Ten Stories of Romance, Secrets and Thrills



Better in Black

CASSANDRA CLARE

Also by Cassandra Clare

THE MORTAL INSTRUMENTS

City of Bones
City of Ashes
City of Glass
City of Fallen Angels
City of Lost Souls
City of Heavenly Fire

THE INFERNAL DEVICES

Clockwork Angel
Clockwork Prince
Clockwork Princess

THE DARK ARTIFICES

Lady Midnight
Lord of Shadows
Queen of Air and Darkness

THE LAST HOURS

Chain of Gold
Chain of Thorns
Chain of Iron

MANGA AND GRAPHIC NOVELS

The Infernal Devices (with art by Hyekyung Baek)

Clockwork Angel

Clockwork Prince

Clockwork Princess

The Mortal Instruments (with art by Cassandra Jean)

The Mortal Instruments: Vol. 1

The Mortal Instruments: Vol. 2

THE SHADOWHUNTERS EXTENDED UNIVERSE

The Shadowhunter's Codex (also with Joshua Lewis)

The Bane Chronicles (also with Sarah Rees Brennan and Maureen Johnson)

Tales from the Shadowhunter Academy (also with Sarah Rees Brennan, Maureen Johnson, and Robin Wasserman)

Ghosts of the Shadow Market

Son of the Dawn (also with Sarah Rees Brennan)

Cast Long Shadows (also with Sarah Rees Brennan)

Every Exquisite Thing (also with Maureen Johnson)

Learn About Loss (also with Kelly Link)

A Deeper Love (also with Maureen Johnson)

The Wicked Ones (also with Robin Wasserman)

The Land I Lost (also with Sarah Rees Brennan)

Through Blood, Through Fire (also with Robin Wasserman)

The Eldest Curses (also with Wesley Chu)

The Red Scrolls of Magic

The Lost Book of the White

This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places and incidents are either the product of the author's imagination or, if real, used fictitiously. All statements, activities, stunts, descriptions, information and material of any other kind contained herein are included for entertainment purposes only and should not be relied on for accuracy or replicated as they may result in injury.

First published in the UK 2025 by Walker Books Ltd
87 Vauxhall Walk, London SE11 5HJ

This edition published 2026

2 4 6 8 10 9 7 5 3 1

Text © 2025 Cassandra Clare LLC
Jacket art © 2025 Cliff Nielsen

The right of Cassandra Clare to be identified as author of this work has been asserted in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988

EU Authorized Representative: HackettFlynn Ltd 36 Cloch Choirneal, Balrothery, Co. Dublin, K32 C942, Ireland EU@walkerpublishinggroup.com

This book has been typeset in Dolly Pro and Pterra

Printed and bound by CPI Group (UK) Ltd, Croydon CR0 4YY

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, transmitted or stored in an information retrieval system in any form or by any means, graphic, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, taping and recording, without prior written permission from the publisher. Additionally, no part of this book may be used or reproduced in any manner for the purpose of training artificial intelligence technologies or systems, nor for text and data mining.

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data: a catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN 978-1-5295-3394-1

www.walker.co.uk



To everyone who backed the Kickstarter—
without you this book would not exist

Contents

The Good Storm · Will and Tessa 13

The Beautiful Ajatara · James and Cordelia 52

Who the Wolf Loves · Jocelyn and Luke 96

Zachary's Day Out · Thomas and Alastair 140

The Judgment of King Kieran · Kieran, Mark, and Cristina .. 184

A Surfeit of Annas · Anna and Ari 226

Bred in the Bone · Emma and Julian 264

City of Broken Hearts · Simon and Isabelle 315

The Time of Two · Jace and Clary 354

Too Wise to Love · Sebastian and the Seelie Queen 407

Sneak Peek at The Wicked Powers 439

The Good Storm

Everything would have gone perfectly splendidly on Will and Tessa Herondale's honeymoon, if it hadn't been for Ragnor Fell's wedding present.

It wasn't as if they hadn't been given other odd presents. Henry had given them a squarish object with a button on top that he promised would allow them to walk through walls, but it hadn't worked yet. Gabriel had given them a lovely silver serving platter whose border was etched with a design of horrifying ducks. Ernie, the proprietor of the Devil Tavern, had given them a bottle of his homemade wine, which they hadn't gotten up the nerve to try since Will had spilled some and burned a hole in the carpet.

But it was Ragnor's gift that, when unwrapped, had puzzled them the most. It was a beautiful crystal globe, delicate as a soap

bubble, with what looked like green smoke swirling inside it. "Very nice," Tessa had said, a bit bemused, and Ragnor—who had come by a day after the wedding expressly to deliver the present—had explained that it was an encapsulated wish. "Smash the glass and make a wish, and the wish will come true," he said, sounding pleased with himself.

"*Any* wish?" Will had asked, his dark eyebrows sharpening into peaks above his eyes.

"Well, not *any* wish," Ragnor had said grumpily. "A wish that is within reason. Do not make wishes that meddle with life and death. That never goes well."

"What if it wasn't life and death?" Will persisted. "What if it was—"

"Turning a Silent Brother back into a Shadowhunter?" Ragnor had rubbed wearily at his left horn. He was beginning to look as if he regretted the whole idea of giving them a wedding present in the first place. "No. That is immutable magic. Only Raziel or the powers of Heaven could do such a thing. Really, William, stick to small things. Wish for a new hat."

Will had seemed disappointed, but not—as Tessa had feared—crushed. He was beginning to accept that certain things could not be changed. She recalled the Will she had met at first, who had seemed at war with everyone and everything in his life, and was glad he had learned to sometimes put down his arms—though he would always battle against injustice and unfairness, and for that, Tessa loved him all the more.

On the train to Paris, they had talked over what they might wish for. Riches? They were already comfortable and did not need anything more. For someone they loved to be happy? But everyone *was* happy. Will said they should wish for a wonderful honeymoon,

and Tessa thought they should save the wish in case of emergency, so they arrived in Paris without having used the globe at all.

Will had booked them a large suite at the Hôtel Meurice on Rue de Rivoli. It was the sort of place that catered to British tourists who wished to have "all the comforts of home," meaning English breakfasts, a smoking room, and discreet servants. Tessa was assigned a maid, a pleasant girl from Brittany, to help with her clothing and hair; she protested initially, but it was true enough that she could not do up her own dresses without help, and while Will offered to assist, dressing her inevitably distracted him in ways that were very pleasant but not conducive to clothing oneself.

The bedroom itself was otherwise lovely, all dark and light blues, with velvet curtains and a gilded four-poster bed. Tessa was not yet used to sleeping in the same bed as Will, and every night, when they curled up together, she felt as if she were getting away with something, some act of blissful naughtiness that would certainly land them in trouble if they were found out. "We are *married*, Tessa," Will would laugh, nuzzling at her unbound hair. "The Angel Raziel himself approves of our union."

But Tessa still blushed and hid her face, especially when Will did certain things—not that she wanted him to *stop* doing those things. She was very enthusiastic about them. Which was fortunate, since Will would have spent all their time in bed if left to his own devices. Tessa, however, was determined to see Paris *properly*. No matter how late into the night they had been sleepless, she would rise in the morning and, giggling, shake a groggy Will awake, forcing coffee on him until he was ready to follow her—clutching her maps and Baedeker guide to Paris—out into the sunlit streets.

Whereupon Will would usually declaim something dramatic.

"Let me be taken, let me be put to death; I am content, so thou wilt have it so!" he would announce, throwing up his arms.

"You can quote *Romeo and Juliet* all you want," Tessa would say, taking his arm and tucking her own through it. "We're still going to the Louvre."

And Will would kiss her, heedless of passersby, which was the sort of thing you could get away with in Paris, and they would set off on another adventure. The days were long and joyful, full of sightseeing—they went to Notre-Dame, of course, and to see Les Invalides, the Louvre, and the Arc de Triomphe; they went to see the *Siege of Paris* cyclorama (which Will declared to be simply an image of a thousand Frenchmen and thus not worth seeing) and to the bustling market of Les Halles, which reminded Tessa of Covent Garden.

It was all delightful, but what Tessa enjoyed the most was simply spending time with Will. At home in London there was always Shadowhunter business to attend to, but here in Paris they were away from all that. They had resolved to avoid the Paris Institute and all things related to the Nephilim, so that they could have an actual holiday and enjoy themselves without being called upon to fight demons or chase away unruly ghosts.

The one place they did not go was the great opera house, the Garnier, because Jem had always wanted to visit it. By unspoken agreement, they avoided it; though Will might have accepted the change in Jem, it did not mean he no longer missed him, just as Tessa missed him too. The loss was one Will would always carry, Tessa knew, a tiny flaw in the heart of his happiness, like a cloudy spot in a diamond. It made Will more precious to her, even as she grieved for his grief, and for her own.

One night, Tessa teased Will that he had never carried her over

the threshold, as was the mundane tradition with new brides. "Perhaps," she said, smiling up at him, "the exertion seems tiresome?"

"I am a Shadowhunter," Will pointed out. "I could carry six of you over the threshold. Though if I had six brides, it would certainly be the talk of the Clave."

To demonstrate, he lifted Tessa up and carried her back and forth over the threshold to their suite, after which he kicked the door closed and collapsed with her, laughing, onto their bed. Being on the bed together led to what it usually did, as their giggles softened into kisses and murmurs, and Will drew Tessa close. He reached behind her back, undoing the row of tiny buttons that fastened her dress, and she caught her breath as his hand slipped beneath her camisole to caress her bare skin, the wings of her shoulder blades. His lips were at her throat, her fingers locked in the soft dark curls of his hair. She wrapped her legs around him as they began to move together, their gazes fixed on each other, neither able to look away.

It had hurt the first time they'd made love, a little bit; now there was nothing but pleasure, a feeling so intense that Tessa imagined sometimes that she might tumble off the edge of the world; she needed Will there with her, needed to watch him as his eyes darkened and his face changed, needed to know he was falling with her when she fell, needed to know that when she came back from the far places that he brought her to, they would be together again. Together as they collapsed against the sheets, breaths slowing, bodies tangled, washed up on the shores of their marital bed like sailors after a storm.

"*La bonne tempête*," Will said, as they rested together, facing each other across an expanse of pillow.

Tessa made a face at him. "You know I don't speak French."

He grinned, a little wickedly. "It means *the good storm*. What you and I just experienced, according to the poet Verlaine, who is very talented."

"Perhaps," Tessa said. She bent to kiss his throat, brushing her lips across his skin. "But does the poet Verlaine do this for you?"

"I should forbid him if he tried," said Will. "I should send him away with great disdain. 'I am a married man, Monsieur Verlaine,' I would say. 'How dare you insult me in this way.'"

Tessa giggled and drew back. When she did, she saw that Will was watching her, his eyes soft. She could read adoration in them, the depth of which never failed to humble her. But beyond and beneath that, she could see melancholy. The flaw in the diamond.

"Oh, Will." She caressed the white star mark on his shoulder, lightly. "What's wrong?"

Will knew better than to say *nothing*. He met her eyes and sighed. "I was thinking about our wedding—"

"A ghastly topic," Tessa mocked gently.

"Enough, woman. I'm trying to tell you something." He wrapped a curl of her hair around his finger. "Our wedding was the pinnacle of my life, my darling, as you well know. A decision I shall never regret. As to why you married me, of course, opinions vary. Some say it was a moment of weakness, or the result of a fever—"

"*Will.*"

He sighed again. "It was only a moment, at the ceremony," he said. "But I found that I missed, not my mother and father, but—Ella. I wished she had been there."

Ella. Will's older sister. Will had cast the blame on himself for her death, for many years; he knew better now, but the grief and guilt had left a wound. Tessa's heart ached for him.

"Of course you missed her," Tessa said. "I missed Nate—I had always thought he would walk me down the aisle, should I marry. I did not miss him the way he was in the end, of course. I missed the brother I had once, before he was corrupted and changed."

"I would that I could bring him back for you," Will said, tracing a finger down her cheek. "As he was before."

"And I wish the same, that I could bring Ella back for you." Tessa tilted her head to the side; some of her hair had come out of its fastenings and tumbled rather wildly around her shoulders. "Do you—you've never seen her spirit, have you?"

Will had the rare gift of seeing ghosts, even those who did not want to be seen. It was a rather melancholy gift, Tessa had discovered; the dead who lingered on Earth rarely remained for happy reasons.

"No," Will said, his dark blue eyes somber. "I never have. And I am glad of it, for it means she is at rest. Her death—" He broke off, but Tessa knew what he had begun to say. *Her death was dreadful. Eternal peace would be the greatest blessing.*

"Will—"

He shook his head, and she saw him shake away his melancholy with a deliberate effort. His eyes cleared, and he was smiling again. "Now is not the time to chatter about sad things," he said. "It is very unromantic of me. I should be telling you how glorious you look half-clothed. Like the Venus de Milo, but with arms."

"I am duly complimented," Tessa said gravely. "And the arms are quite useful, as are the hands. For instance," she added, reaching for him, "I can do *this*."

After a moment, Will caught at her wrist, his eyes languid. "You are mischievous, Tess," he said. "There will be consequences."

"Come and show me what they are, then," she whispered, and he did.

. . .

The next day they ventured out to admire the windows of Sainte-Chapelle. Though the chapel had not been used for religious purposes since the Revolution, it had the hushed-stone feeling Tessa associated with churches and Institutes. Indeed, Will led her to a corner of the chapel, and with the tip of his umbrella (they had wakened to darker skies and the promise of rain) pointed out the near-illegible Enkeli rune carved upon the stone floor. "There would have been a storehouse of weapons here once," he said, "kept for the use of Shadowhunters—maces, flails, swords, all sorts of things."

Tessa leaned against his shoulder. "And now?"

"Who knows?" He flashed a smile. "Times change. Nothing remains as it was."

They went out in the city, where it had not yet rained, which Will attributed to his having brought an umbrella with him. He twirled it as they crossed the Rue de la Paix, where Tessa saw a pretty cameo brooch in the window of a jeweler's, and Will bought it for her immediately. He also tried to interest her in a dressmaker's, but Tessa told him she had not come to Paris to buy clothes, and when he looked affronted, she stuck out her tongue. Will always brought out her childish side, Tessa thought, though not in a bad way—there was much to be missed about childhood and its easy sense of wonder, a wonder she often felt when she was with Will.

That night, tired, they dined at the hotel, intending to go to bed early. As they left the grand dining room, walking hand in hand under the lights of the great sparkling chandeliers in the lobby, Tessa caught sight of something that made her pause.

A printed sign was displayed atop a gold stand. All elegant curlicues and flourishes, it read:

THE WORLD BEYOND?

Tonight, for the special pleasure of our guests, the MEURICE is hosting A GREAT SÉANCE, led by the famed Madame Dorothea, Occultist and Seer! Behold with wonder as she speaks with voices from beyond the veil and relays the words of loved ones believed long lost and gone! Shudder with terror as a GHOSTLY PRESENCE makes itself known. Do you dare?

There was a second sign, where the location of this event was printed: *THE READING ROOM, 8 p.m.* Tessa had been in the hotel's reading room before, of course; it was a pleasant space of frescoed walls, with plush seating, potted palms, and scattered tables.

Tessa checked the clock on the wall: The Great Séance had already begun a quarter of an hour ago. "I don't like this," she said. "We were so hoping to avoid anything that smacked of magic, or Downworld—"

"Oh, I doubt there's any magic here," Will said. "Just a mundane pretending she can speak with the dead, profiting from the grief of others." His voice was hard, and Tessa could not help but recall her thought of the previous night, that Will would always battle anything he perceived as injustice. "I say we attend. Make pests of ourselves. Perhaps we can interrupt her scheme."

"Make pests of ourselves in what way?" Tessa demanded, but Will had already caught her hand in his, and was hurrying to the reading room.

The gas lamps had been turned down low, the room illuminated only by rows of flickering candles. They threw the wavering shadows of those in attendance against the walls, where they seemed to dance an odd, elongated sort of waltz. And there were many hotel guests in attendance, clustered in one corner of the room. Tessa recognized some of them: an old British soldier who

had fought in the Crimea, a mother and daughter who had come to fill out their next season's wardrobes, a pair of elderly sisters who had scraped to save for this trip to Paris. All were watching, rapt, what was unfolding within a circle of daintily upholstered chairs.

Will and Tessa pushed carefully through the crowd until they had a good view. In the center of the chair circle stood a middle-aged woman, stout and short, with dyed-black hair pulled back into a tightly coiled knot. Her face was pale, and she wore a garish blue velvet robe that matched the velvet gloves on her hands.

She was swaying from foot to foot, humming loudly. One of the elderly traveling sisters—a Miss Melody Livingston, if Tessa recalled correctly—moved to stand before the medium, her hands clasped and her eyes wide.

"My . . . dear . . . Melody . . ." The voice that emerged from Madame Dorothea was that of a querulous old woman. "Have you been taking care . . . of your little sister?"

"Oh, absolutely," said Miss Livingston, who was trembling all over. "Our Pearl is quite well, aren't you, dear?"

The second elderly sister, white as a sheet, nodded.

"This is arrant nonsense," Will muttered to Tessa, who was inclined to agree. "She is taking advantage of a confused old person."

"*SHHHH*," snapped another guest, glaring at Will.

"And have you been keeping up . . . with your knitting . . . dear Melody?" inquired Madame Dorothea, who was still swaying from side to side, her eyes closed.

Melody Livingston gave a little gasp and turned to her sister, Pearl. "Did you hear that? She knows! She knows about my knitting!"

"Anyone could have guessed," Will muttered. "Half the old ladies in London knit."

"I still remember . . ." Madame Dorothea whispered in what Tessa guessed was the voice of Miss Livingston's mother. "The lovely blanket you made for poor little Edmund . . . such pretty sunflowers . . . it kept him warm, but couldn't save him . . ."

With a low scream, Melody Livingston fainted dead away. A pair of the Meurice's *personnel de l'hôtel*, dressed in their matching uniforms, seemed to have been waiting for just such an event. They rushed forward, gathered her up, and carried her away, Pearl tottering anxiously in their wake.

Tessa glanced up at Will. His annoyance seemed to have been replaced by wariness. His jaw was set, his shoulders tensed. She suddenly wished they had not come.

Madame Dorothea's eyes opened. "Oh," she murmured. Her voice was quite different now: strong and firm, no longer the voice of a very old woman. "What did I say?"

"Don't you recall?" said a young woman at the front of the crowd.

Madame Dorothea shook her head. "I am only a conduit for the spirits, my dear," she said. "They speak through me. Though sometimes they do whisper in my ears . . ." She turned, her hands held out almost as if she wished to ward someone off. "There is someone here who lost a brother, Albert, on the battlefield . . . but he rests quiet now, my friend, all his tumult ended . . ."

The old soldier, leaning on his staff, gave a hoarse cry.

"And someone who lost a wife . . . but Hilda says she is well, very well, and at peace . . . she is glad you have kept her kitchen just as it was . . ."

Another gasp, from the back of the room. The crowd was nervous now, a mixture of excitement and fear. *Shudder with terror*, the sign had said, and indeed, though Tessa knew this medium was

almost certainly a fraud, it felt dreadfully unnerving to hear these whispered messages and the cries that followed, like arrows from another world finding their targets in this one . . .

And then the seer's gaze fell upon Tessa. Not just Tessa, either, but upon Will and Tessa both. "Such a lovely young couple," she murmured in her own voice, moving closer to them. Her eyes were dark and hard as glass marbles. "And yet your youth has not protected you, alas. You both have suffered loss, terrible loss." Her eyes narrowed as she stared at Tessa with what felt like barely disguised hostility. "A brother," she said. "One who betrayed you before he left this world. And you"—she turned to Will—"a sister. Older than you, but just a child when she died."

"That's enough," Will said. He reached for Tessa's hand; when his fingers interlaced with hers, they were cold as ice. "We'll be leaving—"

"Will." The voice that rose from the medium was a little girl's, breathless and worried. "Oh, Will. I looked for you all over. Among the crowberries, and in the stables in Dolgellau. All your favorite places. But you weren't there."

Will had gone rock-still beside Tessa. His lips formed a word, silently. "*Ella.*"

"Will." The voice went on, relentless. "Will, I'm so lonely here in the dark. Help me. *Help me*—"

"Stop!" The cry burst from Tessa before she could control herself. "That's enough—enough." She still had hold of Will's icy hand; she tugged at him, pulling him with her through the crowd, away from Dorothea. Silent and stunned, he let himself be dragged, though he was still looking back over his shoulder at the medium, who was watching them go, a small smile tugging the corner of her mouth.

The crowd melted away before them, as if no one wished to get

too close to Will and his obvious grief. What Dorothea had said to him manifested the greatest fear of anyone who had come to this room hoping for a word from a dead loved one: the knowledge that their lost beloved was not happy, was not at peace, and did not sleep, but wandered alone in an eternal darkness.

That woman is a liar, Tessa thought, fiercely, but she didn't speak the words: Will still seemed in utter shock, his face expressionless, his eyes nearly black. Besides, she had no desire for anyone in the room to hear her speak to Will about sorrows that were, and should remain, private.

They were nearly at the door when a small man, elegantly dressed, stepped into their path. He wore a black topcoat and tall hat, and dark red spats. Blocking their way, he swept a deep bow, lifting his hat for a moment to reveal goat's horns poking out of his slicked-back hair.

A warlock.

So much for their vow to stay away from supernatural things, Tessa thought dismally. First Madame Dorothea, now—

"Chevalier Ace Dupin," said the man, his accent distinctly American. He replaced his hat and reached into his waistcoat, from which he retrieved a white card. He handed the card to Tessa. "I'm an investigator."

Will said nothing. He barely seemed aware the little warlock was there.

"Now," Tessa said, desperately, "is really not the best time—"

"Keep the card," said Dupin. "Just between the two of us, I've been looking into this Madame Dorothea. It's my opinion she's a fraud." He lowered his voice. "I plan to bring her to justice."

Numbly, Tessa slipped the card into her jacket pocket. "We really must go."

"Of course." The warlock stepped out of their way. "Just don't take anything she said too much to heart, all right?"

Tessa murmured some kind of assent, and hurried through the doors, pulling Will after her. As they emerged into the bright lights of the lobby, Tessa felt the claustrophobic pressure of the reading room fall away from her, as if she'd escaped some sort of awful prison pit.

She turned to look up at Will, and her heart fell. Perhaps she had escaped, she thought, but he had not: From the look in his eyes, she could tell he was still in the reading room, still listening to his sister call out for him from the dark.

That night was the first unhappy night Tessa had spent since she had married Will.

When they first returned to their rooms, Tessa intended to put her arms around Will, to whisper that Madame Dorothea was surely a fraud, that she must have discovered details from his life somehow, that he was quite famous among Shadowhunters and no doubt the medium had picked up some kind of gossip in Downworld.

But Will gave her no chance. The moment the door shut behind them, Will was kissing her—urgently, desperately, as he had that night on the Lightwoods' balcony, when it had seemed to both of them that any future together was impossible. He tore his jacket away, walking her backward across the room until they struck the bed and collapsed upon it.

Will stretched his long body over Tessa's, bracing himself on one hand as, with the other, he tore at her clothes, kissing the bare skin he uncovered as the fabric fell away. There was something wild about him, something feral that made her think of the boy he'd been once, who had walked from Wales to London, driven by guilt and grief.

Tessa's hands went to the fall of his trousers, the buttons of his shirt. She needed to feel Will's skin against hers, and she knew he needed the same. She stroked a hand through his wild hair, gasping as their bodies joined together, and he pressed his face against her neck, shuddering with pleasure.

A moment later he had drawn away, just enough to stare down into her face. His pupils were wide and black, surrounded by a thin rim of blue. Hoarsely, he whispered, "Tessa, are you—"

"I'm fine." She caught at his shoulders, not sure how to show him what she wanted. Proper young ladies weren't taught that sort of thing. "Will—don't stop—"

She saw the relief flash across his face and then he was kissing her, his hesitation swallowed up by desire, by a desperate need she doubted he could put a name to. And she urged him on, urged him to lose himself in her, in the strange, dark, incredible whirlwind of what they were doing together. For the first time, the pleasure she felt was like lightning, sharp and forked; for the first time, she dug her fingernails into his back and heard him moan against her mouth with the pleasure-pain of it; for the first time, she thought she would be sore in the morning, and that she would like it.

And when she finally lost control and fell, for the first time she felt as if she could not hold on to Will through it all. For the first time, when the storm had passed and they tumbled apart, both gasping and half-dressed, Will was silent, though he reached to stroke a hand gently down her cheek.

"Will," she said, softly, but he had closed his eyes. He drew her against him, holding her in the circle of his arms, her head against his chest, his heart beating so hard she could hear it. Tessa lay still, willing him to sleep, to rest, even as the rain that had been predicted

that morning finally broke and poured down over Paris: pattering against their windows, filling the room with the sound of tears.

The next day, they had planned to follow a tour of Paris themed around locations from *A Tale of Two Cities*, which would take them to places mentioned in the book: the Rue Saint-Antoine where the Defarges had their wine shop; the Palais de Justice where Darnay had been imprisoned. The Place de la Concorde, where the guillotine had done its bloody work, and Saint-Germain-des-Prés, where Lucie Manette had lived.

Tessa, exhausted from having barely slept, was no longer sure she wished to do the tour. From the moment she had woken up, groggy and slightly horrified that she had slept in her dress—which was ripped to bits and entirely ruined—she had only wanted to talk to Will.

But Will would not talk. He was no longer silent, nor was he wild and desperate as he had been in the dead of night. He was withdrawn and melancholy, as if the flaw in the diamond had grown to swallow up the whole gem.

As they made their way through the city, Tessa making conversation and Will responding only with distracted yeses, nos, and murmurs of vague interest, Tessa could not help but feel that this was a Will she'd never known before. There was the Will she'd first met, who wore his sharp wit like armor, and liked to argue; and there was the Will she'd gradually come to know as clever and passionate and kind. This Will was closest to the Will he'd been when he first lost Jem, plunged into mourning, missing a part of himself. But even then, he had not felt so far away.

Tessa felt almost bewildered. How had it all gone so wrong, so quickly? She wanted to find Madame Dorothea and pull her head

off. She wanted to crawl to Charlotte and Sophie and cry. But she could do none of those things, so instead, she turned them both around and marched back to the hotel.

Will did not mention their sudden abandonment of their tour, or ask a single question about Tessa's plans. He remained distracted until they had reached their rooms, at which point Tessa locked the door, took hold of Will by the arms, and steered him into one of the gilded chairs that flanked the fireplace. Having sat him down, she took two steps back, crossed her arms over her chest, fixed him with a piercing glare, and said, "Talk."

Will looked up at her, his dark blue eyes thoughtful. His black hair had been tousled by the wind, which had also whipped color into his cheeks. He looked so beautiful it hurt, but Tessa was feeling merciless.

"I mean it," she said. "You cannot go lumbering around Paris like some sort of statue brought to life, staring blankly at things. I won't have it."

Something bright showed briefly in his eyes. "What would you like me to do?"

"Tell me what you are thinking," Tessa said. "You are sunk in melancholy, Will, and I know it is because of last night, which was awful—"

"Not *all* of last night was awful," said Will, with a flash of his old self.

Tessa blushed. "I was speaking of what happened in the reading room. The séance. Madame Dorothea, and what she said about—about Ella."

There was a short silence. Will said, "It is strange, isn't it, that we were speaking of this just the other evening? You asked me if Ella had ever haunted me, and I said that I was comforted by the

fact that she had not. That it meant she was at peace."

"Yes—"

"But what if she is not at peace, Tess? Perhaps she is not a ghost, and thus I have never seen her, but what if she is trapped in some strange in-between place, neither life nor death? A sort of purgatory?"

Tessa knelt down and took Will's hands. "It is as that warlock said when we left the reading room. That medium was a *fraud*. You are well known throughout the Shadowhunter world, Will, and that means in Downworld too. She knew who you were and tried to use pieces of your history to hurt you."

Will didn't move. "I can believe she would know who I was. Even who Ella was. But how would she know about the crowberries we used to pick? The stables in Dolgellau? I never spoke of those small things, not even to Jem, or to you."

"Then there is some other explanation. But believe me, Will—there *is* some other explanation."

He brushed his dark gaze over her softly. "Perhaps," he said. "But what could it be?"

Tessa fell asleep that night waiting for Will to come to bed. She meant to stay awake, to wait for him, but she had barely slept the night before. She could feel her eyelids drifting shut even as she listened to him pacing back and forth in the other room.

Will, she thought, curling around her pillow. *Come to bed. Let me comfort you.*

But what could she even say to him? Tessa thought. That she loved him, of course, but this was a pain that belonged to an old wound, the loss of his sister. That she might be somewhere in pain, suffering, adrift where he could not reach her—the idea would be

torture to him. She understood why he could not see around it or past it to the good things in his life. And he had only just begun to recover from losing Jem . . .

Tessa's eyes closed. *But what if he cannot recover from this? At least he knows Jem is not suffering, but Ella . . . What if Will is never happy again?*

The thought was so terrible, it struck her like a weight, sending her down into the darkness of sleep, as if her consciousness could not bear the pain of it. So she did not hear Will, in the other room, as he stopped his pacing, or hear the sound of breaking glass, or see the green light that blazed momentarily beneath the bedroom door . . .

When Tessa awoke in the morning, there was sunlight streaming through the windows, and she was alone in bed. Without Will.

She sat up, a little groggy. She had not plaited her hair before bed, and it spilled down over her shoulders and back in tangles. Not that her hair mattered at the moment; only Will mattered. He must have fallen asleep in the other room, she thought, starting to push her covers back, or perhaps he had not slept at all—

With a gasp of surprise, she froze. Will was seated in an armchair by the nightstand—he must have brought it in from the other room—fully dressed, and gazing at her with a calm, quizzical expression.

"Will." Tessa put her hand to her heart. "You nearly gave me a fit."

Will tilted his head to the side. His gaze roved over her: frank, curious, exploring. It made Tessa want to blush, which was ridiculous. This was her husband, after all.

"If I may ask an impertinent question," he said, "who exactly are you?"

"Oh, for goodness' sake." Tessa reached up to brush her hair back. The tangles were getting in her eyes. "Will. Don't be silly." She paused, feeling a spark of optimism. A Will who was being silly was surely a Will who was not in despair. She smiled at him hopefully, scooting back on the mattress to make room. "Come to bed," she said, wishing she had worn something prettier to sleep in than her plain white nightgown.

The familiar spark lit in his eyes, the one that seemed to deepen them to sapphire. "Believe me, I would like to," he said, his gaze slipping over her again. "But alas, I do have morals. Terribly awkward things, morals. I feel I should at least know your name, since you know mine."

"*Will*—"

"That is me," he said agreeably. "And you are . . . ?"

"Will, this isn't funny."

"It isn't a joke," he said. "I came into the bedroom, and there you were in the bed. I looked out the window and I realized I was in Paris." He looked honestly puzzled. "Which is not where I live. I really have to wonder what I got up to last night. I was hoping you would know."

Tessa's heart had begun to beat ominously hard in her chest. "What's the last thing you recall?"

"To be truthful, all I remember is a sense of great melancholy. Something was on my mind, but I don't know what." He rose to his feet, running a hand through his tumbled dark hair. "I suppose perhaps I was feeling so morbid I hopped a train to Paris, but I must admit, I don't know why I'd have done that. And if I'd left the Institute . . ."

He broke off, looking at her with an expression she couldn't quite read. His hand went almost automatically to the side of his