

My (Fan) Love for You is Eternal: Creating and Consuming Fanfiction in Response to the Im/mortal Relationship Dynamics of *Shadowhunters*' Magnus Bane and Alec Lightwood

In media fandoms, the term OTP translates to “One True Pairing,” the romantic pairing (or “ship”) that a fan most strongly feels should live happily-ever-after (“HEA”). Many fans create these pairings in their fanworks rather than choosing couples that already exist in the canonical texts. In the case of Freeform’s *Shadowhunters*, fans do not have to imagine a romantic relationship between Magnus Bane and Alec Lightwood. These characters begin dating early on in the series, and, if the books are followed, will eventually marry and adopt children. But while it might seem at first glance that these characters will have a HEA, one major hurdle stands in their way: Magnus, a warlock, is immortal, while Alec, a shadowhunter, is not.

In this presentation, I will analyze how “Malec” fans react to this dynamic in the fanfiction they create. I will first analyze works that demonstrate how strong emotional attachment to this ship and ideas of romantic love have led many fans to “fix” this HEA hurdle by imagining scenarios in which Alec becomes immortal. I will also analyze, however, works by fans who acknowledge the inevitability of loss by writing stories in which they do not attempt to change this lifespan dynamic and instead imagine the moment of Alec’s death. I will use these works to support my argument that feeling strong, positive, emotional ties to this fictional relationship leads not only to HEA plotlines, but also stories that depict the unfortunate repercussions of these characters’ canonical im/mortal existences. By including both types of fan response and demonstrating how fans use these stories to grapple with the complexities of romantic love, my intention is push back against the common idea that fans investing themselves emotionally in a fictional relationship (“shipping”) is a frivolous and shallow pastime.