Lovereading4kids.co.uk

Helping you choose books for children

0-5 5-7 7-9 9-12 12+

opening extract from

City of Bones

written by

Cassandra Clare

published by

Walker Books

All text is copyright of the author and illustrator

please print off and read at your leisure.

1

PANDEMONIUM

"YOU'VE GOT TO BE KIDDING ME," THE BOUNCER SAID, folding his arms across his massive chest. He stared down at the boy in the red zip-up jacket and shook his shaved head. "You can't bring that thing in here."

The fifty or so teenagers in line outside the Pandemonium Club leaned forward to eavesdrop. It was a long wait to get into the all-ages club, especially on a Sunday, and not much generally happened in line. The bouncers were fierce and would come down instantly on anyone who looked like they were going to start trouble. Fifteen-year-old Clary Fray, standing in line with her best friend, Simon, leaned forward along with everyone else, hoping for some excitement.

"Aw, come on." The kid hoisted the thing up over his head. It looked like a wooden beam, pointed at one end. "It's part of my costume."

The bouncer raised an eyebrow. "Which is what?"

The boy grinned. He was normal-enough-looking, Clary thought, for Pandemonium. He had electric-blue dyed hair that stuck up around his head like the tendrils of a startled octopus, but no elaborate facial tattoos or big metal bars through his

ears or lips. "I'm a vampire hunter." He pushed down on the wooden thing. It bent as easily as a blade of grass bending sideways. "It's fake. Foam rubber. See?"

The boy's wide eyes were way too bright a green, Clary noticed: the color of antifreeze, spring grass. Colored contact lenses, probably. The bouncer shrugged, abruptly bored. "Whatever. Go on in."

The boy slid past him, quick as an eel. Clary liked the lilt to his shoulders, the way he tossed his hair as he went. There was a word for him that her mother would have used—*insouciant.*

"You thought he was cute," said Simon, sounding resigned. "Didn't you?"

Clary dug her elbow into his ribs, but didn't answer.

Inside, the club was full of dry-ice smoke. Colored lights played over the dance floor, turning it into a multicolored fairyland of blues and acid greens, hot pinks and golds.

The boy in the red jacket stroked the long razor-sharp blade in his hands, an idle smile playing over his lips. It had been so easy—a little bit of a glamour on the blade, to make it look harmless. Another glamour on his eyes, and the moment the bouncer had looked straight at him, he was in. Of course, he could probably have gotten by without all that trouble, but it was part of the fun—fooling the mundies, doing it all out in the open right in front of them, getting off on the blank looks on their sheeplike faces.

Not that the humans didn't have their uses. The boy's green eyes scanned the dance floor, where slender limbs clad in scraps of silk and black leather appeared and disappeared inside the revolving columns of smoke as the mundies danced. Girls tossed their long hair, boys swung their leather-clad hips, and bare skin glittered with sweat. Vitality just *poured* off them, waves of energy that filled him with a drunken dizziness. His lip curled. They didn't know how lucky they were. They didn't know what

it was like to eke out life in a dead world, where the sun hung limp in the sky like a burned cinder. Their lives burned as brightly as candle flames—and were as easy to snuff out.

His hand tightened on the blade he carried, and he had begun to step out onto the dance floor, when a girl broke away from the mass of dancers and began walking toward him. He stared at her. She was beautiful, for a human—long hair nearly the precise color of black ink, charcoaled eyes. Floor-length white gown, the kind women used to wear when this world was younger. Lace sleeves belled out around her slim arms. Around her neck was a thick silver chain, on which hung a dark red pendant the size of a baby's fist. He only had to narrow his eyes to know that it was real—real and precious. His mouth started to water as she neared him. Vital energy pulsed from her like blood from an open wound. She smiled, passing him, beckoning with her eyes. He turned to follow her, tasting the phantom sizzle of her death on his lips.

It was always easy. He could already feel the power of her evaporating life coursing through his veins like fire. Humans were so stupid. They had something so precious, and they barely safeguarded it at all. They threw away their lives for money, for packets of powder, for a stranger's charming smile. The girl was a pale ghost retreating through the colored smoke. She reached the wall and turned, bunching her skirt up in her hands, lifting it as she grinned at him. Under the skirt, she was wearing thigh-high boots.

He sauntered up to her, his skin prickling with her nearness. Up close she wasn't so perfect: He could see the mascara smudged under her eyes, the sweat sticking her hair to her neck. He could smell her mortality, the sweet rot of corruption. *Got you,* he thought.

A cool smile curled her lips. She moved to the side, and he could see that she was leaning against a closed door. NO ADMITTANCE—STORAGE was scrawled across it in red paint.

She reached behind her for the knob, turned it, slid inside. He caught a glimpse of stacked boxes, tangled wiring. A storage room. He glanced behind him—no one was looking. So much the better if she wanted privacy.

He slipped into the room after her, unaware that he was being followed.

"So," Simon said, "pretty good music, eh?"

Clary didn't reply. They were dancing, or what passed for it—a lot of swaying back and forth with occasional lunges toward the floor as if one of them had dropped a contact lens—in a space between a group of teenage boys in metallic corsets, and a young Asian couple who were making out passionately, their colored hair extensions tangled together like vines. A boy with a lip piercing and a teddy bear backpack was handing out free tablets of herbal ecstasy, his parachute pants flapping in the breeze from the wind machine. Clary wasn't paying much attention to their immediate surroundings—her eyes were on the blue-haired boy who'd talked his way into the club. He was prowling through the crowd as if he were looking for something. There was something about the way he moved that reminded her of something...

"I, for one," Simon went on, "am enjoying myself immensely."

This seemed unlikely. Simon, as always, stuck out at the club like a sore thumb, in jeans and an old T-shirt that said MADE IN BROOKLYN across the front. His freshly scrubbed hair was dark brown instead of green or pink, and his glasses perched crookedly on the end of his nose. He looked less as if he were contemplating the powers of darkness and more as if he were on his way to chess club.

"Mmm-hmm." Clary knew perfectly well that he came to Pandemonium with her only because she liked it, that he thought it was boring. She wasn't even sure why it was that she liked it—the clothes, the music, made it like a dream, someone

else's life, not her boring real life at all. But she was always too shy to talk to anyone but Simon.

The blue-haired boy was making his way off the dance floor. He looked a little lost, as if he hadn't found whom he was looking for. Clary wondered what would happen if she went up and introduced herself, offered to show him around. Maybe he'd just stare at her. Or maybe he was shy too. Maybe he'd be grateful and pleased, and try not to show it, the way boys did—but she'd know. Maybe—

The blue-haired boy straightened up suddenly, snapping to attention, like a hunting dog on point. Clary followed the line of his gaze, and saw the girl in the white dress.

Oh, well, Clary thought, trying not to feel like a deflated party balloon. *I guess that's that.* The girl was gorgeous, the kind of girl Clary would have liked to draw—tall and ribbon-slim, with a long spill of black hair. Even at this distance Clary could see the red pendant around her throat. It pulsed under the lights of the dance floor like a separate, disembodied heart.

"I feel," Simon went on, "that this evening DJ Bat is doing a singularly exceptional job. Don't you agree?"

Clary rolled her eyes and didn't answer; Simon hated trance music. Her attention was on the girl in the white dress. Through the darkness, smoke, and artificial fog, her pale dress shone out like a beacon. No wonder the blue-haired boy was following her as if he were under a spell, too distracted to notice anything else around him—even the two dark shapes hard on his heels, weaving after him through the crowd.

Clary slowed her dancing and stared. She could just make out that the shapes were boys, tall and wearing black clothes. She couldn't have said how she knew that they were following the other boy, but she did. She could see it in the way they paced him, their careful watchfulness, the slinking grace of their movements. A small flower of apprehension began to open inside her chest.

"Meanwhile," Simon added, "I wanted to tell you that lately I've been cross-dressing. Also, I'm sleeping with your mom. I thought you should know."

The girl had reached the wall, and was opening a door marked NO ADMITTANCE. She beckoned the blue-haired boy after her, and they slipped through the door. It wasn't anything Clary hadn't seen before, a couple sneaking off to the dark corners of the club to make out—but that made it even weirder that they were being followed.

She raised herself up on tiptoe, trying to see over the crowd. The two guys had stopped at the door and seemed to be conferring with each other. One of them was blond, the other dark-haired. The blond one reached into his jacket and drew out something long and sharp that flashed under the strobing lights. A knife. "Simon!" Clary shouted, and seized his arm.

"What?" Simon looked alarmed. "I'm not really sleeping with your mom, you know. I was just trying to get your attention. Not that your mom isn't a very attractive woman, for her age."

"Do you see those guys?" She pointed wildly, almost hitting a curvy black girl who was dancing nearby. The girl shot her an evil look. "Sorry—sorry!" Clary turned back to Simon. "Do you see those two guys over there? By that door?"

Simon squinted, then shrugged. "I don't see anything."

"There are two of them. They were following the guy with the blue hair—"

"The one you thought was cute?"

"Yes, but that's not the point. The blond one pulled a knife."

"Are you *sure*?" Simon stared harder, shaking his head. "I still don't see anyone."

"I'm sure."

Suddenly all business, Simon squared his shoulders. "I'll get one of the security guards. You stay here." He strode away, pushing through the crowd.

Clary turned just in time to see the blond boy slip through the NO ADMITTANCE door, his friend right on his heels. She looked around; Simon was still trying to shove his way across the dance floor, but he wasn't making much progress. Even if she yelled now, no one would hear her, and by the time Simon got back, something terrible might *already* have happened. Biting hard on her lower lip, Clary started to wriggle through the crowd.

"What's your name?"

She turned and smiled. What faint light there was in the storage room spilled down through high barred windows smeared with dirt. Piles of electrical cables, along with broken bits of mirrored disco balls and discarded paint cans littered the floor.

"Isabelle."

"That's a nice name." He walked toward her, stepping carefully among the wires in case any of them were live. In the faint light she looked half-transparent, bleached of color, wrapped in white like an angel. It would be a pleasure to make her fall. . . . "I haven't seen you here before."

"You're asking me if I come here often?" She giggled, covering her mouth with her hand. There was some sort of bracelet around her wrist, just under the cuff of her dress—then, as he neared her, he saw that it wasn't a bracelet at all but a pattern inked into her skin, a matrix of swirling lines.

He froze. "You—"

He didn't finish. She moved with lightning swiftness, striking out at him with her open hand, a blow to his chest that would have sent him down gasping if he'd been a human being. He staggered back, and now there was something in her hand, a coiling whip that glinted gold as she brought it down, curling around his ankles, jerking him off his feet. He hit the ground, writhing, the hated metal biting deep into his skin. She laughed, standing over him, and dizzily he thought that he should have

known. No human girl would wear a dress like the one Isabelle wore. She'd worn it to cover her skin—all of her skin.

Isabelle yanked hard on the whip, securing it. Her smile glittered like poisonous water. "He's all yours, boys."

A low laugh sounded behind him, and now there were hands on him, hauling him upright, throwing him against one of the concrete pillars. He could feel the damp stone under his back. His hands were pulled behind him, his wrists bound with wire. As he struggled, someone walked around the side of the pillar into his view: a boy, as young as Isabelle and just as pretty. His tawny eyes glittered like chips of amber. "So," the boy said. "Are there any more with you?"

The blue-haired boy could feel blood welling up under the too-tight metal, making his wrists slippery. "Any other what?"

"Come on now." The tawny-eyed boy held up his hands, and his dark sleeves slipped down, showing the runes inked all over his wrists, the backs of his hands, his palms. "You know what I am."

Far back inside his skull, the shackled boy's second set of teeth began to grind.

"Shadowhunter," he hissed.

The other boy grinned all over his face. "Got you," he said.

Clary pushed the door to the storage room open, and stepped inside. For a moment she thought it was deserted. The only windows were high up and barred; faint street noise came through them, the sound of honking cars and squealing brakes. The room smelled like old paint, and a heavy layer of dust covered the floor, marked by smeared shoe prints.

There's no one in here, she realized, looking around in bewilderment. It was cold in the room, despite the August heat outside. Her back was icy with sweat. She took a step forward, tangling her feet in electrical wires. She bent down to free her sneaker from the cables—and heard voices. A girl's laugh,

a boy answering sharply. When she straightened up, she saw them.

It was as if they had sprung into existence between one blink of her eyes and the next. There was the girl in her long white dress, her black hair hanging down her back like damp seaweed. The two boys were with her—the tall one with black hair like hers, and the smaller, fair one, whose hair gleamed like brass in the dim light coming through the windows high above. The fair boy was standing with his hands in his pockets, facing the punk kid, who was tied to a pillar with what looked like piano wire, his hands stretched behind him, his legs bound at the ankles. His face was pulled tight with pain and fear.

Heart hammering in her chest, Clary ducked behind the nearest concrete pillar and peered around it. She watched as the fair-haired boy paced back and forth, his arms now crossed over his chest. "So," he said. "You still haven't told me if there are any other of your kind with you."

Your kind? Clary wondered what he was talking about. Maybe she'd stumbled into some kind of gang war.

"I don't know what you're talking about." The blue-haired boy's tone was pained but surly.

"He means other demons," said the dark-haired boy, speaking for the first time. "You do know what a demon is, don't you?"

The boy tied to the pillar turned his face away, his mouth working.

"Demons," drawled the blond boy, tracing the word on the air with his finger. "Religiously defined as hell's denizens, the servants of Satan, but understood here, for the purposes of the Clave, to be any malevolent spirit whose origin is outside our own home dimension—"

"That's enough, Jace," said the girl.

"Isabelle's right," agreed the taller boy. "Nobody here needs a lesson in semantics—or demonology."

They're crazy, Clary thought. *Actually crazy.*

Jace raised his head and smiled. There was something fierce about the gesture, something that reminded Clary of documentaries she'd watched about lions on the Discovery Channel, the way the big cats would raise their heads and sniff the air for prey. "Isabelle and Alec think I talk too much," he said, confidingly. "Do *you* think I talk too much?"

The blue-haired boy didn't reply. His mouth was still working. "I could give you information," he said. "I know where Valentine is."

Jace glanced back at Alec, who shrugged. "Valentine's in the ground," Jace said. "The thing's just toying with us."

Isabelle tossed her hair. "Kill it, Jace," she said. "It's not going to tell us anything."

Jace raised his hand, and Clary saw dim light spark off the knife he was holding. It was oddly translucent, the blade clear as crystal, sharp as a shard of glass, the hilt set with red stones.

The bound boy gasped. "Valentine is back!" he protested, dragging at the bonds that held his hands behind his back. "All the Infernal Worlds know it—I know it—I can tell you where he is—"

Rage flared suddenly in Jace's icy eyes. "By the Angel, every time we capture one of you bastards, you claim you know where Valentine is. Well, we know where he is too. He's in hell. And you—" Jace turned the knife in his grasp, the edge sparking like a line of fire. "You can *join him there.*"

Clary could take no more. She stepped out from behind the pillar. "Stop!" she cried. "You can't do this."

Jace whirled, so startled that the knife flew from his hand and clattered against the concrete floor. Isabelle and Alec turned along with him, wearing identical expressions of astonishment. The blue-haired boy hung in his bonds, stunned and gaping.

It was Alec who spoke first. "What's this?" he demanded, looking from Clary to his companions, as if they might know what she was doing there.

"It's a girl," Jace said, recovering his composure. "Surely you've seen girls before, Alec. Your sister Isabelle is one." He took a step closer to Clary, squinting as if he couldn't quite believe what he was seeing. "A mundie girl," he said, half to himself. "And she can see us."

"Of course I can see you," Clary said. "I'm not blind, you know."

"Oh, but you are," said Jace, bending to pick up his knife. "You just don't know it." He straightened up. "You'd better get out of here, if you know what's good for you."

"I'm not going anywhere," Clary said. "If I do, you'll kill him." She pointed at the boy with the blue hair.

"That's true," admitted Jace, twirling the knife between his fingers. "What do you care if I kill him or not?"

"Be-because—" Clary spluttered. "You can't just go around killing people."

"You're right," said Jace. "You can't go around killing *people.*" He pointed at the boy with blue hair, whose eyes were slitted. Clary wondered if he'd fainted. "That's not a person, little girl. It may look like a person and talk like a person and maybe even bleed like a person. But it's a monster."

"Jace," said Isabelle warningly. "That's enough."

"You're crazy," Clary said, backing away from him. "I've called the police, you know. They'll be here any second."

"She's lying," said Alec, but there was doubt on his face. "Jace, do you—"

He never got to finish his sentence. At that moment the blue-haired boy, with a high, yowling cry, tore free of the restraints binding him to the pillar, and flung himself on Jace.

They fell to the ground and rolled together, the blue-haired boy tearing at Jace with hands that glittered as if tipped with metal. Clary backed up, wanting to run, but her feet caught on a loop of wiring and she went down, knocking the breath out

of her chest. She could hear Isabelle shrieking. Rolling over, Clary saw the blue-haired boy sitting on Jace's chest. Blood gleamed at the tips of his razorlike claws.

Isabelle and Alec were running toward them, Isabelle brandishing the whip in her hand. The blue-haired boy slashed at Jace with claws extended. Jace threw an arm up to protect himself, and the claws raked it, splattering blood. The blue-haired boy lunged again—and Isabelle's whip came down across his back. He shrieked and fell to the side.

Swift as a flick of Isabelle's whip, Jace rolled over. There was a blade gleaming in his hand. He sank the knife into the blue-haired boy's chest. Blackish liquid exploded around the hilt. The boy arched off the floor, gurgling and twisting. With a grimace Jace stood up. His black shirt was blacker now in some places, wet with blood. He looked down at the twitching form at his feet, reached down, and yanked out the knife. The hilt was slick with black fluid.

The blue-haired boy's eyes flickered open. His eyes, fixed on Jace, seemed to burn. Between his teeth, he hissed, *"So be it. The Forsaken will take you all."*

Jace seemed to snarl. The boy's eyes rolled back. His body began to jerk and twitch as he crumpled, folding in on himself, growing smaller and smaller until he vanished entirely.

Clary scrambled to her feet, kicking free of the electrical wiring. She began to back away. None of them were paying attention to her. Alec had reached Jace and was holding his arm, pulling at the sleeve, probably trying to get a good look at the wound. Clary turned to run—and found her way blocked by Isabelle, whip in hand. The gold length of it was stained with dark fluid. She flicked it toward Clary, and the end wrapped itself around her wrist and jerked tight. Clary gasped with pain and surprise.

"Stupid little mundie," Isabelle said between her teeth. "You could have gotten Jace killed."

"He's crazy," Clary said, trying to pull her wrist back. The whip bit deeper into her skin. "You're all crazy. What do you think you are, vigilante killers? The police—"

"The police aren't usually interested unless you can produce a body," said Jace. Cradling his arm, he picked his way across the cable-strewn floor toward Clary. Alec followed behind him, face screwed into a scowl.

Clary glanced at the spot where the boy had disappeared from, and said nothing. There wasn't even a smear of blood there—nothing to show that the boy had ever existed.

"They return to their home dimensions when they die," said Jace. "In case you were wondering."

"Jace," Alec hissed. "Be careful."

Jace drew his arm away. A ghoulish freckling of blood marked his face. He still reminded her of a lion, with his wide-spaced, light-colored eyes, and that tawny gold hair. "She can see us, Alec," he said. "She already knows too much."

"So what do you want me to do with her?" Isabelle demanded.

"Let her go," Jace said quietly. Isabelle shot him a surprised, almost angry look, but didn't argue. The whip slithered away, freeing Clary's arm. She rubbed her sore wrist and wondered how the hell she was going to get out of there.

"Maybe we should bring her back with us," Alec said. "I bet Hodge would like to talk to her."

"No way are we bringing her to the Institute," said Isabelle. "She's a *mundie*."

"Or is she?" said Jace softly. His quiet tone was worse than Isabelle's snapping or Alec's anger. "Have you had dealings with demons, little girl? Walked with warlocks, talked with the Night Children? Have you—"

"My name is not 'little girl,'" Clary interrupted. "And I have no idea what you're talking about." *Don't you?* said a voice in the back of her head. *You saw that boy vanish into thin air. Jace*

isn't crazy—you just wish he was. "I don't believe in—in demons, or whatever you—"

"Clary?" It was Simon's voice. She whirled around. He was standing by the storage room door. One of the burly bouncers who'd been stamping hands at the front door was next to him. "Are you okay?" He peered at her through the gloom. "Why are you in here by yourself? What happened to the guys—you know, the ones with the knives?"

Clary stared at him, then looked behind her, where Jace, Isabelle, and Alec stood, Jace still in his bloody shirt with the knife in his hand. He grinned at her and dropped a half-apologetic, half-mocking shrug. Clearly he wasn't surprised that neither Simon nor the bouncer could see them.

Somehow neither was Clary. Slowly she turned back to Simon, knowing how she must look to him, standing alone in a damp storage room, her feet tangled in bright plastic wiring cables. "I thought they went in here," she said lamely. "But I guess they didn't. I'm sorry." She glanced from Simon, whose expression was changing from worried to embarrassed, to the bouncer, who just looked annoyed. "It was a mistake."

Behind her, Isabelle giggled.

"I don't believe it," Simon said stubbornly as Clary, standing at the curb, tried desperately to hail a cab. Street cleaners had come down Orchard while they were inside the club, and the street was glossed black with oily water.

"I know," she agreed. "You'd think there'd be *some* cabs. Where is everyone going at midnight on a Sunday?" She turned back to him, shrugging. "You think we'd have better luck on Houston?"

"Not the cabs," Simon said. "You—I don't believe you. I don't believe those guys with the knives just disappeared."

Clary sighed. "Maybe there weren't any guys with knives, Simon. Maybe I just imagined the whole thing."

"No way." Simon raised his hand over his head, but the oncoming taxis whizzed by him, spraying dirty water. "I saw your face when I came into that storage room. You looked seriously freaked out, like you'd seen a ghost."

Clary thought of Jace with his lion-cat eyes. She glanced down at her wrist, braceleted by a thin red line where Isabelle's whip had curled. *No, not a ghost,* she thought. *Something even weirder than that.*

"It was just a mistake," she said wearily. She wondered why she wasn't telling him the truth. Except, of course, that he'd think she was crazy. And there was something about what had happened—something about the black blood bubbling up around Jace's knife, something about his voice when he'd said *Have you talked with the Night Children?* that she wanted to keep to herself.

"Well, it was a hell of an embarrassing mistake," Simon said. He glanced back at the club, where a thin line still snaked out the door and halfway down the block. "I doubt they'll ever let us back into Pandemonium."

"What do you care? You hate Pandemonium." Clary raised her hand again as a yellow shape sped toward them through the fog. This time, though, the taxi screeched to a halt at their corner, the driver laying into his horn as if he needed to get their attention.

"Finally we get lucky." Simon yanked the taxi door open and slid onto the plastic-covered backseat. Clary followed, inhaling the familiar New York cab smell of old cigarette smoke, leather, and hair spray. "We're going to Brooklyn," Simon said to the cabbie, and then he turned to Clary. "Look, you know you can tell me anything, right?"

Clary hesitated a moment, then nodded. "Sure, Simon," she said. "I know I can."

She slammed the cab door shut behind her, and the taxi took off into the night.