CHAPTER ONE

Collision in Paris

FROM THE OBSERVATION DECK OF THE EIFFEL TOWER, the city was spread at Magnus Bane and Alec Lightwood's feet like a gift. The stars twinkled as if they knew they had competition, the cobbled streets were narrow gold, and the Seine was a silver ribbon twined around a filigree box of bonbons. Paris, city of boulevards and bohemians, of lovers and the Louvre.

Paris had also been the setting for many of Magnus's most embarrassing mishaps and ill-conceived plots, and several romantic catastrophes, but the past did not matter now.

This time Magnus intended to get Paris right. In his four hundred years of wandering the world, he had learned that wherever you traveled, it was the company that mattered. He looked across the small table at Alec Lightwood, who was ignoring the glitter and glamour of Paris in order to write postcards to his family back home, and smiled.

Each time he finished a postcard, Alec wrote *Wish you were here* at the end. And each time, Magnus snatched the card and wrote, with a flourish, *Except not really.*

Alec's broad shoulders were hunched over their table as he wrote. Runes flowed along the muscled strength of his arms, one rune already fading against his throat, just under the clean line of his jaw. A lock of his always-disheveled black hair was falling into his eyes. Magnus had the fleeting impulse to reach over and push his hair back, but he repressed the urge. Alec was sometimes self-conscious about public displays of affection. There might be no Shadowhunters here, but it was not as if all ordinary humans were totally accepting of such gestures either. Magnus wished they were.

"Thinking deep thoughts?" Alec asked.

Magnus scoffed. "I try not to."

Enjoying life was essential, but sometimes it was an effort. Planning the perfect trip to Europe had not been easy. Magnus had been forced to invent several brilliant schemes single-handed. He could only imagine trying to describe his somewhat unique requirements to a travel agent.

"Going somewhere?" she might ask when he called.

"First holiday with my new boyfriend," Magnus might reply, since being able to tell the world he was dating Alec was a recent development, and Magnus liked to brag. "Very new. So new we still have that new-car smell."

So new that each was still learning the rhythms of the other, every glance or touch a move in a territory both wonderful and strange. Sometimes he caught himself looking at Alec, or found Alec looking at him, with luminous shock. It was as though each of them had discovered something unexpected but infinitely desirable. They were not yet sure of each other, but they wanted to be.

Or at least, that was what Magnus wanted.

"It's a classic love story. I hit on him at a party, he asked me out, then we fought an epic magical battle between good and evil side by side, and now we need a vacation. The thing is, he's a Shadowhunter," he would say.

"Sorry, what?" his imaginary travel agent would ask.

"Oh, you know how it is. Back in the day, the world was being overrun with demons. Think Black Friday, with more rivers of blood and slightly fewer howls of desperation. As happens in times of despair for the noble and true—so, never for me—an angel came. The Angel gave to his chosen warriors and all their descendants the power of angels to defend mankind. He also gave them their own secret country. The Angel Raziel was a big gift giver. The Shadowhunters continue their fight to this day, invisible protectors, shining and virtuous, the actual non-ironic definition of 'holier than thou.' It is incredibly annoying. They literally are holier than thou! Certainly holier than me, as I am demonspawn."

Even Magnus could not think of what his travel agent would say to that. Probably she'd just whimper in confusion.

"Did I forget to mention?" Magnus would go on. "There are beings very different from Shadowhunters: there are Downworlders, too. Alec is a child of the Angel, and the son of one of the oldest families in Idris, the Nephilim home country. I'm sure his parents would not have been thrilled to see him squiring a faerie or a vampire or a werewolf about New York. I'm also certain they would have preferred that to a warlock. My kind are considered the most dangerous and suspect in Downworld. We are the children of demons, and I am the immortal child of a certain infamous Greater Demon, though I may have forgotten to mention that fact to my boyfriend. Respectable Shadowhunters are not supposed to bring my sort home to meet Mom and Dad. I have a past. I have several pasts. Besides, good Shadowhunter boys aren't meant to bring home boyfriends at all."

Only Alec had. He'd stood in the hall of his ancestors and kissed Magnus full on the mouth under the eyes of all the Nephilim assembled there. It had been the most profound and lovely surprise of Magnus's long life.

"We recently fought in a great war that averted disaster to all humankind, not that humankind is grateful, since they don't know. We received neither glory nor adequate financial compensation, and suffered losses I cannot describe. Alec lost his brother, and I lost my friend, and both of us could really use a break. I fear the closest thing to treating himself Alec has ever experienced is buying a shiny new knife. I want to do something nice for him, and with him. I want to take a step away from the mess that is our lives, and see if we can work out a way to be really together. Do you have a recommended itinerary?"

Even in his head, the travel agent hung up on him.

No, Magnus had been forced to plan out an elaborately romantic European getaway by himself. But he was Magnus Bane, glamorous and enigmatic. He could accomplish a trip of this kind in style. A warrior chosen by angels and a well-dressed demon's child, in love and intent on adventure through Europe. What could go wrong?

Considering the issue of style, Magnus adjusted his crimson beret to a rakish angle. Alec looked up at the movement, then kept looking.

"Do you want to wear a beret after all?" Magnus asked. "Say the word. I happen to have several berets concealed on my person. In a variety of colors. I'm a beret cornucopia."

"I'm going to pass on the beret," said Alec. "Again. But thanks." The corners of his mouth curved upward, the smile uncertain but real.

Magnus propped his chin on his hand. He wanted to savor this moment of Alec, starlight, and possibility in Paris, and keep it to look at, years in the future. He hoped the memory would not hurt later.

"What are you thinking about?" Alec asked. "Seriously."

"Seriously," said Magnus. "You."

Alec looked startled at the idea that Magnus might be thinking of him. He was both very easy and very difficult to surprise—

Shadowhunter vision and reflexes were no joke. Whether it was coming around a corner or in the bed they shared—only to sleep, for now, until or if Alec wanted anything else—Alec always anticipated him. Yet he could be caught off guard by something as small as knowing that he was in Magnus's thoughts.

Right now, Magnus thought it was well past time for Alec to have a proper surprise. He just so happened to have one ready.

Paris was the first stop on their trip. Perhaps it was a cliché to begin a romantic European vacation in the City of Love, but Magnus believed classics were classics for a reason. They had been here almost a week, and Magnus felt it was time to put his own particular spin on things.

Alec finished his last postcard, and Magnus reached for it, then let his hand drop. He read what Alec had written and smiled, charmed and surprised.

On the postcard to his sister, Alec had added, *Wish you were here. Except not really* himself. He shot Magnus a tiny grin.

"Ready for the next adventure?" Magnus asked.

Alec looked intrigued, but he said, "You mean the cabaret? Our tickets are for nine o'clock. We should check how long it'll take us to get there from here."

It was very clear Alec had not been on a proper vacation before. He kept trying to plan the holiday as if they were going into battle.

Magnus waved his hand lazily, as if shooing a fly. "There's always time for the late show at the Moulin Rouge. Turn around."

He pointed over the Shadowhunter's shoulder. Alec turned.

Drifting toward the Eiffel Tower, bobbing unsteadily against the crosswind, was a brightly striped purple-and-blue hot-air balloon. In place of a basket, a table and two chairs rested on a wooden platform hanging below the balloon by four ropes. The table was set for two, and a rose sat in a thin vase at its center. A three-pronged candelabra completed the setting, although the winds swirling around

the Eiffel Tower kept blowing out the candles. Annoyed, Magnus snapped his fingers, and all three candles lit up again.

"Uh," said Alec. "Can you fly a hot-air balloon?"

"Of course!" Magnus declared. "Did I ever tell you about the time I stole a hot-air balloon to rescue the queen of France?"

Alec grinned as if Magnus was making a joke. Magnus smiled back. Marie Antoinette had actually been quite a handful.

"It's just," Alec said thoughtfully, "I've never even seen you drive a car."

He stood to admire the balloon, which was glamoured to be invisible. As far as the mundanes around them were concerned, Alec solemnly gazed at the open air.

"I can drive. I can also fly, and pilot, and otherwise direct any vehicle you like. I'm hardly going to crash the balloon into a chimney," Magnus protested.

"Uh-huh," said Alec, frowning.

"You seem lost in thought," Magnus remarked. "Are you considering how glamorous and romantic your boyfriend is?"

"I'm considering," said Alec, "how to protect you if we crash the balloon into a chimney."

As he moved past Magnus, Alec stopped and pushed a wayward lock of hair off Magnus's brow. His touch was light, tender but casual, as if he did not even really realize he was doing it. Magnus had not even realized his own hair was in his eyes.

Magnus ducked his head and smiled. Being taken care of was strange to him, but he thought perhaps he could get used to it.

Magnus glamoured the attention of mundane eyes away from him, and then he used his chair as a step and climbed onto the swaying platform. The moment he planted both feet on the floor, it felt as if he were standing on solid ground. He offered his hand. "Trust me."

Alec hesitated, then accepted Magnus's hand. His grip was strong, and his smile sweet. "I do."

He followed Magnus, vaulting lightly over the railing onto the platform. They sat down at the table, and the balloon, ascending bumpily like a rowboat on a choppy ocean, drifted away unseen from the Eiffel Tower. Seconds later they were floating high above the skyline as the sprawl of Paris expanded in every direction around them.

Magnus watched Alec take in the city from a thousand feet in the air. Magnus had been in love before, and it had gone wrong before. He'd been hurt and learned how to recover from the pain. Many times.

Other lovers had told Magnus that he was impossible to take seriously, that he was terrifying, that he was too much, that he was not enough. Magnus might disappoint Alec. He probably would.

If Alec's feelings did not last, Magnus at least wanted this trip to be a good memory. He hoped this would be a foundation for something more, but if this was all they ever had, Magnus would make it count.

The crystalline glow of the Eiffel Tower receded. People had not expected it to last, either. Yet there it stood, the blazon of the city.

There was a sudden strong gust of wind; the platform tilted and the balloon plummeted fifty feet. They spun against the crosswind for several rotations before Magnus made an emphatic gesture and the balloon righted itself.

Alec glanced over with a small frown, clutching the arms of his chair. "So, how do you work the controls on this thing?"

"No idea!" Magnus called back cheerfully. "I was just going to use magic!"

The hot-air balloon passed over L'Arc de Triomphe with inches to spare and made a sharp turn to head toward the Louvre, dipping low over the tops of buildings.

Magnus did not feel as carefree as he wished to appear. It was an awfully windy day. Keeping the balloon upright, steady, headed in

the right direction, and invisible was a greater strain than he cared to admit. And he still had dinner to serve. And he had to keep relighting the candles.

Romance was a lot of work.

Below, dark leaves hung heavy on the red-brick walls along the riverbank, and streetlights shone pink and orange and blue amid the white-painted buildings and narrow cobbled streets. On the other side of the balloon lay the Jardin des Tuileries, its round pond staring up at them like an eye, and the glass pyramid of the Louvre, a beam of red light cutting through its center. Magnus thought suddenly of how the Paris Commune had set the Tuileries on fire, remembered ash rising in the air and the blood on the guillotine. This was a city bearing the stains of long history and old sorrows; through Alec's clear eyes, Magnus hoped it would be washed clean.

He snapped his fingers, and a bottle chilling in an ice bucket materialized next to the table. "Champagne?"

Alec shot out of his chair. "Magnus, you see that plume of smoke down there? Is that a fire?"

"So that's a no to champagne?"

The Shadowhunter pointed at an avenue running parallel to the Seine. "There's something weird about that smoke. It's drifting *against* the wind."

Magnus waved his champagne flute. "Nothing the *pompiers* can't handle."

"Now the smoke is jumping across the rooftops. It just made a right turn. Now it's hiding behind a chimney."

Magnus paused. "I'm sorry?"

"Okay, the smoke has just leaped over Rue des Pyramides." Alec squinted.

"You recognize the Rue des Pyramides from up here?"

Alec looked at Magnus, surprised. "I studied the maps of the city very closely before we left," said Alec. "To prepare."

Magnus was reminded again of the fact that Alec prepared for a vacation like he was preparing for a Shadowhunter mission because this was his first-ever vacation. He eyed the thick black plume drifting into the evening sky, hoping Alec was wrong and they could return to his planned evening of romance. But Alec was, unfortunately, not wrong: the cloud was too black and too compact; its plumes extended like solid tentacles fluttering in the air, blatantly ignoring the wind that should have dispersed them. Under the trails of smoke, he saw a sudden gleam.

Alec was at the edge of the platform, leaning alarmingly far over the side. "There are two people chasing the smoke . . . thing. I think those are seraph blades. They're Shadowhunters."

"Hooray, Shadowhunters," said Magnus. "Present company excepted from my sarcastic hooray, of course."

He stood, and with a decisive gesture brought the balloon rapidly lower in altitude, recognizing with some disappointment the need to get a closer look. His vision was not as keen as Alec's rune-enhanced sight, but beneath the smoke he could soon make out two dark shapes, running along the Paris rooftops in hot pursuit.

Magnus discerned a woman's face, uplifted to the sky and shining pale as a pearl. A long plait trailed behind her as she ran, like a snake of silver and gold. The two Shadowhunters were going desperately fast.

The smoke eddied down a block of commercial buildings and over a narrow road, and spilled onto an apartment complex, dodging skylights and piping and ventilation shafts. All the while the Shadowhunters pursued, slicing at any black tentacles that whipped too close. Inside the dark maelstrom of smoke, a crowd of yellow lights like fireflies swarmed in pairs.

"Iblis demons," muttered Alec, seizing his bow and nocking an arrow. Magnus had groaned when he realized Alec was taking his bow with him to their dinner. "How could you possibly need

to shoot anything with a bow and arrow at the Eiffel Tower?" he'd said, and Alec had just smiled gently and, with a small shrug, strapped the weapon in place.

Magnus knew better than to suggest they let the Paris Shadowhunters take care of whatever irritating demonic disaster was unfolding. Alec was congenitally incapable of turning away from a good cause. It was one of his most appealing qualities.

They were closer to the rooftops now. The platform swayed dangerously as Magnus skirted around chimneys, cable wires, and roof stairwells.

The wind was dangerously strong. Magnus felt as if he were fighting the whole sky. The balloon wobbled, swinging side to side, and the ice bucket tumbled over. Magnus managed to just avoid crashing into a tall chimney stack as he watched the champagne bottle roll off the edge. It exploded in a spray of glass and foam as it impacted the roof below.

He opened his mouth to make a remark about the sad waste of champagne.

"Sorry about the champagne," said Alec. "I hope it wasn't one of your most-prized bottles or anything."

Magnus laughed. Alec anticipating him, yet again.

"I only bring the medium-prized bottles to drink on a dangling platform a thousand feet in the air."

He overcompensated for the wind a bit too much and the platform swung dangerously in the other direction like a pendulum, nearly putting a hole in a giant billboard. He righted the balloon hastily and checked on the situation below.

The swarm of Iblis demons had split in two, encircling the Shadowhunters on the roof below. The unlucky pair were trapped, though they continued fighting valiantly. The fair-haired woman moved like cornered lightning. The first Iblis demon that leaped at them was cut down by a slice of her seraph blade, as were the

second and third. But there were too many. As Magnus watched, a fourth demon launched itself toward the Shadowhunter woman, its glowing eyes streaking through the darkness.

Magnus glanced at Alec, and Alec nodded at him. Magnus used a great deal of his magic to hold the hot-air balloon perfectly still, for just a moment. Alec let his first arrow fly.

The Iblis demon never reached the woman. The glow from its eyes dimmed as its smoky body dissipated, leaving behind nothing but an arrow embedded into the ground. Three more demons suffered a similar fate.

Alec's hands were a blur, raining arrow after arrow at the swarm below. Any time a pair of glowing eyes moved toward the Shadowhunters, a streaking arrow would meet it before it could reach them.

It was a pity Magnus had to devote his attention to controlling the elements rather than admiring his boyfriend.

The rear guard of the Iblis demons turned toward the new threat in the sky. Three broke off their attack on the Shadowhunters and launched themselves toward the balloon. Two were dropped by arrows before they could make it onto the platform, but Alec was too late to draw on the third. The demon, gaping maw exposing a row of sharp black teeth, struck at Alec.

But Alec had already dropped the bow and drawn a seraph blade. *"Puriel,"* said Alec, and the blade lit up with angelic power. The runes on his body shimmered as he thrust the blade through the Iblis demon and sliced, separating head from body. The demon crumbled away into black ash.

Another group of demons reached the platform, and quickly met a similar fate. This was what Shadowhunters did, what Alec was born to do. His body was a weapon, graceful and swift, an instrument honed to slay demons and shield his loved ones. Alec was very good at both.

Magnus's skills were more in the areas of magic and fashion

sense. He ensnared one demon in a web of electricity and held off another with an invisible barrier made of wind. Alec shot the demon Magnus was holding off, then shot the last demon lingering below. At this point, the fair-haired Shadowhunter woman and her male companion had nothing left to do. They were standing in a whirl of smoky ash and destruction and appeared somewhat at a loss.

"You're welcome!" Magnus called down to them, waving. "No charge!"

"Magnus," said Alec. "Magnus!"

The note of real alarm in Alec's voice was what made Magnus aware that the wind had slipped out of his grasp, even before he felt the lurch of the balloon platform beneath their feet. Magnus made a last frantic, futile gesture, and Alec rushed at him, curling his body around Magnus's.

"Brace for—" Alec shouted in his ear, as the balloon careened down toward earth and, more specifically, a theater marquee with CARMEN spelled across the front in brilliant yellow bulbs.

Magnus Bane did his best, in life, to always be spectacular.

This crash was.