him, and altogether human. That was the shock of it. The queen was a human, in her sleeping dress. There was a loveliness about her. One part, no doubt, was simply the training she had had—her regal bearing and small, delicate footsteps. The pictures had never done justice to her eyes, though, which were large and luminous. Her hair had been carefully coiffed in a halo of light curls, over which she wore a light linen cap. Magnus remained in the shadows and watched her pace her room, going from bed to window and back to bed again, clearly terrified about the fate of her family.

"You notice nothing, madame," he said quietly. The queen turned as he said this and looked at the corner of the room in confusion, then returned to her pacing. Magnus drew closer, and as he did so, he could see how the strain of things had taken its toll on the woman. Her hair was thin, and pale, turning brittle and gray at points. Still, her face had a fierce, determined glow that Magnus quite admired. He could see why Axel felt for her—there was a strength there he never would have expected.

He wiggled his fingers, and blue flames crackled between them. Again the queen turned in confusion. Magnus passed his hand by her face, changing her visage from the familiar and royal to the familiar and ordinary. Her eyes diminished in size and grew dark, her cheeks became plumper and heavily flushed with red, her nose increased in size, and her chin receded. Her hair became more limp and darkened to a chestnut brown. He went a little further than was absolutely necessary, even altering her cheekbones and ears a bit until no one could mistake the woman in front of him for the queen. She looked as she was supposed to look—like a Russian noblewoman of a different age, a different life altogether.

He created a noise near the window to draw her attention away, and when her back was turned, he exited. He left the palace through a heavily trafficked exit behind the royal apartments, where the queen kept a gate open for Axel's nightly entrances and exits.

It was altogether simple and elegant, and a good night's work. Magnus smiled to himself, looked up at the moon hanging over Paris, and thought of Axel, driving around in his coach. Then he thought

of Axel doing other things. And then he hurried on. There were vampires to see.



It was a fortunate thing that vampire parties always started so late. Magnus's carriage drew up to Saint Cloud's door after midnight. The footmen, all vampires, helped him from his carriage, and Henri greeted him by the door.

"Monsieur Bane," he said, with his creepy little smile. "Master will be so very pleased."

"I'm so glad," Magnus said, barely concealing his sarcasm. Henri's eyebrow flicked just a bit. Then he turned and put his arm out to a girl of similar age and appearance—blond, glassy-eyed, dull of expression, and very beautiful.

"You know my sister, Brigitte?"

"Of course. We've met several times, mademoiselle, in your . . . previous life."

"My previous life," Brigitte said with a little, tinkling laugh. "My previous life."

Brigitte's previous life was an idea that continued to entertain her, as she kept giggling and smiling to herself. Henri put his arm around her in a way that was not entirely brotherly.

"Master has very generously allowed us to keep our names," he said. "And I was most pleased when he permitted me to return to my former home and bring my sister back here to live. Master is most generous in this way, as he is in all ways."

This caused Brigitte to have another fit of giggles. Henri gave her a playful pat on the bottom.

"I'm absolutely parched," Magnus said. "I think I'll find some champagne."

Unlike the dreary and poorly lit Tuileries, Saint Cloud's house was spectacular. It didn't quite qualify as a palace, in terms of size, but it had all of the opulence of the décor. It was a veritable jungle of patterns, with paintings packed frame to frame up to the ceilings. And all of Saint Cloud's chandeliers sparkled and were full of black candles, dripping black wax onto the floor. The wax was then instantly scraped up by a small army of darklings. A few mundane hangers-on were draped over the furniture, most holding wineglasses—or bottles. Most slumped with their necks exposed, just waiting, begging to be bitten. The vampires stayed on their own side of the room, laughing amongst themselves and pointing, as if choosing what to eat from a table laden with delicacies.

In mundane Parisian society the large powdered wig had recently gone out of fashion, in favor of more natural styles. In vampire society the wigs were bigger than ever. One female vampire wore a wig that was at least six feet high, powdered a light pink, and supported by a delicate latticework of what Magnus suspected was the bones of children. She had a bit of blood at the corner of her mouth, and Magnus could not figure out if the slashes of red on her cheeks were blood or extreme streaks of blush. (Like the wigs, the Paris vampires also favored the slightly passé makeup styles, such as the sharp spots of blush on the cheeks, possibly in mockery of the humans.)

He passed an ashen-faced harpist who had—Magnus noted grimly—been shackled to the floor by his ankle. If he played well enough, he might be kept alive for a while to play again. Or he could be a late-night snack. Magnus was tempted to sever the harpist's chain, but just at that moment there was a voice from above.

"Magnus! Magnus Bane, where have you been?"

Marcel Saint Cloud was leaning over the rail and waving down. Around him, a cluster of vampires peered at Magnus over their fans of feather and ivory and bone.

Saint Cloud was, though it pained Magnus to admit it, strikingly beautiful. The old ones all had a very special look about them—a luster that came with age. And Saint Cloud was old, possibly one of Vlad's very first vampire court. He was not as tall as Magnus, but was very finely boned, with jutting

cheekbones and long fingers. His eyes were utterly black, but caught the light like mirrored glass. And his clothes . . . well, he used the same tailor as Magnus, so of course they were wonderful.

“Always busy,” Magnus said, managing a smile as Saint Cloud and his cluster of followers descended the steps. They clung to his heels, altering their pace to fall in line with his. Sycophants.

“You’ve just missed de Sade.”

“What a shame,” Magnus replied. The Marquis de Sade was a decidedly eerie mundane, with the most perverse imagination Magnus had ever come across since the Spanish Inquisition.

“There are some things I want to show you,” Saint Cloud said, putting a cold arm around Magnus’s shoulders. “Absolutely wonderful things!”

One thing Saint Cloud and Magnus had in common was a rich appreciation for mundane fashion, furniture, and art. Magnus tended to buy his, or receive them as payment. Marcel traded with the revolutionaries—or with the street people who had raided great houses and taken the pretty things from inside. Or his darklings handed over their possessions. Or things just arrived in his house. It was best not to ask too many questions but simply to admire, and admire loudly. Marcel would take offense if Magnus didn’t praise every item.

Suddenly, a chorus of voices from an outside courtyard was calling for Saint Cloud.

“Something seems to be going on,” Marcel said. “Perhaps we should investigate.”

The voices were high, excited, and giddy—all tones Magnus didn’t want to hear at a vampire party. Those tones meant very bad things.

“What is it, my friends?” Marcel said, walking toward the front hall.

There was a tangle of vampires standing at the foot of the front steps, with Henri at the head. A few of them were holding a struggling figure. She made high-pitched squeals from a mouth that sounded covered, though it was impossible to see her in the throng.

“Master . . .” Henri’s eyes were wide. “Master, we have found . . . You will not believe, Master . . .”

“Show me. Bring it forward. What is it?”

The vampires ordered themselves a bit and threw the human into the cleared space on the ground. It was all Magnus could do not to make a sound of alarm, or give away anything at all.

It was Marie Antoinette.

Of course, the glamour he had applied did not affect the vampires. The queen was exposed, her face white with shock.

“You . . . ,” she said, addressing the crowd in a shaky voice, “what you have done . . . You will —”

Marcel raised a silencing hand, and to Magnus’s surprise, the queen stopped speaking.

“Who brought her?” he asked. “How did this happen?”

“It was I, monsieur,” said a voice. A dapper vampire named Coselle stepped to the front. “I was on my way here, coming down the rue du Bac, and I absolutely could not believe my eyes. She must have gotten out of the Tuileries. She was just on the street, monsieur, looking panicked and lost.”

Of course. The queen would not have been accustomed to being out on the streets on her own. And in the dark it was easy to go the wrong way. She had made a wrong turn and crossed the Seine somehow.

“Madame,” Marcel said, walking down the stairs. “Or should I say ‘Your Majesty’? Do I have the pleasure of addressing our beloved and most . . . illustrious queen?”

A low snicker from around the room, but aside from that no noise at all.

“I am she,” the queen said, rising to her feet. “And I demand—”

Marcel put up his hand again, indicating silence. He descended the rest of the steps and walked to the queen, stood in front of her, and examined her closely. Then he gave a small bow.

“Your Majesty,” he said. “I am thrilled beyond words that you could attend my party. We are all thrilled beyond words, are we not, my friends?”

By now, all the vampires who could fit had crowded into the doorway. Those who could not were leaning out of the windows. There were nods and smiles, but no reply. The silence was terrible. Outside Marcel’s courtyard wall, even Paris itself seemed to have fallen silent.

“My dear Marcel,” Magnus said, forcing a laugh. “I do *hate* to disappoint you, but this is not the queen. This is the mistress of one of my clients. Her name is Josette.”

As this statement appeared to be plainly and glaringly false, Marcel and the others remained silent, waiting to hear more. Magnus walked down the steps, trying to look like he was amused by this turn of events.

“She’s very good, isn’t she?” he said. “I cater to many tastes, much like you. And I happen to have a client who wishes to do to the queen what she has been doing to the French people for many years. I was hired to do a complete transformation. And I must say, at the risk of sounding immodest, that I have done an excellent job of it.”

“I have never known you to be modest,” Marcel said without a hint of a smile.

“It’s an overrated quality,” Magnus replied with a shrug.

“Then how do you explain the fact that this woman claims she is, in fact, Queen Marie Antoinette?”

“I am the queen, you monster!” she said, her voice now hysterical. “I am the queen. I am the queen!”

Magnus got the impression that she was saying this not as a way of impressing her captors but as a way of assuring herself of her own identity and sanity. He stepped calmly in front of her and snapped his fingers in front of her face. She fell unconscious at once, slumping gently into his arms. “Why,” he said, calmly turning toward Marcel, “would the queen of France be wandering down this street, unattended, in the middle of the night?”

“A fair question.”

“Because she wasn’t. Josette was. She had to be complete in every way. At first my client wanted her only to look like the queen, but then he insisted on the entire package, as it were. Appearance, personality, all of it. Josette absolutely believes she is Marie Antoinette. In fact, I was doing a bit of work on her in this very regard when she became afearred and escaped from my apartments. Perhaps she followed me here. Sometimes my talents get the better of me.”

He set the queen gently on the ground.

“It also appears she has a light glamour on her,” Marcel added.

“For mundanes,” Magnus said. “You can’t have a woman who looks exactly like the queen passing through the streets. It’s quite a light one, like a summer shawl. She was not supposed to leave the house. I was still working.”

Marcel squatted down and took the queen’s face in his hand, turning it from side to side, sometimes looking at the face itself, sometimes at the neck. A long minute or two passed in which the entire assembled group waited for his next utterance.

“Well,” Marcel said at last, standing back up. “I must congratulate you on an excellent piece of work.”

Magnus had to brace himself in order that his sigh of relief would not be seen.

“All of my work is excellent, but I accept your congratulations,” he said, flicking a careless hand

in Marcel's direction.

"A marvel such as this, it would be such a success at one of my gatherings. So I really must insist that you sell her to me."

"Sell her?" Magnus said.

"Yes." Marcel leaned down and traced his finger down the queen's jawline. "Yes, you must. Whatever your client paid you, I'll double it. But I really must have her. Quite stunning. Whatever you like, I will pay."

"But, Marcel . . ."

"Now, now, Magnus." Marcel slowly wagged a finger. "We all have our weaknesses, and our weaknesses must be indulged if they are to flourish. I will have her."

It wouldn't do to imply that this fictional client was more important than Marcel.

Think. He had to *think*. And he knew that Marcel was watching him think. "If you insist," Magnus replied. "But, as I said, I was still working. I just had a few finishing touches left to do. She still has a few unfortunate habits left over from her previous life. All of those Versailles mannerisms—there are so many of them—they all had to be stitched in like fine embroidery. And I hadn't yet signed the work. I do like to sign my work."

"How long would this take?"

"Oh, not long at all. I could bring her back tomorrow . . ."

"I would prefer she stayed here. After all, how long does it take you to sign your work?" Marcel asked with a light smile.

"It can take time," Magnus said, responding with his own knowing smile. "I have an exquisite signature."

"While I deal in used goods, I do prefer ones in pristine condition. Don't be long about it. Henri, Charles . . . take Madam upstairs and put her in the blue room. Let Monsieur Bane complete his signature. We are looking forward to seeing the final product shortly."

"Of course," Magnus said.

Slowly he followed the prostrate queen and the darklings back inside. After Henri and Charles put the queen on the bed, Magnus locked the door and slid a large wardrobe to block it. Then he threw open the shutters. The blue room was a third-floor room, a sheer drop down to the receiving courtyard. That was the only way out.



Magnus allowed himself a few moments of swearing before shaking his head and taking stock of his situation again. He could probably get himself out of this, but to get both himself and the queen . . . *and* to return the queen to Axel . . .

He looked out the window again, to the ground below. Most of the vampires had gone back inside. A few servants and darklings remained to greet the carriages, though. Down would not work, but *up* . . .

Up, in a balloon, for instance.

Magnus was certain of one thing—this work was going to be very difficult. The balloon itself was on the other side of Paris. He reached out with his mind and found what he was looking for. It was rolled up still, in the gazebo in the Bois de Boulogne. He rolled it to the grass, he willed it to inflate, glamoured it invisible, and then he lifted it from the ground. He felt it lift, and he guided it up, over the trees of the park, over the houses and the streets, carefully avoiding the spires of the churches and cathedrals, over the river. It was strongly buoyant and was pulled easily by the wind. It wanted to go

straight up into the sky, but Magnus held on.

At some point he would run dry of power, and then he would lose consciousness. He could only hope that this would happen late enough in the process, but there was really no telling. As the balloon drew nearer, he did his best to glamour it completely, making it invisible to even the vampires just below. He watched it come to the window, and as carefully as he could, he guided it close. He leaned out as far as he could and caught hold of it. The basket had a small door, which he managed to get open.

When one steals a flying balloon and animates it to fly over Paris, one should, ideally, have some idea how said balloon normally works. Magnus had never been interested in the mechanics of the balloon—his only interest was that the mundanes could now fly in a colorful piece of silk. So when he discovered that the basket contained a fire, he was dismayed.

Also, the queen herself was probably not heavy, but her dress—and whatever she had concealed or sewn into the dress for her escape—certainly was, and Magnus had no energy to spare. He snapped his fingers, and the queen woke. Just in time he drew a finger across her lips and silenced the scream that was about to come from her mouth.

“Your Majesty,” he said, the exhaustion weighing his voice. “There is no time to explain, and no time for introductions. What I need you to do is—as quickly as possible—step out of that window. You cannot see it, but there is something out there that will catch you. But we must be quick.”

The queen opened her mouth and, finding that she could not speak, began to run around the room, picking up objects and hurling them at Magnus. Magnus cringed as vases hit the wall next to him. He managed to lash the balloon to the window with the curtain and grabbed the queen. She began to pummel Magnus. Her fists were small and she was clearly unused to this sort of activity, but her blows were not entirely ineffective. He had very little strength left, and she seemed to be running on raw fear, which quicksilvered her veins.

“Your Majesty,” he hissed. “You must stop. You must listen to me. Axel—”

On the word “Axel,” she froze. This was all he needed. He shoved her backward out the window. The balloon, bumped back by the force, shifted a foot or so away from the window—so she landed half in, half out. She hung there, terrified and grasping at something she could feel but not see, her slippered feet kicking into the air and smacking into the side of the building. Magnus had to accept a few flurried kicks in the chest and face before he was able to roll her over into the basket. Her skirts tumbled over her head, and the Queen of France was reduced to a pile of cloth and two flailing legs. He jumped into the basket himself, closed the basket door, and released the hold on the basket with a deep sigh. The balloon went straight up, shooting above the rooftops. The queen had managed to flip herself over and scramble to her knees. She touched the basket, her eyes wide with a childlike wonder. She drew herself up slowly and peered over the side of the basket, took one look at the view below, and fainted dead away.

“Someday,” Magnus said, looking at the crumpled royal person at his feet, “I must write my memoirs.”



This was not the balloon ride Magnus had hoped for.

For a start, the balloon was low and suicidally slow, and seemed to like nothing more than dropping suddenly onto roofs and chimneys. The queen was shifting and groaning on the floor of the basket, causing it to sway back and forth in a nausea-inducing way. An owl made a sudden assault. And the sky was dark, so dark that Magnus had largely no idea where he was going. The queen

moaned a bit and lifted her head.

“Who *are* you?” she asked weakly.

“A friend of a friend,” Magnus replied.

“What are we—”

“It’s best if you don’t ask, Your Majesty. You really don’t want the answer. And I think we’re being blown south, which is the completely wrong direction.”

“Axel . . .”

“Yes.” Magnus leaned over and tried to make out the streets below. “Yes, Axel . . . but here’s a question . . . If you were trying to find, say, the Seine, where would you look?”

The queen put her head back down.

He managed to find enough strength to restore the glamour on the balloon, rendering it invisible to the mundanes. He did not have the energy to completely glamour himself in the process, so some people were treated to the view of Magnus’s upper half sailing past their third-story window in the dark. Some people didn’t spare the candles, and he got one or two very interesting views.

Eventually he caught sight of a shop he knew. He pulled the balloon down the street, until more and more looked familiar, and then he caught sight of Notre Dame.

Now the question was . . . where to put the balloon *down*? You couldn’t just land a balloon in the middle of Paris. Even an invisible one. Paris was just too . . . spiky.

There was only one thing for it, and Magnus already hated it.

“Your Majesty,” he said, prodding the queen with his foot. “Your Majesty, *you must wake up.*”

The queen stirred again.

“Now,” Magnus said, “you won’t like what I am about to say, but trust me when I say it is the best of several terrible alternatives. . . .”

“Axel. . . .”

“Yes. Now, in a minute we are going to land in the Seine—”

“What?”

“And it would be very good if you perhaps held your nose. And I’m guessing your dress is full of jewels, so . . .”

The balloon was dropping fast, and the water was coming up. Magnus carefully navigated them to a spot between two bridges.

“You may get—”

The balloon simply dropped like a stone. The fire went out, and the silk immediately came down on Magnus and the queen. Magnus was almost out of strength, but he managed to find enough to rend the silk in two so it didn’t trap them. He swam on his own power, pulling her under his arm to the bank. They were, as he’d hoped, quite close to the Tuileries and its dock. He got her over to the steps and threw her down.

“Stay here,” he said, dripping wet and panting.

But the queen was unconscious again. Magnus envied her.

He trudged up the steps and back up onto the streets of Paris. Axel would probably have been circling the area. They had agreed that if anything went wrong, Magnus was to send a blue flash into the sky, like a firework. He did it. Then he sank to the ground and waited.

About fifteen minutes later a carriage pulled up—not the simple, plain one from before but a massive one, in black and green and yellow. One that could easily carry half a dozen or more people for several days, in the grandest of possible styles. Axel hopped down from the driver’s seat and rushed to Magnus.

“Where is she? Why are you wet? What has happened?”

“She’s fine,” Magnus said, putting up a hand. “*This* is the carriage? A *berline de voyage*?”

“Yes,” von Fersen said. “Their Majesties insist. And it would be unseemly for them to arrive in something less grand.”

“And impossible not to be noticed!”

For the first time von Fersen looked uncomfortable. He had clearly hated this idea and had fought it.

“Yes, well . . . this is the carriage. But . . .”

“She’s on the steps. We had to land in the river.”

“Land?”

“It’s a long story,” Magnus said. “Let’s just say things got complicated. But she is alive.”

Axel got to his knees in front of Magnus.

“You will never be forgotten for this,” Axel said in a low voice. “France will remember. Sweden will remember.”

“I don’t care if France or Sweden remembers. I care if you remember.”

Magnus was genuinely shocked when it was Axel who instigated the kiss—how sudden it was, how passionate, how all of Paris, and all the vampires, and the Seine and the balloon and everything fell away and it was just the two of them for one moment. One perfect moment.

And it was Magnus who broke it.

“Go,” he whispered. “I need you to be safe. Go.”

Axel nodded, looking a bit shocked at his own action, and ran to the dock steps. Magnus got up, and with one last look started to walk.



Going home was not an option. Saint Cloud’s vampires were probably at his apartments right now. He had to get inside until dawn. He spent the night at the *petite maison* of Madame de ———, one of his more recent lovers. At dawn he returned to his apartments. The front door was ajar. He made his way inside cautiously.

“Claude!” he called, carefully staying in the pool of sunlight by the door. “Marie! Ragnor!”

“They are not here, monsieur,” said a voice.

Henri. Of course. He was sitting on the staircase.

“Did you hurt them?”

“We took the ones called Claude and Marie. I don’t know who Ragnor is.”

“Did you *hurt* them?” Magnus said again.

“They are beyond hurt now. My master asked me to send his compliments. He said they made for excellent feasting.”

Magnus felt sick. Marie and Claude had been good to him, and now . . .

“Master would like very much to see you,” Henri said. “Why don’t we go there together, now, and you can speak when he wakes this evening.”

“I think I’ll decline the invitation,” Magnus said.

“If you do, I think you will find Paris a most inhospitable place to live. And who is that new gentleman of yours? We’ll find his name eventually. Do you understand?”

Henri stood, and tried to look menacing, but he was a mundane, a darkling of seventeen.

“What I think, little darkling,” Magnus said, stepping closer, “is that you forget who you’re dealing with.”

Magnus allowed some blue sparks to flick between his fingers. Henri backed up a step.

“Go home and tell your master that I’ve gotten his message. I have given offense that I did not mean to give. I will leave Paris at once. The matter can be considered closed. I accept my punishment.”

He stepped away from the door and extended his arm, indicating that Henri should exit.



As he’d expected, everything was a shambles—furniture overturned, burn marks up the walls, art missing, books shredded. In his bedchamber wine had been poured onto his bed and his clothes. . . . At least he thought it was wine.

Magnus didn’t take long to pick through the wreckage. With the flick of his hand, the marble fireplace moved away from the wall. He retrieved a sack heavy with *louis d’or*, a thick roll of *assignats*, and a collection of wonderful rings in citrine, jade, ruby, and one magnificent blue topaz.

This was his insurance policy, should the revolutionaries have raided his house. Vampires, revolutionaries . . . it was all the same now. The rings went on his fingers, the *assignats* into his coat, and the *louis d’or* into a handsome leather satchel, which had also been stored inside the wall for this very purpose. He reached back farther into the opening and produced one last item—the Gray Book, bound in green velvet. This he carefully placed in the satchel.

He heard a tiny noise behind him, and Ragnor crawled out from under the bed.

“My little friend,” Magnus said, picking up the frightened monkey. “At least you survived. Come. We’ll go together.”



When Magnus heard the news, he was high in the Alps, resting by a stream, crushing some edelweiss under his thumb. Magnus had tried to avoid all things French for weeks—French people, French food, French news. He had given himself over to pork and pounded veal, thermal bathing, and reading. For most of this time he had passed his days alone—with little Ragnor—and in the quiet. But just that morning an escaped nobleman from Dijon had come to stay at the inn where Magnus was living. He looked like a man who liked to talk at length, and Magnus was in no mood for such company, so he’d gone to sit by the stream. He was not surprised when the man followed him there.

“You! Monsieur!” he called to Magnus as he puffed and huffed up the hillside.

Magnus flicked some edelweiss from his fingernail.

“Yes?”

“The innkeeper says you recently came from Paris, monsieur! Are you my countryman?”

Magnus wore a light glamour at the inn, so he could pass as a random noble French refugee, one of hundreds that were flowing over the border.

“I came from Paris,” Magnus said noncommittally.

“And you have a monkey?”

Ragnor was scampering around. He had taken to the Alps extremely well.

“Ah, monsieur, I am so glad to find you! For weeks I have not spoken to anyone from my land.” He wrung his hands together. “I hardly know what to think or do these days. Such terrible times! Such horrors! You have heard about the king and queen, no doubt?”

“What about them?” Magnus said, keeping his face impassive.

“Their Majesties, God protect them! They tried to escape Paris! They made it as far as the town of Varennes, where it is said a postal worker recognized the king. They were captured and sent back to Paris. Oh, terrible times!”

Without a word Magnus got up, scooped up Ragnor, and returned to the inn.



He had not wanted to think of this matter. In his mind Axel and the family had been safe. That was how he'd needed it to be. But now.

He paced his room, and finally wrote a letter to Axel's address in Paris. Then he waited for the reply.

It took three weeks, and came in an unfamiliar hand, from Sweden.

Monsieur,

Axel wishes you to know he is well, and returns the depth of feeling. The King and Queen, as you know, are now imprisoned in Paris. Axel has been moved to Vienna to plead their case to the Emperor, but I fear he is determined to return to Paris, at the risk of his life. Monsieur, as Axel seems to hold you in high esteem, won't you please write to him and discourage this enterprise? He is my beloved brother, and I worry for him constantly.

There was an address in Vienna given, and the note was signed simply "Sophie."

Axel would return to Paris. Of that, Magnus was sure.

Vampires, fey folk, werewolves, Shadowhunters, and demons—these things made sense to Magnus. But the mundane world—it seemed to have no pattern, no form. Their quicksilver politics. Their short lives . . .

Magnus thought once again of the blue-eyed man standing in his parlor. Then he lit a match and burned the note.

Cassandra Clare is the author of the *New York Times*, *USA Today*, *Wall Street Journal*, and *Publishers Weekly* bestselling *Mortal Instruments* series and *Infernal Devices* trilogy. Her books have more than twenty million copies in print worldwide and have been translated into more than thirty-five languages. Cassandra lives in western Massachusetts. Visit her at CassandraClare.com. Learn more about the world of the Shadowhunters at Shadowhunters.com.

New York Times bestseller **Maureen Johnson** is the author of ten YA novels, including *13 Little Blue Envelopes*, *The Name of the Star*, and *The Madness Underneath*. Maureen spends a great deal of time online, earning her some dubious and some not-so-dubious commendations, such as being named one of *Time* magazine's top 140 people to follow on Twitter. Visit her at MaureenJohnsonBooks.com or follow her on Twitter at [@maureenjohnson](https://twitter.com/maureenjohnson).

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