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The Mortal Instruments 4: City of Fallen Angels

Written by Cassandra Clare

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Roberts, a friend of theirs who happened to be a werewolf, in an equally serious way. And she really couldn't believe that Simon hadn't yet told either of them about the other.

Simon wasn't really sure how it had happened. Maia liked to come to his house and use his Xbox—they didn't have one at the abandoned police station where the werewolf pack lived—and it wasn't until the third or fourth time she'd come over that she'd leaned over and kissed him good-bye before she'd left. He'd been pleased, and then had called up Clary to ask her if he needed to tell Isabelle. "Figure out what's going on with you and Isabelle," she said. "Then tell her."

This had turned out to be bad advice. It had been a month, and he still wasn't sure what was going on with him and Isabelle, so he hadn't said anything. And the more time that passed, the more awkward the idea of saying something grew. So far he'd made it work. Isabelle and Maia weren't really friends, and rarely saw each other. Unfortunately for him, that was about to change. Clary's mother and her long-time friend, Luke, were getting married in a few weeks, and both Isabelle and Maia were invited to the wedding, a prospect Simon found more terrifying than the idea of being chased through the streets of New York by an angry mob of vampire hunters.

"So," Isabelle said, snapping him out of his reverie. "Why here and not Taki's? They'd serve you blood there."

Simon winced at her volume. Isabelle was nothing if not unsubtle. Fortunately, no one seemed to be listening in, not even the waitress who returned, banged down a cup of coffee in front of Simon, eyed Izzy, and left without taking her order.

"I like it here," he said. "Clary and I used to come here back

when she was taking classes at Tisch. They have great borscht and blintzes—they're like sweet cheese dumplings—plus it's open all night."

Isabelle, however, was ignoring him. She was staring past his shoulder. "What is *that*?"

Simon followed her glance. "That's Count Blintzula."

"Count *Blintzula*?"

Simon shrugged. "It's a Halloween decoration. Count Blintzula is for kids. It's like Count Chocula, or the Count on *Sesame Street*." He grinned at her blank look. "You know. He teaches kids how to count."

Isabelle was shaking her head. "There's a TV show where children are taught how to count by a *vampire*?"

"It would make sense if you'd seen it," Simon muttered.

"There is some mythological basis for such a construction," Isabelle said, lapsing into lecturey Shadowhunter mode. "Some legends do assert that vampires are obsessed with counting, and that if you spill grains of rice in front of them, they'll have to stop what they're doing and count each one. There's no truth in it, of course, any more than that business about garlic. And vampires have no business teaching children. Vampires are terrifying."

"Thank you," Simon said. "It's a joke, Isabelle. He's the Count. He likes counting. You know. 'What did the Count eat today, children? *One* chocolate chip cookie, *two* chocolate chip cookies, *three* chocolate chip cookies . . .'"

There was a rush of cold air as the door of the restaurant opened, letting in another customer. Isabelle shivered and reached for her black silk scarf. "It's not realistic."

"What would you prefer? 'What did the Count eat today,

children? *One* helpless villager, *two* helpless villagers, *three* helpless villagers . . .”

“Shh.” Isabelle finished knotting her scarf around her throat and leaned forward, putting her hand on Simon’s wrist. Her big dark eyes were alive suddenly, the way they only ever came alive when she was either hunting demons or thinking about hunting demons. “Look over there.”

Simon followed her gaze. There were two men standing over by the glass-fronted case that held bakery items: thickly frosted cakes, plates of rugelach, and cream-filled Danishes. Neither of the men looked as if they were interested in food, though. Both were short and painfully gaunt, so much so that their cheekbones jutted from their colorless faces like knives. Both had thin gray hair and pale gray eyes, and wore belted slate-colored coats that reached the floor.

“Now,” Isabelle said, “what do you suppose they are?”

Simon squinted at them. They both stared back at him, their lashless eyes like empty holes. “They kind of look like evil lawn gnomes.”

“They’re human subjugates,” Isabelle hissed. “They belong to a vampire.”

“‘Belong’ as in . . . ?”

She made an impatient noise. “By the Angel, you don’t know anything about your kind, do you? Do you even really know how vampires are made?”

“Well, when a mommy vampire and a daddy vampire love each other very much . . .”

Isabelle made a face at him. “Fine, you know that vampires *don’t* need to have sex to reproduce, but I bet you don’t really know how it works.”

“I do too,” said Simon. “I’m a vampire because I drank some of Raphael’s blood before I died. Drinking blood plus death equals vampire.”

“Not exactly,” said Isabelle. “You’re a vampire because you drank some of Raphael’s blood, and then you were bitten by other vampires, and *then* you died. You need to be bitten at some point during the process.”

“Why?”

“Vampire saliva has . . . properties. Transformative properties.”

“Yech,” said Simon.

“Don’t ‘yech’ me. You’re the one with the magical spit. Vampires keep humans around and feed on them when they’re short on blood—like walking snack machines.” Izzy spoke with distaste. “You’d think they’d be weak from blood loss all the time, but vampire saliva actually has healing properties. It increases their red blood cell count, makes them stronger and healthier, and makes them live longer. That’s why it’s not against the Law for a vampire to feed on a human. It doesn’t really hurt them. Of course every once in a while the vampire will decide it wants more than a snack, it wants a subjugate—and then it will start feeding its bitten human small amounts of vampire blood, just to keep it docile, to keep it connected to its master. Subjugates worship their masters, and love serving them. All they want is to be near them. Like you were when you went back to the Dumont. You were drawn back to the vampire whose blood you had consumed.”

“Raphael,” Simon said, his voice bleak. “I don’t feel a burning urge to be with him these days, let me tell you.”

“No, it goes away when you become a full vampire. It’s only

the subjugates who worship their sires and can't disobey them. Don't you see? When you went back to the Dumont, Raphael's clan drained you, and you died, and then you became a vampire. But if they hadn't drained you, if they'd given you more vampire blood instead, you would eventually have become a subjugate."

"That's all very interesting," Simon said. "But it doesn't explain why they're staring at us."

Isabelle glanced back at them. "They're staring at *you*. Maybe their master died and they're looking for another vampire to own them. You could have pets." She grinned.

"Or," Simon said, "maybe they're here for the hash browns."

"Human subjugates don't eat food. They live on a mix of vampire blood and animal blood. It keeps them in a state of suspended animation. They're not immortal, but they age very slowly."

"Sadly," Simon said, eyeing them, "they don't seem to keep their looks."

Isabelle sat up straight. "And they're on their way over here. I guess we'll find out what they want."

The human subjugates moved as if they were on wheels. They didn't appear to be taking steps so much as gliding forward soundlessly. It took them only seconds to cross the restaurant; by the time they neared Simon's table, Isabelle had whipped the sharp stiletto-like dagger out of the top of her boot. It lay across the table, gleaming in the diner's fluorescent lights. It was a dark, heavy silver, with crosses burned into both sides of the hilt. Most vampire-repelling weapons seemed to sport crosses, on the assumption, Simon thought, that most vampires were Christian. Who knew that following a minority religion could be so advantageous?

“That’s close enough,” Isabelle said, as the two subjugates paused beside the table, her fingers inches from the dagger. “State your business, you two.”

“Shadowhunter.” The creature on the left spoke in a hissing whisper. “We did not know of you in this situation.”

Isabelle raised a delicate eyebrow. “And what situation would that be?”

The second subjugate pointed a long gray finger at Simon. The nail on the end of it was yellowed and sharp. “We have dealings with the Daylighter.”

“No, you don’t,” Simon said. “I have no idea who you are. Never seen you before.”

“I am Mr. Walker,” said the first creature. “Beside me is Mr. Archer. We serve the most powerful vampire in New York City. The head of the greatest Manhattan clan.”

“Raphael Santiago,” said Isabelle. “In that case you must know that Simon isn’t a part of any clan. He’s a free agent.”

Mr. Walker smiled a thin smile. “My master was hoping that was a situation that could be altered.”

Simon met Isabelle’s eyes across the table. She shrugged. “Didn’t Raphael tell you he wanted you to stay *away* from the clan?”

“Maybe he’s changed his mind,” Simon suggested. “You know how he is. Moody. Fickle.”

“I wouldn’t know. I haven’t really seen him since that time I threatened to kill him with a candelabra. He took it well, though. Didn’t flinch.”

“Fantastic,” Simon said. The two subjugates were staring at him. Their eyes were a pale whitish gray color, like dirty snow. “If Raphael wants me in the clan, it’s because he wants

something from me. You might as well tell me what it is.”

“We are not privy to our master’s plans,” said Mr. Archer in a haughty tone.

“No dice, then,” said Simon. “I won’t go.”

“If you do not wish to come with us, we are authorized to use force to bring you.”

The dagger seemed to leap into Isabelle’s hand; or at least, she barely seemed to move, and yet she was holding it. She twirled it lightly. “I wouldn’t do that if I were you.”

Mr. Archer bared his teeth at her. “Since when have the Angel’s children become the bodyguards for rogue Downworlders? I would have thought you above this sort of business, Isabelle Lightwood.”

“I’m not his bodyguard,” said Isabelle. “I’m his *girlfriend*. Which gives me the right to kick your ass if you bother him. That’s how it works.”

Girlfriend? Simon was startled enough to look at her in surprise, but she was staring down the two subjugates, her dark eyes flashing. On the one hand he didn’t think Isabelle had ever referred to herself as his girlfriend before. On the other hand it was symptomatic of how strange his life had become that *that* was the thing that had startled him most tonight, rather than the fact that he had just been summoned to a meeting by the most powerful vampire in New York.

“My master,” said Mr. Walker, in what he probably thought was a soothing tone, “has a proposition to put to the Daylighter—”

“His name is Simon. Simon Lewis.”

“To put to Mr. Lewis. I can promise you that Mr. Lewis will find it most advantageous if he is willing to accompany

us and hear my master out. I swear on my master's honor that no harm will come to you, Daylighter, and that should you wish to refuse my master's offer, you will have the free choice to do so."

My master, my master. Mr. Walker spoke the words with a mixture of adoration and awe. Simon shuddered a little inwardly. How horrible to be so bound to someone else, and to have no real will of your own.

Isabelle was shaking her head; she mouthed "no" at Simon. She was probably right, he thought. Isabelle was an excellent Shadowhunter. She'd been hunting demons and lawbreaking Downworlders—rogue vampires, black-magic-practicing warlocks, werewolves who'd run wild and eaten someone—since she was twelve years old, and was probably better at what she did than any other Shadowhunter her age, with the exception of her brother Jace. And there had been Sebastian, Simon thought, who had been better than them both. But he was dead.

"All right," he said. "I'll go."

Isabelle's eyes rounded. "Simon!"

Both subjugates rubbed their hands together, like villains in a comic book. The gesture itself wasn't what was creepy, really; it was that they did it exactly at the same time and in the same way, as if they were puppets whose strings were being yanked in unison.

"Excellent," said Mr. Archer.

Isabelle banged the knife down on the table with a clatter and leaned forward, her shining dark hair brushing the tabletop. "Simon," she said in an urgent whisper. "Don't be stupid. There's no reason for you to go with them. And Raphael's a jerk."