



The Bane Chronicles

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448 pages

Extrait

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It was a sad moment in Magnus Bane's life when he was banned from Peru by the High Council of Peruvian warlocks. It was not just because the posters with a picture of him that were passed around Downworld in Peru were so wildly unflattering. It was because Peru was one of his favorite places. He had had many adventures there, and had many wonderful memories, starting with the time in 1791 when he had invited Ragnor Fell to join him for a festive sightseeing escape in Lima.

1791

Magnus awoke in his roadside inn just outside Lima, and once he had arrayed himself in an embroidered waistcoat, breeches, and shining buckled shoes, he went in search of breakfast. Instead he found his hostess, a plump woman whose long hair was covered with a black mantilla, in a deep, troubled conference with one of the serving girls about a recent arrival to the inn.

"I think it's a sea monster," he heard his hostess whisper. "Or a merman. Can they survive on land?"

"Good morning, ladies," Magnus called out. "Sounds like my guest has arrived."

Both women blinked twice. Magnus put the first blink down to his vivid attire, and the second, slower blink down to what he had just said. He gave them both a cheery wave and wandered out through wide wooden doors and across the courtyard into the common room, where he found his fellow warlock Ragnor Fell skulking in the back of the room with a mug of chicha de molle.

"I'll have what he's having," Magnus said to the serving lady. "No, wait a moment. I'll have three of what he's having."

"Tell them I'll have the same," said Ragnor. "I achieved this drink only through some very determined pointing."

Magnus did, and when he returned his gaze to Ragnor, he saw that his old friend was looking his usual self: hideously dressed, deeply gloomy, and deeply green of skin. Magnus often gave thanks that his own warlock's mark was not so obvious. It was sometimes inconvenient to have the gold-green, slit-pupilled eyes of a cat, but this was usually easily hidden with a small glamour, and if not, well, there were quite a few ladies—and men—who didn't find it a drawback.

"No glamour?" Magnus inquired.

"You said that you wanted me to join you on travels that would be a ceaseless round of debauchery," Ragnor told him.

Magnus beamed. "I did!" He paused. "Forgive me. I do not see the connection."

“I have found I have better luck with the ladies in my natural state,” Ragnor told him. “Ladies enjoy a bit of variety. There was a woman in the court of Louis the Sun King who said none could compare to her ‘dear little cabbage.’ I hear it’s become quite a popular term of endearment in France. All thanks to me.”

He spoke in the same glum tones as usual. When the six drinks arrived, Magnus seized on them.

“I’ll be needing all of these. Please bring more for my friend.”

“There was also a woman who referred to me as her sweet peapod of love,” Ragnor continued.

Magnus took a deep restorative swallow, looked at the sunshine outside and the drinks before him, and felt better about the entire situation. “Congratulations. And welcome to Lima, the City of Kings, my sweet peapod.”



After breakfast, which was five drinks for Ragnor and seventeen for Magnus, Magnus took Ragnor on a tour of Lima, from the golden, curled, and carved façade of the archbishop’s palace to the brightly colored buildings across the plaza, with their practically mandatory elaborate balconies, where the Spanish had once executed criminals.

“I thought it would be nice to start in the capital. Besides, I’ve been here before,” Magnus said. “About fifty years ago. I had a lovely time, aside from the earthquake that almost swallowed the city.”

“Did you have something to do with that earthquake?”

“Ragnor,” Magnus reproached his friend. “You cannot blame me for every little natural disaster that happens!”

“You didn’t answer the question,” Ragnor said, and sighed. “I am relying on you to be . . . more reliable and less like you than you usually are,” he warned as they walked. “I don’t speak the language.”

“So you don’t speak Spanish?” Magnus asked. “Or you don’t speak Quechua? Or is it that you don’t speak Aymara?”

Magnus was perfectly aware he was a stranger everywhere he went, and he took care to learn all the languages so he could go anywhere he chose. Spanish had been the first language that he had learned to speak, after his native language. That was the one tongue he did not speak often. It reminded him of his mother, and his stepfather—reminded him of the love and the prayer and despair of his childhood. The words of his homeland rested a little too heavily on his tongue, as if he had to mean them, had to be serious, when he spoke.

(There were other languages—Purgatic and Gehennic and Tartarian—that he had learned so that he could communicate with those from the demon realms, languages he was forced to use often in his line of work. But those reminded him of his blood father, and those memories were even worse.)

Sincerity and gravity, in Magnus’s opinion, were highly overrated, as was being forced to relive unpleasant memories. He would much rather be amused and amusing.

“I don’t speak any of the things that you just said,” Ragnor told him. “Although, I must speak Prattling Fool, since I can understand you.”

“That is hurtful and unnecessary,” Magnus observed. “But of course, you can trust me completely.”

“Just don’t leave me here without guidance. You have to swear, Bane.”

Magnus raised his eyebrows. “I give you my word of honor!”

“I will find you,” Ragnor told him. “I will find whatever chest of absurd clothes you have. And I will bring a llama into the place where you sleep and make sure that it urinates on everything you possess.”

“There is no need to get nasty about this,” Magnus said. “Don’t worry. I can teach you every word that you need to know right now. One of them is ‘fiesta.’”

Ragnor scowled. “What does that mean?”

Magnus raised his eyebrows. “It means ‘party.’ Another important word is ‘juerga.’”

“What does that word mean?”

Magnus was silent.

“Magnus,” said Ragnor, his voice stern. “Does that word also mean ‘party’?”

Magnus could not help the sly grin that spread across his face. “I would apologize,” he said. “Except that I feel no regret at all.”

“Try to be a little sensible,” Ragnor suggested.

“We’re on holiday!” said Magnus.

“You’re always on holiday,” Ragnor pointed out. “You’ve been on holiday for thirty years!”

It was true. Magnus had not been settled anywhere since his lover died—not his first lover, but the first one who had lived by his side and died in his arms. Magnus had thought of her often enough that the mention of her did not hurt him, her remembered face like the distant familiar beauty of stars, not to be touched but to shine in front of his eyes at night.

“I can’t get enough adventure,” Magnus said lightly. “And adventure cannot get enough of me.”

He had no idea why Ragnor sighed again.



Ragnor’s suspicious nature continued to make Magnus very sad and disappointed in him as a person, such as when they visited Lake Yarinacocha and Ragnor’s eyes narrowed as he demanded: “Are those dolphins pink?”

“They were pink when I got here!” Magnus exclaimed indignantly. He paused and considered. “I am almost certain.”

They went from costa to sierra seeing all the sights of Peru. Magnus’s favorite was perhaps the city of Arequipa, a piece of the moon, made of sillar rock that when touched by the sun blazed as dazzling and scintillating a white as moonlight striking water.

There was a very attractive young lady there too, but in the end she decided she preferred Ragnor. Magnus could have lived his whole long life without becoming involved in a warlock love triangle, or hearing the endearment “adorable pitcher plant of a man” spoken in French, which Ragnor did understand. Ragnor, however, seemed very pleased and for the first time did not seem to regret that he’d come when Magnus had summoned him to Lima.

In the end Magnus was able to persuade Ragnor away from Arequipa only by introducing him to another lovely young lady, Giuliana, who knew her way in the rain forest and assured them both that she would be able to lead them to ayahuasca, a plant with remarkable magical properties.

Later Magnus had cause to regret choosing this particular lure as he pulled himself through the green swathes of the Manu rain forest. It was all green, green, green, everywhere he looked. Even when he looked at his traveling companion.

“I don’t like the rain forest,” Ragnor said sadly.

“That’s because you are not open to new experiences in the same way I am!”

“No, it is because it is wetter than a boar’s armpit and twice as smelly here.”

Magnus pushed a dripping frond out of his eyes. “I admit you make an excellent point and also paint a vivid picture with your words.”

It was not comfortable in the rain forest, that much was true, but it was wonderful there all the same. The thick green of the undergrowth was different from the delicate leaves on trees higher up, the bright feathery shapes of some plants gently waving at the ropelike strands of others. The green all around was broken up by sudden bright interruptions: the vivid splash of flowers and the rush of movement that meant animals instead of leaves.

Magnus was especially charmed by the sight of the spider monkeys above, dainty and glossy with long arms and legs spread out in the trees like stars, and the shy swift spring of squirrel monkeys.

“Picture this,” said Magnus. “Me with a little monkey friend. I could teach him tricks. I could dress him in a cunning jacket. He could look just like me! But more monkey-shaped.”

“Your friend has gone mad and giddy with the altitude sickness,” Giuliana announced. “We are many feet above sea level here.”

Magnus was not entirely sure why he had brought a guide, except that it seemed to calm Ragnor down. Other people probably dutifully followed their guides in unfamiliar and potentially dangerous places, but Magnus was a warlock and fully prepared to have a magical battle with a jaguar demon if that was required. It would be an excellent story, which might impress some of the ladies who were not inexplicably allured by Ragnor.

Or some of the gentlemen.

Lost in picking fruit and in the contemplation of jaguar demons, Magnus looked around at one point and found himself separated from his companions—lost in the green wilderness.

He paused and admired the bromeliads, huge iridescent flower-like bowls made out of petals, shimmering with color and water. There were frogs inside the jewel-bright recesses of the flowers.

Then he looked up into the round brown eyes of a monkey.

“Hello, companion,” said Magnus.

The monkey made a terrible sound, half snarl and half hiss.

“I begin to rather doubt the beauty of our friendship,” said Magnus.

Giuliana had told them not to back down when approached by monkeys, but to stay still and preserve an air of calm authority. This monkey was much larger than the other monkeys Magnus had seen, with broader bunched shoulders and thick, almost black fur—a howler monkey, Magnus remembered they were called.

Magnus threw the monkey a fig. The monkey took the fig.

“There,” said Magnus. “Let us consider the matter settled.”

The monkey advanced, chewing in a menacing fashion.

“I rather wonder what I am doing here. I enjoy city life, you know,” Magnus observed. “The glittering lights, the constant companionship, the liquid entertainment. The lack of sudden monkeys.”

He ignored Giuliana’s advice and took a smart step back, and also threw another piece of fruit. The monkey did not take the bait this time. He coiled and rattled out a growl, and Magnus took several more steps back and into a tree.

Magnus flailed on impact, was briefly grateful that nobody was watching him and expecting him to be a sophisticated warlock, and had a monkey assault launched directly to his face.

He shouted, spun, and sprinted through the rain forest. He did not even think to drop the fruit. It fell one by one in a bright cascade as he ran for his life from the simian menace. He heard it in hot pursuit and fled faster, until all his fruit was gone and he ran right into Ragnor.

“Have a care!” Ragnor snapped.

“In my defense, you are quite well camouflaged,” Magnus pointed out, and then he detailed his terrible monkey adventure twice, once for Giuliana in Spanish, and again for Ragnor in English.

“But of course you should have retreated at once from the dominant male,” Giuliana said. “Are you an idiot? You are extremely lucky he was distracted from ripping out your throat by the fruit. He thought you were trying to steal his females.”

“Pardon me, but we did not have the time to exchange that kind of personal information,” Magnus said. “I could not have known! Moreover, I wish to assure both of you that I did not make any amorous advances on female monkeys.” He paused and winked. “I didn’t actually see any, so I never got the chance.”

Ragnor looked very regretful about all the choices that had led to his being in this place and especially in this company. Later he stooped and hissed, low enough so Giuliana could not hear and in a way that reminded Magnus horribly of his monkey nemesis: “Did you forget that you can do magic?”

Magnus spared a moment to toss a disdainful look over his shoulder.

“I am not going to ensorcel a monkey! Honestly, Ragnor. What do you take me for?”



Life could not be entirely devoted to debauchery and monkeys. Magnus had to finance all the drinking somehow. There was always a Downworlder network to be found, and he had made sure to make the right contacts as soon as he’d set foot in Peru.

When his particular expertise was called for, he brought Ragnor with him. They boarded the ship in the Salaverry harbor together, both dressed in their greatest finery. Magnus was wearing his largest hat, with an ostrich feather plume.

Edmund García, one of the richest merchants in Peru, met them on the foredeck. He was a man with a florid complexion, dressed in an expensive-looking cassock, knee breeches, and a powdered wig. An engraved pistol hung from his leather belt. He squinted at Ragnor. “Is that a sea monster?” he demanded.

“He is a highly respected warlock,” said Magnus. “You are, in fact, getting two warlocks for the price of one.”

García had not made his fortune by turning his nose up at bargains. He was instantly and forevermore silent on the subject of sea monsters.

“Welcome,” he said instead.

“I dislike boats,” Ragnor observed, looking around. “I get vilely seasick.”

The turning green joke was too easy. Magnus was not going to stoop to make it.

“Would you care to elaborate on what this job entails?” he asked instead. “The letter I received said you had need of my particular talents, but I must confess that I have so many talents that I am not sure which one you require. They are all, of course, at your disposal.”

“You are strangers to our shores,” said Edmund. “So perhaps you do not know that the current state of prosperity in Peru rests on our chief export—guano.”

“What’s he saying?” Ragnor asked.

“Nothing you would like, so far,” Magnus said. The boat lurched beneath them on the waves. “Pardon me. You were talking about bird droppings.”

“I was,” said García. “For a long time the European merchants were the ones who profited most from this trade. Now laws have been passed to ensure that Peruvian merchants will have the upper hand in such dealings, and the Europeans will have to make us partners in their enterprises or retire from the guano business. One of my ships, bearing a large quantity of guano as cargo, will be one of the first sent out now that the laws have been passed. I fear attempts may be made on the ship.”

“You think pirates are out to steal your bird droppings?” Magnus asked.

“What’s going on?” Ragnor moaned piteously.

“You don’t want to know. Trust me.” Magnus looked at García. “Varied though my talents are, I am not sure they extend to guarding, ah, guano.”

He was dubious about the cargo, but he did know something about Europeans swooping in and laying claim to everything they saw as if it were unquestionably theirs, land and lives, produce and people.

Besides which, he had never had an adventure on the high seas before.

“We are prepared to pay handsomely,” García offered, naming a sum.

“Oh. Well, in that case, consider us hired,” said Magnus, and he broke the news to Ragnor.



“I’m still not sure about any of this,” Ragnor said. “I’m not even sure where you got that hat.”

Magnus adjusted it for maximum jauntiness. “Just a little something I picked up. Seemed appropriate for the occasion.”

“Nobody else is wearing anything even remotely like it.”

Magnus cast a disparaging look around at all the fashion-challenged sailors. “I feel sorry for them, of course, but I do not see why that observation should alter my current extremely stylish course of action.”

He looked from the ship deck across to the sea. The water was a particularly clear green, with the same shading of turquoise and emerald as in a polished green tourmaline. Two ships were visible on the horizon—the ship that they were on their way to join, and a second, which Magnus suspected strongly was a pirate ship intent on attacking the first.

Magnus snapped his fingers, and their own ship swallowed the horizon at a gulp.

“Magnus, don’t magic the ship to go faster,” Ragnor said. “Magnus, why are you magicking the ship to go faster?”

Magnus snapped his fingers again, and blue sparks played along the weather-worn and storm-splintered side of the ship. “I spy dread pirates in the distance. Ready yourself for battle, my greenish friend.”

Ragnor was loudly sick at that and even more loudly unhappy about it, but they were gaining on the two ships, so Magnus was overall pleased.

“We are not hunting pirates. Nobody is a pirate! We are safeguarding cargo and that’s all. And what is this cargo, anyway?” Ragnor asked.

“You’re happier not knowing, my sweet little peapod,” Magnus assured him.

“Please stop calling me that.”

“I never shall, never,” Magnus vowed, and he made a swift economical gesture, with his rings catching the sunshine and painting the air in tiny bright brushstrokes.

The ship Magnus insisted on thinking of as the enemy pirate ship noticeably listed to one side. It was possible Magnus had gone slightly too far there.

García seemed extremely impressed that Magnus could disable ships from a distance, but he wanted to be absolutely sure the cargo was safe, so they drew their vessel alongside the larger ship—the pirate ship was by now lagging far, far behind them.

Magnus was perfectly happy with this state of affairs. Since they were hunting pirates and adventuring on the high seas, there was something that he had always wanted to try.

“You do it too,” he urged Ragnor. “It will be dashing. You’ll see.”

Then he seized a rope and swung, dashing, across fathoms of shining blue space and over a stretch of gleaming deck.

Then he dropped, neatly, into the hold.

Ragnor followed him a few moments later.

“Hold your nose,” Magnus counseled urgently. “Do not breathe in. Obviously someone was checking on the cargo, and left the hold open, and we both just jumped directly in.”

“And now here we are, all thanks to you, in the soup.”

“If only,” said Magnus.

There was a brief pause for them both to evaluate the full horror of the situation. Magnus, personally, was in horror up to his elbows. Even more tragically, he had lost his jaunty hat. He was simply trying not to think of what substance they were mostly buried in. If he thought very hard of anything other than the excrement of tiny winged mammals, he could imagine that he was stuck in something else. Anything else.

“Magnus,” Ragnor said. “I can see that the cargo we’re guarding is some very unpleasant substance, but could you tell me exactly what it is?”

Seeing that concealment and pretense were useless, Magnus told him.

“I hate adventures in Peru,” Ragnor said at last in a stifled voice. “I want to go home.”

It was not Magnus’s fault when the ensuing warlock tantrum managed to sink the boat full of guano, but he

was blamed just the same. Even worse, he was not paid.

Magnus's wanton destruction of Peruvian property was not, however, the reason he was banned from Peru.

1885

The next time Magnus was back in Peru, he was on a job with his friends Catarina Loss and Ragnor Fell. This proved Catarina had, besides magic, supernatural powers of persuasion, because Ragnor had sworn that he would never set foot in Peru again and certainly never in Magnus's company. But the two had had some adventures together in England during the 1870s, and Ragnor had grown better disposed toward Magnus. Still, the whole time they were walking into the valley of the Lurín River with their client, Ragnor was sending Magnus suspicious little glances out of the corner of his eye.

"This constant air of foreboding that you have when you're around me is hurtful and unwarranted, you know," Magnus told Ragnor.

"I was airing the smell out of my clothes for years! Years!" Ragnor replied.

"Well, you should have thrown them out and bought clothes that were both more sweetly scented and more stylish," Magnus said. "Anyway, that was decades ago. What have I done to you lately?"

"Don't fight in front of the client, boys," Catarina implored in her sweet voice, "or I will knock your heads together so hard, your skulls will crack like eggs."

"I can speak English, you know," said Nayaraq, their client, who was paying them extremely generously.

Embarrassment descended on the entire group. They reached Pachacamac in silence. They beheld the walls of piled rubble, which looked like a giant, artful child's sculpture made of sand.

There were pyramids here, but it was mostly ruins. What remained was thousands of years old, though, and Magnus could feel magic thrumming even in the sand-colored fragments.

"I knew the oracle who lived here seven hundred years ago," Magnus announced grandly. Nayaraq looked impressed.

Catarina, who knew Magnus's actual age perfectly well, did not.

Magnus had first started putting a price on his magic when he was less than twenty years old. He'd still been growing then, not yet fixed in time like a dragonfly caught in amber, iridescent and everlasting but frozen forever and a day in the prison of one golden instant. When he was growing to his full height and his face and body were changing infinitesimally every day, when he was a little closer to human than he was now.

You could not tell a potential customer, expecting a learned and ancient magician, that you were not even fully grown. Magnus had started lying about his age young, and had never dropped the habit.

It did get a little embarrassing sometimes when he forgot what lie he'd told to whom. Someone had once asked him what Julius Caesar was like, and Magnus had stared at him for much too long and said, "Not tall?"

Magnus looked around at the sand lying close to the walls, and at the cracked crumbling edges of those

walls, as if the stone were bread and a careless hand had torn a piece away. He carefully maintained the blasé air of one who had been here before and had been incredibly well dressed that time too.

“Pachacamac” meant “Lord of Earthquakes.” Fortunately, Nayaraq did not want them to create one. Magnus had never created an earthquake on purpose and preferred not to dwell on unfortunate accidents in his youth.

What Nayaraq wanted was the treasure that her mother’s mother’s mother’s mother, a beautiful noble girl living in the Acllahausi—the house of the women chosen by the sun—had hidden when the conquerors had come.

Magnus was not sure why she wanted it, as she seemed to have money enough, but he was not being paid to question her. They walked for hours in sun and shadow, by the ruined walls that bore the marks of time and the faint impressions of frescoes, until they found what she was looking for.

When the stones were removed from the wall and the treasure was dug out, the sun struck the gold and Nayaraq’s face at the same time. That was when Magnus understood that Nayaraq had not been searching for gold but for truth, for something real in her past.

She knew of Downworlders because she had been taken by the faeries, once. But this was not illusion or glamour, this gold shining in her hands as it had once shone in her ancestor’s hands.

“Thank you all very much,” she said, and Magnus understood and for a moment almost envied her.

When she was gone, Catarina let her own glamour fall away to reveal blue skin and white hair that dazzled in the dying sunlight.

“Now that that’s settled, I have something to propose. I have been jealous for years about all the adventures you two had in Peru. What do you say to continuing on here for a while?”

“Absolutely!” said Magnus.

Catarina clapped her hands together.

Ragnor scowled. “Absolutely not.”

“Don’t worry, Ragnor,” Magnus said carelessly. “I am fairly certain nobody who remembers the pirate misunderstanding is still alive. And the monkeys definitely aren’t still after me. Besides, you know what this means.”

“I do not want to do this, and I will not enjoy it,” Ragnor said. “I would leave at once, but it would be cruel to abandon a lady in a foreign land with a maniac.”

“I am so glad we are all agreed,” said Catarina.

“We are going to be a dread triumvirate,” Magnus informed Catarina and Ragnor with delight. “That means thrice the adventure.”

Later they heard that they were wanted criminals for desecrating a temple, but nevertheless, that was not the reason, nor the time, that Magnus was banned from Peru.

It was a beautiful day in Puno, the lake out the window a wash of blue and the sun shining with such dazzling force that it seemed to have burned all the azure and cloud out of the sky and left it all a white blaze. Carried on the clear mountain air, out over the lake water and through the house, rang Magnus's melody.

Magnus was turning in a gentle circle under the windowsill when the shutters on Ragnor's bedroom window slammed open.

"What—what—what are you doing?" he demanded.

"I am almost six hundred years old," Magnus claimed, and Ragnor snorted, since Magnus changed his age to suit himself every few weeks. Magnus swept on. "It does seem about time to learn a musical instrument." He flourished his new prize, a little stringed instrument that looked like a cousin of the lute that the lute was embarrassed to be related to. "It's called a charango. I am planning to become a charanguista!"

"I wouldn't call that an instrument of music," Ragnor observed sourly. "An instrument of torture, perhaps."

Magnus cradled the charango in his arms as if it were an easily offended baby. "It's a beautiful and very unique instrument! The sound box is made from an armadillo. Well, a dried armadillo shell."

"That explains the sound you're making," said Ragnor. "Like a lost, hungry armadillo."

"You are just jealous," Magnus remarked calmly. "Because you do not have the soul of a true artiste like myself."

"Oh, I am positively green with envy," Ragnor snapped.

"Come now, Ragnor. That's not fair," said Magnus. "You know I love it when you make jokes about your complexion."

Magnus refused to be affected by Ragnor's cruel judgments. He regarded his fellow warlock with a lofty stare of superb indifference, raised his charango, and began to play again his defiant, beautiful tune.

They both heard the staccato thump of frantically running feet from within the house, the swish of skirts, and then Catarina came rushing out into the courtyard. Her white hair was falling loose about her shoulders, and her face was the picture of alarm.

"Magnus, Ragnor, I heard a cat making a most unearthly noise," she exclaimed. "From the sound of it, the poor creature must be direly sick. You have to help me find it!"

Ragnor immediately collapsed with hysterical laughter on his windowsill. Magnus stared at Catarina for a moment, until he saw her lips twitch.

"You are conspiring against me and my art," he declared. "You are a pack of conspirators."

He began to play again. Catarina stopped him by putting a hand on his arm.

“No, but seriously, Magnus,” she said. “That noise is appalling.”

Magnus sighed. “Every warlock’s a critic.”

“Why are you doing this?”

“I have already explained myself to Ragnor. I wish to become proficient with a musical instrument. I have decided to devote myself to the art of the charanguista, and I wish to hear no more petty objections.”

“If we are all making lists of things we wish to hear no more . . . ,” Ragnor murmured.

Catarina, however, was smiling.

“I see,” she said.

“Madam, you do not see.”

“I do. I see it all most clearly,” Catarina assured him. “What is her name?”

“I resent your implication,” Magnus said. “There is no woman in the case. I am married to my music!”

“Oh, all right,” Catarina said. “What’s his name, then?”



His name was Imasu Morales, and he was gorgeous.

The three warlocks were staying near the harbor, along the shoreline of Lake Titicaca, but Magnus liked to see and be part of life in a way that Ragnor and Catarina, familiar with quiet and solitude from childhood on account of their unusual complexions, did not quite understand. He went walking about the city and up into the mountains, having small adventures. On a few occasions that Ragnor and Catarina kept hurtfully and unnecessarily reminding him of, he had been escorted home by the police, even though that incident with the Bolivian smugglers had been a complete misunderstanding.

Magnus had not been involved in any dealings with smugglers that night, though. He had simply been walking through the Plaza Republicana, skirting around artfully sculpted bushes and artfully sculpted sculptures. The city below shone like stars arranged in neat rows, as if someone were growing a harvest of light. It was a beautiful night to meet a beautiful boy.

The music had caught Magnus’s ear first, and then the laughter. Magnus had turned to look and saw sparkling dark eyes and rumpled hair, and the play of the musician’s fingers. Magnus had a list of favored traits in a partner—black hair, blue eyes, honest—but in this case what drew him in was an individual response to life. Something he hadn’t seen before, and which made him want to see more.

He moved closer, and managed to catch Imasu’s eye. Once both were caught, the game could begin, and Magnus began it by asking if Imasu taught music. He wanted to spend more time with Imasu, but he wanted to learn as well—to see if he could be absorbed in the same way, create the same sounds.

Even after a few lessons, Magnus could tell that the sounds he made with the charango were slightly

different from the sounds Imasu made. Possibly more than slightly. Ragnor and Catarina both begged him to give the instrument up. Random strangers on the street begged him to give the instrument up. Even cats ran from him.

But: “You have real potential as a musician,” Imasu said, his voice serious and his eyes laughing.

Magnus made it his policy to listen to people who were kind, encouraging, and extremely handsome.

So he kept at it with the charango, despite the fact that he was forbidden to play it in the house. He was also discouraged from playing it in public places by a crying child, a man with papers talking about city ordinances, and a small riot.

As a last resort he went up to the mountains and played there. Magnus was sure that the llama stampede he witnessed was a coincidence. The llamas could not be judging him.

Besides, the charango was definitely starting to sound better. He was either getting the hang of it or succumbing to auditory hallucinations. Magnus chose to believe it was the former.

“I think I really turned a corner,” he told Imasu earnestly one day. “In the mountains. A metaphorical, musical corner, that is. There really should be more roads up there.”

“That’s wonderful,” Imasu said, eyes shining. “I can’t wait to hear it.”

They were in Imasu’s house, as Magnus was not allowed to play anywhere else in Puno. Imasu’s mother and sister were both sadly prone to migraines, so many of Magnus’s lessons were on musical theory, but today Magnus and Imasu were in the house alone.

“When can we expect your mother and sister back?” Magnus asked, very casually.

“In a few weeks,” Imasu replied. “They went to visit my aunt. Um. They didn’t flee—I mean, leave the house—for any particular reason.”

“Such charming ladies,” Magnus remarked. “So sad they’re both so sickly.”

Imasu blinked.

“Their headaches?” Magnus reminded him.

“Oh,” Imasu said. “Oh, right.” There was a pause, then Imasu clapped his hands together. “You were about to play something for me!”

Magnus beamed at him. “Prepare,” he intoned, “to be astounded.”

He lifted the instrument up in his arms. They had come to understand each other, he felt, his charango and he. He could make music flow from the air or the river or the curtains if he so chose, but this was different, human and strangely touching. The stumble and screech of the strings were coming together, Magnus thought, to form a melody. The music was almost there, in his hands.

When Magnus looked at Imasu, he saw Imasu had dropped his head into his hands.

“Er,” Magnus said. “Are you quite all right?”

“I was simply overcome,” Imasu said in a faint voice.

Magnus preened slightly. “Ah. Well.”

“By how awful that was,” Imasu said.

Magnus blinked. “Pardon?”

“I can’t live a lie any longer!” Imasu burst out. “I have tried to be encouraging. Dignitaries of the town have been sent to me, asking me to plead with you to stop. My own sainted mother begged me, with tears in her eyes—”

“It isn’t as bad as all that—”

“Yes, it is!” It was like a dam of musical critique had broken. Imasu turned on him with eyes that flashed instead of shining. “It is worse than you can possibly imagine! When you play, all of my mother’s flowers lose the will to live and expire on the instant. The quinoa has no flavor now. The llamas are migrating because of your music, and llamas are not a migratory animal. The children now believe there is a sickly monster, half horse and half large mournful chicken, that lives in the lake and calls out to the world to grant it the sweet release of death. The townspeople believe that you and I are performing arcane magic rituals—”

“Well, that one was rather a good guess,” Magnus remarked.

“—using the skull of an elephant, an improbably large mushroom, and one of your very peculiar hats!”

“Or not,” said Magnus. “Furthermore, my hats are extraordinary.”

“I will not argue with that.” Imasu scrubbed a hand through his thick black hair, which curled and clung to his fingers like inky vines. “Look, I know that I was wrong. I saw a handsome man, thought that it would not hurt to talk a little about music and strike up a common interest, but I don’t deserve this. You are going to get stoned in the town square, and if I have to listen to you play again, I will drown myself in the lake.”

“Oh,” said Magnus, and he began to grin. “I wouldn’t. I hear there is a dreadful monster living in that lake.”

Imasu seemed to still be brooding about Magnus’s charango playing, a subject that Magnus had lost all interest in. “I believe the world will end with a noise like the noise you make!”

“Interesting,” said Magnus, and he threw his charango out the window.

“Magnus!”

“I believe that music and I have gone as far as we can go together,” Magnus said. “A true artiste knows when to surrender.”

“I can’t believe you did that!”

Magnus waved a hand airily. “I know, it is heartbreaking, but sometimes one must shut one’s ears to the

pleas of the muse.”

“I just meant that those are expensive and I heard a crunch.”

Imasu looked genuinely distressed, but he was smiling, too. His face was an open book in glowing colors, as fascinating as it was easy to read. Magnus moved from the window into Imasu’s space and let one hand curl around Imasu’s callused fingers, the other very lightly around his wrist. He saw the shiver run through Imasu’s whole body, as if he were an instrument from which Magnus could coax any sound he pleased.

“It desolates me to give up my music,” Magnus murmured. “But I believe you will discover I have many talents.”

That night when he came home and told Ragnor and Catarina that he had given up music, Ragnor said, “In five hundred years I have never desired the touch of another man, but I am suddenly possessed with a desire to kiss that boy on the mouth.”

“Hands off,” said Magnus, with easy, pleased possessiveness.

The next day all of Puno rose and gathered together in a festival. Imasu told Magnus he was sure the timing of the festival was entirely unrelated. Magnus laughed. The sun came through in slants across Imasu’s eyes, in glowing strips across his brown skin, and Imasu’s mouth curled beneath Magnus’s. They did not make it outside in time to see the parade.



Magnus asked his friends if they could stay in Puno for a while, and was not surprised when they agreed. Catarina and Ragnor were both warlocks. To them, as to Magnus, time was like rain, glittering as it fell, changing the world, but something that could also be taken for granted.

Until you loved a mortal. Then time became gold in a miser’s hands, every bright year counted out carefully, infinitely precious, and each one slipping through your fingers.

Imasu told him about his father’s death and about his sister’s love for dancing that had inspired Imasu to play for her, and that this was the second time he had ever been in love. He was both indígena and Spanish, more mingled even than most of the mestizos, too Spanish for some and not Spanish enough for others. Magnus talked a little with Imasu about that, about the Dutch and Batavian blood in his own veins. He did not talk about demonic blood or his father or magic, not yet.

Magnus had learned to be careful about giving his memories with his heart. When people died, it felt like all the pieces of yourself you had given to them went as well. It took so long, building yourself back up until you were whole again, and you were never entirely the same.

That had been a long, painful lesson.

Magnus had still not learned it very well, he supposed, as he found himself wanting to tell Imasu a great deal. He did not only wish to talk about his parentage, but about his past, the people he had loved—about Camille; and about Edmund Herondale and his son, Will; and even about Tessa and Catarina and how he had met her in Spain. In the end he broke down and told the last story, though he left out details like the Silent Brothers and Catarina’s almost being burned as a witch. But as the seasons changed, Magnus began to think that he

should tell Imasu about magic at least, before he suggested that Magnus stop living with Catarina and Ragnor, and Imasu stop living with his mother and sister, and that they find a place together that Imasu could fill with music and Magnus with magic. It was time to settle down, Magnus thought, for a short while at least.

It came as a shock when Imasu suggested, quite quietly: “Perhaps it is time for you and your friends to think of leaving Puno.”

“What, without you?” Magnus asked. He had been lying sunning himself outside Imasu’s house, content and making his plans for a little way into the future. He was caught off guard enough to be stupid.

“Yes,” Imasu answered, looking regretful about the prospect of making himself clearer. “Absolutely without me. It’s not that I have not had a wonderful time with you. We have had fun together, you and I, haven’t we?” he added pleadingly.

Magnus nodded, with the most nonchalant air he could manage, and then immediately ruined it by saying, “I thought so. So why end it?”

Perhaps it was his mother, or his sister, some member of Imasu’s family, objecting to the fact that they were both men. This would not be the first or the last time that happened to Magnus, although Imasu’s mother had always given Magnus the impression he could do anything he liked with her son just so long as he never touched a musical instrument in her presence ever again.

“It’s you,” Imasu burst out. “It is the way you are. I cannot be with you any longer because I do not want to be.”

“Please,” Magnus said after a pause. “Carry on showering me with compliments. This is an extremely pleasant experience for me, by the way, and precisely how I was hoping my day would go.”

“You are just . . .” Imasu took a deep, frustrated breath. “You seem always . . . ephemeral, like a glittering shallow stream that passes the whole world by. Not something that will stay, not something that will last.” He made a small, helpless gesture, as if letting something go, as if Magnus had wanted to be let go. “Not someone permanent.”

That made Magnus laugh, suddenly and helplessly, and he threw his head back. He’d learned this lesson a long time ago: Even in the midst of heartbreak, you could still find yourself laughing.

Laughter had always come easily to Magnus, and it helped, but not enough.

“Magnus,” said Imasu, and he sounded truly angry. Magnus wondered how many times when Magnus had thought they were simply arguing, Imasu had been leading up to this moment of parting. “This is exactly what I was talking about!”

“You’re quite wrong, you know. I am the most permanent person that you will ever meet,” said Magnus, his voice breathless with laughter and his eyes stung a little by tears. “It is only that it never makes any difference.”

It was the truest thing he had ever told Imasu, and he never told him any more truth than that.



Warlocks lived forever, which meant they saw the intimate, terrible cycle of birth, life, and death over and over again. It also meant that they had all been witness to literally millions of failed relationships.

“It’s for the best,” Magnus informed Ragnor and Catarina solemnly, raising his voice to be heard above the sounds of yet another festival.

“Of course,” murmured Catarina, who was a good and loyal friend.

“I’m surprised it even lasted this long; he was much better looking than you,” mumbled Ragnor, who deserved a cruel and terrible fate.

“I’m only two hundred years old,” said Magnus, ignoring his friends’ mutual snort at the lie. “I can’t settle down yet. I need more time to devote myself to debauchery. And I think—” He finished his drink and looked speculatively around. “I think I am going to ask that charming young lady over there to dance.”

The girl he was eyeing, he noted, was eyeing him back. She had lashes so long they were almost sweeping her shoulders.

It was possible Magnus was a little bit drunk. Chicha de molle was famous for both its swift effects and the horrible hangovers that followed.

Ragnor twitched violently and made a sound like a cat whose tail has been stepped on. “Magnus, please, no. The music was bad enough!”

“Magnus is not as bad at dancing as he is at the charango,” Catarina remarked thoughtfully. “Actually, he dances quite well. Albeit with a certain, er, unique and characteristic flair.”

“I do not feel even slightly reassured,” Ragnor said. “Neither of you are reassuring people.”

After a brief heated interlude, Magnus returned to the table breathing slightly hard. He saw that Ragnor had decided to amuse himself by hitting his own forehead repeatedly against the tabletop.

“What did you think you were doing?” Ragnor demanded between gloomy thumps.

Catarina contributed, “The dance is a beautiful, traditional dance called El Alcatraz, and I thought Magnus performed it—”

“Brilliantly,” Magnus suggested. “Dashing? Devastatingly attractively? Nimbly?”

Catarina pursed her lips in thought before selecting the appropriate word. “Spectacularly.”

Magnus pointed at her. “That’s why you’re my favorite.”

“And traditionally the man gyrates—”

“You did gyrate spectacularly,” Ragnor observed in a sour voice.

Magnus made a little bow. “Why, thank you.”

“—and attempts to set fire to his partner’s skirts with a candle,” Catarina continued. “It’s a wonderful, vibrant, and rather gorgeous dance.”

“Oh, ‘attempts,’ is it?” Ragnor asked. “So it is not traditional for someone to utilize magic, actually set the woman’s skirts and his own ostentatious coat on fire, and keep dancing even though both the dance partners involved are now actually spinning towers of flame?”

Catarina coughed. “Not strictly traditional, no.”

“It was all under control,” Magnus declared loftily. “Have a little faith in my magic fingers.”

Even the girl he’d danced with had thought it was some marvelous trick. She had been enveloped in real, bright fire and she had tipped back her head and laughed, the tumble of her black hair becoming a crackling waterfall of light, the heels of her shoes striking sparks like glittering leaping dust all over the floor, her skirt trailing flame as if he were following a phoenix tail. Magnus had spun and swung with her, and she’d thought he was marvelous for a single moment of bright illusion.

But, like love, fire didn’t last.

“Do you think that eventually our kind becomes far enough removed from humanity that we transform into creatures that are untouchable and unlovable by humanity?” Magnus asked.

Ragnor and Catarina stared at him.

“Don’t answer that,” Magnus told them. “That sounded like the question of a man who doesn’t need answers. That sounded like the question of a man who needs another drink. Here we go!”

He lifted a glass. Ragnor and Catarina did not join him, but Magnus was happy to make the toast on his own.

“To adventure,” he said, and drank.



Magnus opened his eyes and saw brilliant light, felt hot air drag across his skin like a knife scraping across burned bread. His whole brain throbbed and he was promptly, violently sick.

Catarina offered him a bowl. She was a muddle of white and blue in his blurred vision.

“Where am I?” Magnus croaked.

“Nazca.”

So Magnus was still in Peru. That indicated that he had been rather more sensible than he’d feared.

“Oh, so we went on a little trip.”

“You broke into a man’s house,” Catarina said. “You stole a carpet and enchanted it to fly. Then you sped

off into the night air. We pursued you on foot.”

“Ah,” said Magnus.

“You were shouting some things.”

“What things?”

“I prefer not to repeat them,” Catarina said. She was a weary shade of blue. “I also prefer not to remember the time we spent in the desert. It is a mammoth desert, Magnus. Ordinary deserts are quite large. Mammoth deserts are so called because they are larger than ordinary deserts.”

“Thank you for that interesting and enlightening information,” Magnus croaked, and tried to bury his face in his pillow, like an ostrich trying to bury its head in the sand of a mammoth desert. “It was kind of you both to follow me. I’m sure I was pleased to see you,” he offered weakly, hoping that this would lead to Catarina’s bringing him more liquids and perhaps a hammer with which he could smash in his skull.

Magnus felt too weak to move in quest of a liquid, himself. Healing magic had never been his specialty, but he was almost certain that moving would cause his head to topple from his shoulders. He could not allow that to happen. He had confirmation from many witnesses that his head looked superb where it was.

“You told us to leave you in the desert, because you planned to start a new life as a cactus,” Catarina said, her voice flat. “Then you conjured up tiny needles and threw them at us. With pinpoint accuracy.”

Magnus chanced another look up at her. She was still very blurry. Magnus thought this was unkind. He’d believed they were friends.

“Well,” he said with dignity. “Considering my highly intoxicated state, you must have been impressed with my aim.”

“‘Impressed’ is not the word to use to describe how I felt last night, Magnus.”

“I thank you for stopping me there,” Magnus said. “It was for the best. You are a true friend. No harm done. Let’s say no more about it. Could you possibly fetch me—”

“Oh, we couldn’t stop you,” Catarina interrupted. “We tried, but you giggled, leaped onto the carpet, and flew away again. You kept saying that you wanted to go to Moquegua.”

Magnus really did not feel at all well. His stomach was sinking and his head was spinning.

“What did I do in Moquegua?”

“You never got there,” Catarina said. “But you were flying about and yelling and trying to, ahem, write messages for us with your carpet in the sky.”

Magnus had a sudden vivid memory, wind and stars in his hair, of the things he had been trying to write. Fortunately, he didn’t think Ragnar or Catarina spoke the language he had been writing in.

“We then stopped for a meal,” Catarina said. “You were most insistent that we try a local specialty that you

called cuy. We actually had a very pleasant meal, even though you were still very drunk.”

“I’m sure I must have been sobering up at that point,” Magnus argued.

“Magnus, you were trying to flirt with your own plate.”

“I’m a very open-minded sort of fellow!”

“Ragnor is not,” Catarina said. “When he found out that you were feeding us guinea pigs, he hit you over the head with your plate. It broke.”

“So ended our love,” Magnus said. “Ah, well. It would never have worked between me and the plate anyway. I’m sure the food did me good, Catarina, and you were very good to feed me and put me to bed—”

Catarina shook her head. She seemed to be enjoying this, like a nightmare nurse telling a child she did not especially like a terrifying bedtime story. “You fell down on the floor. Honestly, we thought it best to leave you sleeping on the ground. We thought you would remain there for some time, but we took our eyes off you for one minute, and then you scuttled off. Ragnor claims he saw you making for the carpet, crawling like a huge demented crab.”

Magnus refused to believe he had done any such thing. Ragnor was not to be trusted.

“I believe him,” Catarina said treacherously. “You were having a great deal of difficulty walking upright even before you were hit with the plate. Also, I believe the food did not do you much good at all, because then you flew all over the place exclaiming that you could see great big monkeys and birds and llamas and kitty cats drawn on the ground.”

“Gracious,” Magnus said. “I progressed to full hallucinations? It’s official. That sounds like . . . almost the most drunk I have ever been. Please don’t ask questions about the most drunk I have ever been. It’s a very sad story involving a birdcage.”

“You were not hallucinating, actually,” Catarina said. “Once we stood on the hills yelling ‘Get down, you idiot,’ we could see the vast drawings in the ground as well. They’re very grand and beautiful. I think they were part of an ancient ritual to summon water from the earth. Seeing them at all was worth coming to this country.”

Magnus still had his head sunk deep in the pillow, but he preened slightly.

“Always happy to enrich your life, Catarina.”

“It was not grand or beautiful,” Catarina said reminiscently, “when you were sick all over those mystical and immense designs from a civilization long gone by. From a height. Continuously.”

He briefly felt regret and shame. Then he mostly felt the urge to get sick again.

Later, when he was soberer, Magnus would go to see the Nazca Lines, and commit to memory the trenches where gravel had been cut away to show naked clay in sprawling, specific patterns: a bird with its wings outstretched in soaring flight, a monkey with a tail whose curves Magnus thought positively indecent—obviously, he approved—and a shape that might have been a man.

When scientists discovered and spent the 1930s and 1940s investigating the Nazca Lines, Magnus was a little annoyed, as if shapes scored in stone were his own personal property.

But then he accepted it. That was what humans did: They left one another messages through time, pressed between pages or carved into rock. Like reaching out a hand through time, and trusting in a phantom hoped-for hand to catch yours. Humans did not live forever. They could only hope what they made would endure.

Magnus supposed he could let the humans pass their message on.

But his acceptance came much, much later. Magnus had other things to do the day after he first saw the Nazca Lines. He had to be sick thirty-seven times.



After the thirtieth time Magnus was ill, Catarina became concerned.

“I really think you might have a fever.”

“I have told you again and again that I am most vilely unwell, yes,” Magnus said coldly. “Probably dying, not that either of you ingrates will care.”

“Shouldn’t have had the guinea pig,” said Ragnor, and he cackled. He seemed to be bearing a grudge.

“I feel far too faint to help myself,” Magnus said, turning to the person who cared for him and did not take unholy joy in his suffering. He did his best to look pathetic and suspected that right now his best was really excellent. “Catarina, would you—”

“I’m not going to waste magic and energy that could save lives to cure the ill effects of a night spent drinking excessively and spinning at high altitudes!”

When Catarina looked stern, it was all over. It would be more use to throw himself on Ragnor’s tender green mercies.

Magnus was just about to try that when Catarina announced thoughtfully, “I think it would be best if we tried out some of the local mundane medicines.”

The way mundanes in this part of Peru practiced medicine, it appeared, was to rub a guinea pig all over the afflicted sufferer’s body.

“I demand that you stop this!” Magnus protested. “I am a warlock and I can heal myself, and also I can blast your head clean off!”

“Oh, no. He’s delirious, he’s crazed, don’t listen to him,” Ragnor said. “Continue applying the guinea pig!”

The lady with the guinea pigs gave them all an unimpressed look and continued to go about her guinea pig business.

“Lie back, Magnus,” said Catarina, who was extremely open-minded and always interested in exploring other fields of medicine, and apparently willing to have Magnus serve as a hapless pawn in her medical

game. “Let the magic of the guinea pig flow through you.”

“Yes indeed,” put in Ragnor, who was not very open-minded at all, and giggled.

Magnus did not find the whole process as inherently hilarious as Ragnor did. As a child he’d taken djamu many times. There was bile of goat in that (if you were lucky—bile of alligator if you weren’t). And guinea pigs and djamu were both better than the bloodletting someone had tried on him in England once.

It was just that he generally found mundane medicine very trying, and he wished they would wait until he felt better to inflict these medical procedures on him.

Magnus tried to escape several times, and had to be forcibly restrained. Later Catarina and Ragnor liked to act out the time he tried to take the guinea pigs with him, reportedly shouting “Freedom!” and “I am your leader now.”

There was a distinct possibility that Magnus was still a tiny bit drunk.

At the end of the whole horrific ordeal, one of the guinea pigs was cut open and its entrails examined to see if the cure had been effected. At the sight of it Magnus was promptly sick again.



Some days later in Lima, after all the trauma and guinea pigs, Catarina and Ragnor finally trusted Magnus enough to let him have one—just one, and they were watching him insultingly closely—drink.

“What you were saying before, on That Night,” said Catarina.

Catarina and Ragnor both called it that, and in both cases Magnus could hear them using the capitals for emphasis.

“Don’t fret,” Magnus said airily. “I no longer want to go be a cactus and live in the desert.”

Catarina blinked and winced, visibly having a flashback. “Not what I was referring to, but good to know. I meant about humans, and love.”

Magnus did not particularly want to think about whatever he had been babbling piteously about on the night when he’d gotten his heart broken. There was no point in wallowing. Magnus refused to wallow. Wallowing was for elephants, depressing people, and depressing elephants.

Catarina continued despite the lack of encouragement. “I was born this color. I did not know how to wear a glamour as a newborn. There was no way to look like anything but what I was then, all the time, even though it was not safe. My mother saw me and knew what I was, but she hid me from the world. She raised me in secret. She did everything she could to keep me safe. A great wrong was done to her, and she gave back love. Every human I heal, I heal in her name. I do what I do to honor her, and to know that when she saved my life she saved countless lives through the centuries.”

She turned a wide, serious gaze to Ragnor, who was sitting at the table and looking at his hands uncomfortably, but who responded to the cue.

“My parents thought I was a faerie child or something, I think,” Ragnor said. “Because I was the color of springtime, my mother used to say,” he added, and blushed emerald. “Obviously it all came out as a bit more complicated than that, but by then they’d gotten fond of me. They were always fond of me, even though I was unsettling to have around the place, and Mother told me that I was grouchy as a baby. I outgrew that, of course.”

A polite silence followed this statement.

A faerie child would be easier to accept, Magnus thought, than that demons had tricked or hurt a woman—or, more rarely, a man—and now there was a marked child to remind the parent of their pain. Warlocks were always born from that, from pain and demons.

“It is something to remember, if we feel distant from humans,” Catarina said. “We owe a great deal to human love. We live forever by the grace of human love, which rocked strange children in their cradles and did not despair and did not turn away. I know which side of my heritage my soul comes from.”

They were sitting outside their house, in a garden surrounded by high walls, but Catarina was always the most cautious of them all. She looked around in the dark before she lit the candle on the table, light springing from nothing between her cupped hands and turning her white hair to silk and pearls. In the sudden light Magnus could see her smile.

“Our fathers were demons,” said Catarina. “Our mothers were heroes.”

That was true, of course, for them.

Most warlocks were born wearing unmistakable signs of what they were, and some warlock children died young because their parents abandoned or killed what they saw as unnatural creatures. Some were raised as Catarina and Ragnor had been, in love that was greater than fear.

Magnus’s warlock’s mark was his eyes, the pupils slit, the color lucent and green-gold at the wrong angles, but these features had not developed immediately. He had not been born with Catarina’s blue or Ragnor’s green skin, had been born a seemingly human baby with unusual amber eyes. Magnus’s mother had not realized his father was a demon for some time, not until she had gone to the cradle one morning and seen her child staring back at her with the eyes of a cat.

She knew, then, what had happened, that whatever had come to her in the night in the shape of her husband had not been her husband. When she had realized that, she had not wanted to go on living.

And she hadn’t.

Magnus did not know if she had been a hero or not. He had not been old enough to know about her life, or fully comprehend her pain. He could not be sure in the way Ragnor and Catarina looked sure. He did not know if, when his mother knew the truth, she had still loved him or if all love had been blotted out by darkness. A darkness greater than the one known by his friends’ mothers, for Magnus’s father was no ordinary demon.

“And I saw Satan fall,” Magnus murmured into his drink, “like lightning from Heaven.”

Catarina turned to him. “What was that?”

“Rejoice that your names are written in Heaven, my dear,” said Magnus. “I am so touched that I laugh and have another drink so that I may not weep.”

After that he took another walk outside.

He remembered now why he had told them, on that dark drunken night, that he wanted to go to Moquegua. Magnus had been to that town only once before, and had not stayed long.

Moquegua meant “quiet place” in Quechua, and that was exactly what the town was, and exactly why Magnus had felt uneasy there. The peaceful cobbled streets, the plaza with its wrought-iron fountain where children played, were not for him.

Magnus’s life philosophy was to keep moving, and in places like Moquegua he understood why it was necessary to keep moving. If he did not, someone might see him as he really was. Not that he thought he was so very dreadful, but there was still that voice in his head like a warning: Keep in bright constant motion, or the whole illusion will collapse in on itself.

Magnus remembered lying in the silver sand of the night desert and thinking of quiet places where he did not belong, and how sometimes he believed, as he believed in the passage of time and the joy of living and the absolute merciless unfairness of fate, that there was no quiet place in the world for him, and never would be. Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.

Nor was it wise to tempt angels, even of the fallen sort.

He shook the memory off. Even if that were true, there would always be another adventure.

You might think that Magnus’s spectacular night of drunken debauchery and countless crimes must be the reason he was banned from Peru, but that is not in fact the case. Amazingly, Magnus was allowed back into Peru. Many years later he went back, this time alone, and he did indeed find another adventure.

1962

Magnus was strolling through the streets of Cuzco, past the convent of La Merced and down the Calle Mantas, when he heard the man’s voice. The first thing he noticed was how nasal said voice was. The next thing he noticed was that he was speaking English.

“I don’t care what you say, Kitty. I maintain that we could have gotten a bus to Machu Picchu.”

“Geoffrey, there are no buses to Machu Picchu from New York.”

“Well, really,” said Geoffrey after a pause. “If the National Geographic Society is going to put the wretched place in their paper, they might at least have arranged a bus.”

Magnus was able to spot them then, wending their way through the arches that lined the street once you were past the bell tower. Geoffrey had the nose of a man who never shut up. It was peeling in the hot sun and arid air, and the once-crisp edges of his white trousers were wilting like a sad, dying flower.

“Another thing here is the natives,” said Geoffrey. “I had hoped we could get some decent pictures. I expected them to be so much more colorful, don’t you know?”

“It’s almost as if they are not here for your entertainment,” said Magnus in Spanish.

Kitty turned around at the sound, and Magnus saw a small mocking face and red hair curling underneath the brim of a very large straw hat. Her lips were curling too.

Geoffrey turned when she turned.

“Oh, well spotted, old girl,” he said. “Now, he’s what I call colorful.”

That much was true. Magnus was wearing more than a dozen scarves all in different colors and carefully arrayed to swirl about him like a fantastic rainbow. He was not too impressed by Geoffrey’s powers of observation, however, since Geoffrey was apparently unable to imagine that anyone with brown skin could possibly be a visitor like himself.

“I say, fellow, do you want to have your picture taken?” asked Geoffrey.

“You’re an idiot,” Magnus told him, smiling brightly.

Magnus was still speaking in Spanish. Kitty choked on a laugh and turned it into a cough.

“Ask him, Kitty!” said Geoffrey, with the air of one prompting a dog to do a trick.

“I apologize for him,” she said in halting Spanish.

Magnus smiled and offered his arm with a flourish. Kitty skipped over the flagstones, worn so smooth by time that the stone was like water, and seized his arm.

“Oh, charming, charming. Mother will love to see these shots,” said Geoffrey enthusiastically.

“How do you put up with him?” Magnus inquired.

Kitty and Magnus beamed like actors, toothy, ecstatic, and entirely insincere.

“With some difficulty.”

“Let me offer an alternate proposition,” Magnus said between the locked teeth of his smile. “Run away with me. Right now. It will be the most amazing adventure, I promise you that.”

Kitty stared at him. Geoffrey turned around, in quest of someone who could take shots of them all together. Behind Geoffrey’s back Magnus saw Kitty begin, slowly and delightedly, to smile.

“Oh, all right. Why not?”

“Excellent,” said Magnus.

He spun and seized her hand, and they ran, laughing, together down the sunlit street.

“We’d better go pretty quickly!” Kitty shouted, voice breathless as they rushed. “He’s bound to notice soon that I stole his watch.”

Magnus blinked. "Pardon?"

There was a noise behind them. It sounded disturbingly like a ruckus. Magnus was, through hardly any fault of his own, somewhat familiar with the sound of the police being summoned and also the sounds of a hot pursuit.

He pulled Kitty into an alleyway. She was still laughing, and undoing the buttons of her blouse.

"It will probably take them a little longer," she murmured, the mother-of-pearl buttons parting enough to show the sudden rich flash of emeralds and rubies, "to realize that I also stole all his mother's jewels."

She gave Magnus a little saucy smile. Magnus burst out laughing.

"Do you con a lot of annoying rich men?"

"And their mothers," said Kitty. "I could probably have taken them for the whole family fortune, or at least the silver, but a handsome man asked me to run away with him, and I thought, What the hell."

The sound of pursuit was closer now.

"You are about to be very glad you did," Magnus told her. "Since you showed me yours, I believe it's only fair I show you mine."

He snapped his fingers, making sure to trail blue sparks to impress the lady. Kitty was clever enough to realize what was going on as soon as one of the first pursuers glanced down the alleyway and ran on.

"They can't see us," she breathed. "You turned us invisible."

Magnus raised his eyebrows and made a gesture of display. "As you see," he said. "And they don't."

Magnus had seen humans shocked and scared and amazed by his power. Kitty flung herself into his arms.

"Tell me, handsome stranger," she said. "How do you feel about a life of magical crime?"

"Sounds like an adventure," said Magnus. "But promise me something. Promise we will always steal from the irritating and spend the cash on booze and useless trinkets."

Kitty pressed a kiss to his mouth. "I swear."

They fell in love, not even for a mortal lifetime but for a mortal summer, a summer of laughing and running and being wanted by the law in several different countries.

In the end Magnus's favorite memory of that summer was an image he had never seen: that last picture on Geoffrey's camera, of a man trailing bright colors and a woman hiding them beneath a white blouse, both smiling because they knew a joke he did not.

Magnus's sudden turn to a life of crime, shockingly enough, was not the reason he was banned from Peru either. The High Council of Peruvian warlocks met in secret, and a letter was sent to Magnus several months later announcing that he had been banned from Peru, on pain of death, for "crimes unspeakable." Despite his

inquiries, he never received an answer to the question of what he had been banned for. To this day, whatever it is that actually got him banned from Peru is—and perhaps must always remain—a mystery. *Revue de presse*

"11 clever, touching, and hilarious short stories...starts with a brief, hilarious, mangastyle comic highlighting the trademark wit of coauthors' Clare, Maureen Johnson, and Sarah Rees Brennan... Fans (and they are legion) who are mourning the end of the *Mortal Instruments* series will be desperate to get their hands on this." (*Booklist*)

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