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Mortal Instruments Movie City Of Ashes

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The Unmade Sequel: Exploring the Legacy of the Mortal Instruments Movie City of Ashes

For fans of Cassandra Clare's bestselling Shadowhunter series, few topics inspire as much curiosity and lingering "what if" speculation as the abandoned sequel film, **Mortal Instruments Movie City of Ashes**. Following the release of the 2013 adaptation *The Mortal Instruments: City of Bones*, a sequel was officially announced, with director Harald Zwart attached to return and production expected to move forward quickly. However, the follow-up never materialized, leaving a devoted fan base to wonder what could have been. This article explores the full story behind the unmade film, from its initial announcement to its eventual cancellation, and examines how the franchise ultimately found new life on the small screen.

The Foundation: Building the World of The Mortal Instruments

Before we dive into the saga of the **Mortal Instruments Movie City of Ashes**, it is important to understand the source material. Cassandra Clare's urban fantasy series follows Clary Fray, a teenage girl who discovers she is a Shadowhunter—a half-angel warrior tasked with protecting the human world from demons. The first book, *City of Bones*, introduces readers to a hidden world of runes, seraph blades, and the Downworlder factions of vampires, werewolves, warlocks, and faeries. The second book, *City of Ashes*, raises the stakes considerably, with Clary facing the revelation that the villainous Valentine is her father, and that her brother Jace is not actually her sibling—a central plot twist that creates both emotional tension and complex character dynamics.

The books developed a massive following long before Hollywood came calling. The series combined the romantic intensity of young adult fiction with detailed world-building and genuinely dangerous stakes. This devoted readership made a film adaptation seem like a natural next step, and fans were eager to see their favorite characters brought to life on the big screen.

The First Film: City of Bones Arrives in Theaters

In August 2013, *The Mortal Instruments: City of Bones*premiered with considerable buzz. The film starred Lily Collins as Clary Fray, Jamie Campbell Bower as Jace Wayland, and featured an ensemble cast including Robert Sheehan, Kevin Zegers, Lena Headey, Jonathan Rhys Meyers, and Jared Harris. Director Harald Zwart aimed to capture the fast-paced, romantic, and darkly magical tone of the novels.

Visually, the film was ambitious. It brought to life the New York Institute, the Silent Brothers, and the glittering world of the Downworlder nightclub Pandemonium. The casting was generally well-received by fans, with particular praise for Collins's portrayal of Clary and Sheehan's scene-stealing performance as the warlock Magnus Bane. However, the film faced significant challenges. Competing in a crowded summer season that included major blockbusters, *City of Bones*earned a modest $31 million domestically on a budget of around $60 million. Internationally, it performed somewhat better, bringing its worldwide total to approximately $95 million.

While not a catastrophic flop, these numbers fell short of studio expectations for launching a multi-film franchise. Nevertheless, the fan base remained vocal and passionate, and the studio officially announced that **Mortal Instruments Movie City of Ashes** would move forward.

The Announced Sequel: Plans for City of Ashes

In the months following the first film's release, announcements regarding **Mortal Instruments Movie City of Ashes**were positive. Director Harald Zwart confirmed he would return, and screenwriter Jessica Postigo was brought on to adapt the second novel. The plan was to film a more faithful adaptation that would dig deeper into the emotional core of the story, particularly the complicated relationship between Clary and Jace as they grapple with Valentine's claims about their parentage.

The second book contains several memorable sequences that fans were eager to see on screen: the battle at the Seelie Court, the introduction of the Inquisitor, and the dramatic confrontation at Valentine's ship, the *Emma Carstairs*. The story also expands the roles of supporting characters like Simon, who becomes a vampire, and Alec and Magnus, whose relationship begins to develop in this installment. There was genuine optimism that the sequel could improve upon the first film's reception while satisfying the core fan base.

However, behind the scenes, complications were brewing. The first film's mixed critical reception and underwhelming box office made studio executives cautious. Changing leadership at Screen Gems, the production company, further complicated matters. Budget discussions became protracted, and the initial 2014 target release date slipped into 2015, then into indefinite limbo.

The Cancellation: Why the Mortal Instruments Movie City of Ashes Never Happened

By 2014, it became increasingly clear that the **Mortal Instruments Movie City of Ashes**was not going to move forward as planned. Several factors contributed to this decision. First and foremost was the financial reality: the first film had not generated enough revenue to justify the investment required for a sequel, especially one that would need to include even more elaborate visual effects for demons, magic, and the urban fantasy setting.

Second, the young adult film adaptation market was undergoing a significant shift. Following the massive success of *The Hunger Games* and *The Twilight Saga*, studios had rushed multiple YA properties into production. However, by 2014, audiences were showing signs of fatigue with the genre, and several high-profile adaptations underperformed. The market had become oversaturated, making it harder for mid-tier franchises to compete.

Third, there were creative differences regarding the direction of the franchise. Reports emerged that the studio wanted to retool the series to appeal to a broader audience, while the creative team and the author herself were committed to preserving the integrity of the original story. These tensions made moving forward difficult.

Finally, the rise of serialized television as a preferred medium for fantasy storytelling changed the calculus. Networks and streaming platforms were increasingly interested in adapting book series as television shows, recognizing that the longer format allowed for more faithful and detailed storytelling. For a series as complex as The Mortal Instruments, with its multiple interwoven plotlines and large ensemble cast, television offered significant advantages over film.

A New Direction: The Shadowhunters Television Series

In 2016, fans received both disappointing and exciting news. The **Mortal Instruments Movie City of Ashes** was officially dead, but a television adaptation titled *Shadowhunters*was in development for the Freeform network. The show would not be a continuation of the film series but rather a complete reboot with a new cast and a fresh creative vision.

Shadowhunters starred Katherine McNamara as Clary Fray, Dominic Sherwood as Jace Wayland, and Alberto Rosende as Simon Lewis. The series ran for three seasons and 55 episodes, allowing it to cover the events of the first three books in the series: *City of Bones*, *City of Ashes*, and the majority of *City of Glass*. While the show faced its own production challenges and a fan campaign for renewal following its cancellation, it successfully brought the story of **City of Ashes** to life in a way that the film never could.

The television format allowed the show to explore subplots that were compressed or omitted in the film. Characters like Maia Roberts, Luke Garroway, and the Lightwood siblings received more developed arcs. The romantic relationships, including the controversial but central Clary-Jace dynamic, were given more room to breathe. Many fans who had been disappointed by the cancellation of the **Mortal Instruments Movie City of Ashes** found solace in the show's more comprehensive adaptation.

What Could Have Been: Imagining the Unmade Film

Despite the existence of *Shadowhunters*, the question of what the **Mortal Instruments Movie City of Ashes** would have looked like remains a fascinating subject for discussion. The film would have reunited Lily Collins and Jamie Campbell Bower, whose on-screen chemistry was one of the most discussed aspects of the first movie. Collins brought a grounded, relatable quality to Clary, while Bower captured Jace's dangerous charm and vulnerability.

The visual style established in *City of Bones*would likely have evolved. Director Harald Zwart had expressed interest in making the sequel darker and more intense, reflecting the book's emotional weight. The Seelie Court, with its treacherous beauty and morally ambiguous queen, would have been a visually spectacular sequence. The final confrontation on Valentine's ship, involving a massive battle and a devastating choice, would have provided a powerful climax.

There was also speculation about casting additions. The character of the Inquisitor, a stern and prejudiced Shadowhunter official, had not been cast before production stalled. Fan casting suggestions included actresses like Tilda Swinton or Kate Beckinsale. The role of the Seelie Queen, a minor but memorable character, also generated considerable fan discussion.

For many fans, the greatest loss is the continuation of the cast's performances. Robert Sheehan's Magnus Bane was a standout in the first film, and his character plays a more significant role in *City of Ashes*. Kevin Zegers and Lena Headey, who played Alec Lightwood and Jocelyn Fray respectively, were also expected to return. The ensemble chemistry that developed during the first film's production would have been carried into the sequel, creating a richer character dynamic.

The Legacy of the Film Series

The story of the **Mortal Instruments Movie City of Ashes**is ultimately a cautionary tale about the challenges of adapting beloved book series for the big screen. The first film tried to balance fan expectations with mainstream appeal, and while it succeeded in some areas, it fell short in others. The cancellation of the sequel demonstrated that even with a passionate fan base and a talented cast, commercial realities can prevent a franchise from reaching its full potential.

However, the story does not end with disappointment. The success of *Shadowhunters*proved that there was still a strong appetite for Cassandra Clare's world. The television series introduced the Shadowhunter universe to a new generation of viewers and kept the fan community active. The cast and crew of the film have also spoken fondly of their experience, and Lily Collins has frequently expressed gratitude for the role that launched her career in young adult cinema.

Moreover, the books themselves continue to thrive. Cassandra Clare has expanded the Shadowhunter universe with multiple spin-off series, including *The Infernal Devices*, *The Dark Artifices*, and *The Last Hours*. These series explore different time periods and characters within the same world, creating a rich, interconnected

narrative. The demand for adaptations of these books remains high, and discussions about potential film or television projects continue.

Why the Mortal Instruments Movie City of Ashes Still Matters

Even though the film was never made, the concept of **Mortal Instruments Movie City of Ashes**holds a significant place in the history of Hollywood adaptations. It represents the moment when the young adult film boom began to recede, and it highlights the difficulties of adapting serialized fantasy fiction into a medium that typically requires self-contained installments.

For the fan community, the unmade sequel has become a symbol of both loss and resilience. Online forums and social media groups still discuss what could have been, sharing fan art, alternative casting ideas, and speculation about deleted scenes from the first film that might have set up the second. The dedication of the fan base is a testament to the power of Clare's storytelling and the emotional connection readers feel to the characters.

Lessons Learned: Adapting Book Series for Film and Television

The saga of the **Mortal Instruments Movie City of Ashes**offers valuable lessons for studios, producers, and fans. First, it demonstrates the importance of realistic expectations. Not every book series can sustain a multi-film franchise, especially in a competitive marketplace. Second, it shows that faithful adaptation matters to fans, but commercial viability matters to studios. Balancing these competing priorities is a constant challenge.

Third, the shift from film to television for this franchise was a smart strategic move. Television allows for deeper character development, more detailed world-building, and a more serialized storytelling approach that matches the structure of book series. Many other young adult fantasy series,

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