

“You’re sure?”

Callie slid under Teague’s arm and cuddled up against him. The snow fell in giant clouds outside, making it the perfect night to wrap up in a warm blanket before the fireplace. They’d decided to spend Christmas Eve alone and away from family, to take some time for just the two of them. In a few hours, they’d attend midnight Mass, but until then, the evening was there. She pressed a kiss to his jaw. “I’m sure.”

“You know how I feel about you—about this. You don’t have to take—”

“Teague.” She smiled. “I’m sure.”

He exhaled. “Then I will stop trying to convince you otherwise.” He pulled out his phone and dialed, still watching her with those dark eyes. Several months together—several months *married*—and she still hadn’t quite gotten used to how he looked at her; as if she was the angel he’d nicknamed her. She didn’t deserve that level of adoration, but since she felt the same way about him, it was difficult to hold it against him. Callie rotated the engagement ring around her finger, the weight of the diamond still strange.

A few minutes later, Teague hung up and set his phone on the coffee table in front of the couch. “He’ll be here shortly.”

“Good.” She kissed him, ignoring the strange flutter of nerves that rose in her stomach. She had no intention of letting Teague go—not now, not ever. She wanted his future as much as he wanted hers. There would be children eventually, something she’d never really considered a real and present possibility until they were married. But the thought of sharing a family with him, of raising boys and girls? She liked it. She liked it a lot.

They sat in a comfortable silence, watching the fire. She rested her head on his chest,

reveling in each breath he took. There was a time when she wasn't sure he *would* keep breathing, so to be able to have this quiet moment was a gift beyond measure. The war wasn't over, the danger was far from past, but they had tonight.

She'd do whatever it took to make sure they had decades ahead of them.

Micah appeared in the doorway. "There's a man here for you. Jacob Meyer."

Teague straightened, and Callie sat up. She smoothed her hair back. "Send him in, please."

"Sure thing."

A few minutes later, he led a thin, tattoo-covered man into the room. Jacob Meyer wasn't much older than she and Teague, but the ink covering him from his chin downward and flaring out from his brows made it hard to judge that accurately. He had three piercings in his lip, and his eyes were lined in black. He nodded at them. "Teague."

"Jacob."

"You mind if I set up in here?"

Teague motioned. "By all means."

She watched with interest as he unpacked his small bag. Out came blue-black ink and the tattoo machine and needles, which he put together with meticulous movements, pausing to check the machine, and then tweak it further. "Who's first?"

"Me." Teague sat forward.

Jacob took his hand, tilted it back and forth, and then swabbed it down with an alcohol wipe. "Finally found your Mrs."

"I did." He looked at her over Jacob's head as the man turned on his machine. The man went to work on the empty spot on his ring finger, the spot he'd saved for his future

wife. The spot he'd saved for *her*, even if he hadn't know that when he'd decided to hold off tattooing that knuckle. His face gave no indication of any kind of pain, and it was over surprisingly fast. When Jacob sat back, she looked at the spot, her heart picking up at the sight of angel wings. "What do you think, angel?"

"I love it."

Jacob waited until she shifted closer to take her hand and deliver the same treatment. The alcohol wipe was shockingly cold. She had one insane second of *Oh my God, what I am doing?* but it passed immediately. She'd never planned on a tattoo, but with Teague, it felt right. At her nod, Jacob went to work, inking in a tongue of flame that was identical to the one on the middle knuckle of Teague's right hand. It symbolized his patron saint, Jude, but more than that, it symbolized everything they'd come up against and prevailed over up to this point. Their situation should have been a lost cause from the very beginning—children of rival families being pushed into an arranged marriage neither of them wanted—but they'd managed to find love despite that. The tattoo fit. *They* fit.

And then it was done. Jacob packed up his things, and stood. "See you around, Teague."

"Thanks." He shook the man's hand, and she caught a flash of cash, but she didn't comment on it. Teague showed him out and then returned. He sat next to her with a grin. "That thing's permanent, angel. There's no getting rid of me now."

She went up onto her knees and kissed him with everything she had. "Good, because I plan on keeping you, Teague O'Malley."