

Advance Review Copy

Christmas Ink

By

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Prologue

North Pole-Kringle Town, where magic and memories are made.

November 2006

“Now Christopher, we’ve had this discussion before.” Chris Kringle settled into his comfortable recliner, speaking with his pipe clenched between his teeth, packed with his favorite cherry flavored tobacco. “Your thirty-fifth birthday is next month and before you can take over the business, you have to have a missus. What would Christmas be like without a Mrs. Kringle?”

“Yeah, Pop, I know.” Christopher wiped his hand down his face clearly showing his frustration in having to discuss this subject with his father for the hundredth time.

“If you know son, what are you going to do about it?”

Christopher rolled his eyes, shaking his head. *Why did I have to be born into a magical family? Why couldn't I have been born into a normal, average, everyday family? Nooo, I had to be born to marry, be merry, and then run my ass off delivering presents around the freakin' world in a twenty-four hour gift-giving marathon.*

“Holy flying reindeers! I am so screwed now,” Christopher whispered under his breath so his father would not hear him. His father did not like Christopher to use naughty language of any kind. It did not look right for the image of Santa to spew obscenities right and left.

Christopher glanced over at his father, watching him as he deftly clenched his favorite pipe between his teeth and struck a match before touching the flame to the tobacco. As it slowly kindled, drawing a short quick puff off the pipe to ignite the tobacco in the bowl, a pipe that held special meaning for his father. The elves that worked and lived in Kringle Town gave it to him for his birthday long before Christopher was born. The bowl was crafted from a piece of carved ivory replicating his father's jolly features, right down to the ball that dangled preciously at the tip of his Santa hat, nestling perfectly in his father's large, capable hand.

The likeness of the pipe's carving to his father's face was uncannily life-like to his true appearance when he was all dressed up in his Christmas regalia. He was plain old Chris Kringle right now, but the moment he donned his magical red suit, with the fluffy white fur and leather belt and boots, he became what everyone envisioned him to be...the one, the only, Santa Claus. The jolly old man who made Christmas dreams come true for children and adults around the world, spreading his special brand of merriment and goodness throughout every realm—even the realm of the magical kingdom of fey. Think about it, whether magical or human who does not like getting a present?

The rest of the pipe was made of a black wood that Christopher wasn't sure of its origins. He watched as tendrils of smoke drifted up from the pipe as it slowly caught and danced around his father head, filling the room with tinges of a sweet cherry smell, a tobacco his father always smoked. One he had always associated with his father—a comforting and familiar scent.

His father had not changed much in the last thirty or so odd years. He still wore his basic black corduroy pants, with a tucked-in long-sleeved red flannel shirt, accented with suspenders that were striped to look like candy canes swirled in red and white stripes. Smooth black leather boots, only he did not tuck his pant legs in—that was only for Christmas and with his magical Santa suit, with its brilliant red hat perched proudly upon his head and his regal looking red velvet jacket and pants completing his persona. Being Santa was a sure business to his father and he liked tradition. Dressing up only

on Christmas was his way of honoring that special day. His father's full, snow-white mustache and beard were neatly trimmed and reminded Christopher of finely spun angel hair. As a child, he loved to run his fingers through it, stroking the soft white hair. Permanently stained rosy cheeks and a quick-to-smile jolly attitude were synonymous with his father's persona.

He really did admire his father, but Christopher wanted to help and care for people in his own way...by being a healer, not a present pusher, as he liked to say.

Christopher really did love his father very much, and respected him, too. But he wanted to live his life his way and not follow in his father's famous footsteps, as Santa Claus.

He could tell this conversation would be going nowhere, so this might be a good time to skedaddle.

Gathering his leather jacket off the couch where he had set it earlier, Christopher walked over to his father who stood up and kissed him on the cheek. "I have to go now, Pop. Tell Mother I am sorry to have missed her on this trip, but I will call soon."

"Sure Son. Have a safe trip home, and don't go over the air traffic speed limit." Chris Kringle rubbed the back of his neck. "I got a call from the Air Board the last time you were here. They said you were doing 865 miles an hour in a 665 mile an hour air zone." The fatherly look he gave Christopher was one that said he loved his son very much. "There are speed limits for a reason and I can't help but be worried about my only son."

Christopher nodded his head in a placating manner as he walked out the door. "Yeah, yeah, I will watch my speed, Pop."

He grabbed up his helmet, scarf and leather gloves that he had laid on the hall table next to the front door for easy retrieval on his way out. Stepping out into the frigid air of the North Pole, Christopher walked toward his motorcycle parked in front of his parents' castle. The snow under his feet crunched clearly with his brisk steps and the wind whipped his scarf about.

All bundled up, Christopher straddled his magically souped-up Harley. As he turned the key in the ignition it roared to life, emitting clouds of exhaust as it hit the cold air. He loved the feeling of power between his legs and the freedom it gave him when he soared through the sky at high speeds he should not. Gunning it a few times, he let out the throttle and away he went. Building up speed, he could just make out his father's parting words, "Take care son and don't forget to turn on your cloaking shield..."

Within less than a minute, his Harley was airborne and he was once more free to be himself, heading back to the life he had created just for himself. A life he had worked hard to establish, building the trust of the community he now called home.

What gave this Harley its magic were the intricate designs painted in brilliant jewel tones on its tank and fenders. It was within the ancient designs the magic had been weaved. If one knew what to look for, they would see the amazing vignettes of different Christmas scenes. To anyone else, it looked like a really cool paint job, and nothing more. Christopher never had to worry about anyone trying to steal the Harley. It would only start for him and him alone.

Looking back over his shoulder he watched the twinkling lights and fantastical structures that made up Kringle Town slowly fade from view, the farther his magical Harley drew him away high in the air. The sight never failed to make him smile. All the gingerbread work with its sculpted curves and intricate cuts framed the eaves, doorways and windows, painted in brilliant colors of red, green, and gilded gold, gave it an appearance from his airborne view of a frosted winter wonderland dotting and decorating the snowline like glittered icing on a cake. It had been the place he had grown up in and would always think fondly of.

Once he was a few miles away, having sensed his departure, the cloaking dome would automatically close, hiding and protecting Kringle Town from humanity and the non-believers of humankind, forever preserving and sheltering the beloved place of magic and dreams for the children of the world.

Chapter One

December 5th 2006 – The Town of Wadeville

The Doctor's Lounge was empty except for Doctor Christopher Kringle. Looking around at the meager items that dwelled in the room, he had to confess it really was not a lounge per se; more like a room with a coffee pot, microwave, small refrigerator, and a couple of old chairs surrounding a round wooden table that had seen better days. Its scuffed and age-scarred surface, made so from the careless use over many years gave it a lived in and much used appearance. A couple of dog-eared medical magazines were scattered here and there about the room, adding a little color to the otherwise drab room.

The normally sterile white walls were mainly decorated with pictures of different scenes of the town and some of Christopher's achievements in the community. But now, the lounge was decorated with the abundant colors of Christmas, giving the room warmth and a touch of holiday cheer. A Christmas tree the residents of Wadeville brought in and lovingly decorated filled one corner. Strands of garland with gold bows spaced about a foot apart were strung along the walls adding a touch of greenery to its otherwise colorless façade; tiny blinking lights were hung to flicker around the two windows in the room, framing them with the brilliance of their twinkling glow. The residents had even added their version of snow by spraying the windows with some type of flocking to resemble frosted panes of glass. The likelihood of having it snow in

Wadeville, which was at a low elevation, was a rare commodity. It was said to have snowed there once about fifteen years ago. But, the residents were hopeful that it would snow here this Christmas, and really so was Christopher. It reminded him of home, where it was Christmas every day.

Christmas cards from patients and town folks also graced the walls, displayed with a piece of string tacked and strung at eye-level from one corner of a wall to the opposite end. Christopher smiled at the exuberance of the town's people when they had come in to decorate, that crisp December morning. They even played Christmas songs and sang carols as they put up the decorations. They decorated every room and even the hallway in the downstairs of the clinic, but the so called doctor's lounge was the only room where Christopher got to stop and enjoy the holiday spirit it evoked at any given moment. Yep, he was a lucky man to have found this quaint and loving community that supported him a hundred percent.

He lived upstairs, which took up the whole upper floor of the building, and he really had not done much with in the way of décor, except for his toys. It looked like a bachelor pad, complete with all the newest electronic gadgets and a leather sofa with a matching recliner. As he sat in front of all that wizardry while he watched TV or listened to his favorite country western singer croon out another lover gone astray he wanted for nothing. He had not gotten much time to do that lately. Business was booming here in Wadeville. How they managed before he came here was still a mystery to him.

He was the only doctor around for miles, so it was more like a room with adult toys in it for him to relax in, he had no one else to impress but himself and he was a man who was fascinated with the latest and newest gadgets.

Heck, the only thing that really did stand out about this hospital was the black and white checkerboard linoleum on the floor—which was Janice's idea—and the usual medicine smells all medical facilities have, and even that was more festive with all the Christmas decorations that adorned the clinic now.

The clinic was a labor of Christopher's love... taking a large older home, he turned it into the only medical facility in the small foothill community of Wadeville. He settled here two years ago while on a road trip to nowhere in particular when he came across this tight knit community who welcomed him with open arms. The closest hospital was twenty-five miles away and they needed a town doctor desperately. He could not be happier here, he thought silently to himself, running a hand through his disheveled dark hair, his habitual reflex whenever he was tired or frustrated.

Man, he needed a haircut. He would need to take another hour from his sleep to get that done, though. Not enough hours in the day for the niceties of a fresh haircut. Maybe he would get around to it next month or maybe the month after that. Hell, he could start tying it into a ponytail, and let it be. He had enough on his full plate, to deal with right now.

Walking over to the coffee pot, he poured himself a nice hot cup of steaming coffee, pulled out a chair and settled down. Stretching his legs out in front of him, he took a sip of coffee and leaned his head back to try to stretch out his tight neck muscles and relax for a few moments, letting the calm of the late night settle into his weary bones.

It had been a busy week at his clinic and now that it was the weekend it did not look like the pace would be letting up anytime soon. He just got through stitching up poor Joe Potter's hand that he had cut while out chopping wood, then he had to give little Tommy Brown a tetanus shot after the boy stepped on a rusty nail that had gone straight through his tennis shoe while he was playing in his yard earlier that day.

Christopher could just make out his only nurse, Janice Marks, muttering into the phone down the hall from the lounge. He had been lucky to find a registered nurse in this sleepy little foothill town. Janice was a short, round woman in her early fifties, with gray hair and motherly appeal. She had a soft-spoken voice that the patients found comforting and reacted to in a positive way. Behind her bespectacled kind blue eyes, lay a woman with a steel-trap mind and quick wit that he never underestimated and could always rely on in any type of emergency. Her endless energy was a godsend to

Christopher. Janice was his steadfast rock and he would not know what to do without her.

Christopher knew something was up when he heard Janice say, "I'll tell Doctor Kringle right away." Then, he heard the swooshing sound of her crisp white nurse's uniform as it rubbed against her round figure with each step she took as she quickly made her way toward the lounge to stop in the doorway to address him. "Doctor Kringle, we have an incoming patient who was involved in a motorcycle accident."

She was also very proper; Christopher could not get her to call him by his first name if his life depended on it. "I'm right behind you, Janice," his tiredness evident in the haggard tone of his voice making it come out more like a croak instead of his usual deep melodious tone. He noted the look of worry tightening her face.

He cleared his throat and nodded his head at her, she always looked after his health, heaven only knew he did not have the time. "I am fine Janice. Be right there." One slightly gray eyebrow rose over the top her glasses as if to say, "I worry about you sometimes", but, without saying anything, she turned on her heels, leaving him in a cloud of her invisible energy to ready a room for their newest patient.

No rest for the wicked, he muttered to himself, rolling his shoulders and snapping his neck side to side trying to get the tension out of his shoulders that came every time he had to face situations such as this incoming accident. He never knew what to expect, so he had to be ready for anything and everything.

Taking one last energizing gulp of the bitter yet hot coffee, Christopher pushed himself up from the chair, took a deep breath, walked out of the solitude of the lounge. He made his way to the area the incoming accident victim would be brought to hoping and praying this was not too serious of an injury, one that would require an emergency airlift out. Whatever it would turn out to be, he would not be getting to bed anytime soon that was for sure.

* * * *

Candi Kane could feel the vibration of the motorcycle's engine through the leather seat firmly situated between her legs, as she sped down the main street of a town called

Wadeville. She had glimpsed a sign about three miles back up the highway and decided she would stop there and rest for the night. The dark and deserted street fled by, giving Candi the feeling of complete freedom as the crisp December air blew stray tendrils of hair wildly about her face, tickling her nose and cheeks.

She loved nothing better than something hard and fast between her legs. This beat riding men, well almost. Nothing felt quite as good as a long, hard cock tunneling in and out of her for hours on end, with her legs wrapped around a lean pair of thrusting hips. For heaven's sake she was hornier than hell. She needed to keep her mind on the road and not what was currently not going on between her legs. She had something powerful under her right now that needed her full attention and certainly should *not be* thinking about sex.

Her face was going numb from the biting breeze of night, and her eyes started to water profusely, even with the eye shield on her helmet. Just for a second Candi took her eyes off road to wipe at her hair, trying to get it back behind her ears as best she could. And then it happened. In that short span of time, a car pulled out in front of her, causing her to take quick action. "Oh, holy shit!" She yelled into the wind, causing cold air to fill her mouth, choking back her words. The motorcycle swerved wildly beneath her, leaving her feeling helpless and scared. Candi managed to avoid hitting the car, but she over corrected the motorcycle and it started to tilt madly to one side, tipping onto her.

As the motorcycle lay down onto its side, Candi could feel the excruciating pain as the heavy weight of it slammed her to the ground, sandwiching her between it and the blacktop. The asphalt acted like a big black eraser grinding away at the pant leg of her black leather chaps. It all seemed to happen in slow motion, and yet she was unable to control her next movement or thought. As her helmet struck the road with a resounding *crack*, darkness closed in around her as if a black velvet cape had been dropped over the top of her, cutting off her line of vision.

The last thing Candi remembered before unconsciousness swept through her, bringing her world to a deadly calm, was her father's voice inside her head screaming her name.

"Candi, what's wrong, daughter? I can sense fear welling up within you and darkness is closing my mental path to you, what's wrong? Talk to me!"

* * * *

Christopher could feel his body tighten in readiness as soon as he heard the sound of the incoming ambulance's siren, his first clue the impending patient was here. Janice, so in tune with him, could see his body language change and demeanor shift, like he was readying himself for combat.

They both moved quickly into place outside the open double metal doors where all emergencies were brought in. They could see the red and white lights flashing and twirling on the roof of the ambulance working in tandem with the siren as it rounded the corner and turned into the driveway of the medical facility, stopping directly in front of them.

The ambulance driver, a young man named Danny Miller, had been driving the local ambulance for the last year. He was dependable and quick, which was needed in his field of work. If Christopher remembered right, he had just turned twenty-seven last month. Danny would drop by on occasion when he was not driving just to admire Christopher's Harley. He called it a sweet ride, but a lot of things were 'sweet' to this kid. If only Danny knew just how 'sweet' his Harley really was, magic and all...

Christopher, with Janice right by his side, watched as Danny jumped out of the ambulance, slamming the driver's door as soon as his feet hit the ground. With lightening speed he had the back doors of the ambulance open and was taking the patient out. The wheels of the portable gurney made a brisk clanking sound as Danny pushed a lever to bring it up to waist height, then securing and locking the expansion mechanism into place before pushing the rolling gurney into the building.

The first thing Christopher noticed about his newest patient was how small and fragile she looked, lying covered up and strapped down to the board having her head

immobilized. It was hard to tell what she looked like, with her long blond hair wildly arranged around her tiny face, a face that was almost as white as the sheet that covered her. By her head was her helmet she had worn, thank goodness. It was a mess. The face shield was completely torn away and there were deep scratches and missing paint from most of the left side of the helmet. Even the chinstrap was missing. She had definitely taken a nasty spill from all the indications of her now useless helmet.

Christopher's soft heart went out to the poor injured young lady. He hated to see anyone suffer, but at the same time, he had a job to do. *Time to get to it.*

As they started working on her, Christopher heard Janice chuckle quietly. With his head still down working on the young lady before him, he just had to find out what tickled her. "Okay Janice, what tickled your funny bone?"

Janice pointed to the medical chart in her hand she had started on the young lady. "You are never going to believe what her name is, it is just too precious." A genuine smile lit up her face as she waited to see if Christopher would bite.

"Haven't a clue. What is it pray tell?"

"Candi Kane. Get it? We are in the month of December with Christmas just around the corner, and we have a patient with the name of Candi Kane. How coincidental is that and with you being Doctor Chris Kringle?"

Yeah, how coincidental was that when you are the son of freaking Santa Claus, Christopher mentally rolled his eyes. "Yeah, that is wild, Janice," he replied never missing a beat. Why did he have this funny feeling in his gut this woman named Candi Kane would somehow change or alter his life? No more time to think right now, he had to keep his mind on business and get this young lady back on the road to recovery. He pushed the thought to the back of his mind and his professional expertise took over as naturally as breathing.

Christopher could not wait to hear what her story was when she finally woke up. And why was his right ass cheek burning? Like he had time to scratch it right now!

Chapter Two

Everything went by in a blur of perfectly choreographed teamwork between Christopher and Janice for the next couple of hours. From doing x-rays, getting IV's inserted, blood workup, casting her broken ankle, and cleaning her up, there was not one wasted moment to spare. Within her personal effects, they had not found any medical alert items, so they hoped and prayed Ms. Kane was not allergic to anything they would need to give her at this time. As it was they would have to keep a close watch on her for the next twenty-four to forty-eight hours because of her nasty concussion. He decided to take the first shift to watch over her, letting Janice go home and rest.

Christopher and Janice worked nonstop until Candi was ready to be wheeled into a room of her own. The entire time she never awoke or even moved a muscle, no matter what was done to her. Poor thing, Christopher really felt bad for the poor young lady.

During part of all this, he recalled Danny jabbering about how cool her motorcycle had been, while he and Janice worked their asses off. "You should have seen the sweet little crotch rocket she had, Doc. It was, cuz now it is history, but it must have been a demon on the road before she laid it down. That beauty was Kawasaki Ninja ZX-14, painted the brightest Christmas red you'd ever seen. Those babies run on a four stroke, four-cylinder, liquid-cooled engine. They're dynamite going down the road. What a darn shame, it was a 2006 model to boot."

He kind of remembered smidgens of the conversation and glancing over at the look of awe on Danny's face if one did not know better, could have been misconstrued as sexual arousal, when it was nothing more than a hard-on for a motorcycle. That boy needed to find himself a girlfriend.

Danny finally left, saying he had to restock the ambulance and get something to eat. Christopher really liked Danny, but when things got hairy, like right now, he could drive a person to hit the bottle, if they drank. Another perk working in a small community like Wadeville, everyone knew everyone else's business. Case in point, Danny.

Christopher was not sure if it was the painful crick in his neck, or the headache pounding behind his closed eyelids that woke him. He had fallen asleep sitting up in a chair next to Candi's bed. His long hours at the clinic had finally taken their toll on him.

Mumbled words caused his head to snap to attention, chin and eyes facing forward. He looked at Candi still lying unconscious, she had not moved a muscle since he and Janice transferred her here into this room and that was about four hours ago. Yet, he could still faintly make out softly whispered words feathered through his mind.

"Daddy, I can hear you."

"Baby, where are you?"

"I am not sure. The last thing I remember was riding my motorcycle, and then nothing. Oh. Wait. I had an accident. Daddy, am I dead?"

"Oh, baby girl...we could not be having this telepathic conversation if you were not among the living."

"Daddy, I am scared."

"Shhhh, it is all right, my baby girl." His mental tone was fatherly and confident, reassuring her. "You must be unconscious sweetheart. When you wake up, you will know where you are and can tell me."

"I love you daddy...I..."

Even though her voice was a gentle whisper through his mind, its fearful tone touched Christopher's heart, making him want to reach out and take her into his arms, reassure and give her comfort to drive her fears away.

The last words drifted into silence. Christopher had just listened in on Candi and her father's mental connection. *Well, I'll be damned; she can talk to her father like I can talk to my parents. Whoa...wait a minute; I shouldn't be able to pick up on their conversation, though. What is going on here? Why is it I can hear what they are saying to each other? That shouldn't happen. Is it because I am tired and my mind is open to their telepathic thread of conversation?*

He knew there were other kinds of magical beings; he was not sure which one she was. This was becoming more intriguing and interesting by the minute. His luck she would be a witch; heaven help him if she was. They were sometimes very temperamental and unpredictable to deal with when they were injured. At least that was what his father had told him. He had yet to come across anyone of magic, except for the elves and his parents of Kringle Town.

Standing up, Christopher gave his long, lean body a good tall stretch with his arms arched back over his head, working out the cricks and kinks in his back. Groaning, he bent to check her vitals. The moment his fingertips came into contact with her soft warm skin, his right butt cheek began to burn and itch. He looked around quickly; making sure no one was around before he reached his hand back behind him to give his butt a good hard scratching. *Boy, that felt good. Man, I hope I am not getting a rash or something on my backside.*

Christopher wasn't about to drop his drawers for Janice to look at his ass, that was for sure. How embarrassing would that be? *Hey, Janice would you mind checking my butt out? No, I am not getting fresh with you and yes, I am serious. What's wrong you ask? I am not really sure, but it itches like crazy. Oh...he could just imagine the look on her face right now. Nope, not even going there.*

With her hair brushed back from her face, he saw Candi had a refined, heart shaped face, with porcelain-textured skin that flowed over her bone structure. A small nose

tipped up at the end, gave her an impish appearance. Her pink full tinged lips had a slight bow shape to them, giving them a bee stung look. Plump and full.

He already knew what her eye coloring was, having looked at them when she was first brought in. They were an unusual shade of violet blue, speckled with gold flakes, like fool's gold had been sprinkled in her eyes, giving them a unique sparkle, which even in her unconscious state took his breath away when he lifted her eyelids. Her dark blond brows arched over her eyes, with a thick layer of dark eyelashes that shadowed her cheeks with femininity. She was almost angelic lying there so still and quite. Light blond hair framed and fell along side her shoulders and face. *Whoa...* Christopher startled by his train of thought. His thoughts had turned sexual. He had never had any sexual interest in any of his patients before. It was unethical and immoral considering she was helpless and unconscious. *Get a grip man!*

It was definitely time for him to go upstairs and get some sleep before he would be needed again later in the morning. A cold shower would not hurt either, now that he thought about it.

* * * *

Candi's eyelids felt like lead as she tried to pry them open. Who in the heck cemented her eyes shut, cuz it sure felt like it. Her body did not fair much better. A semi-truck must have run over her ass at some point when she was not looking, even her hair hurt. She finally managed to slit her eyelids open. Bright light from a window off to the side, pierced across her vision, causing shards of pain to prick at her eyeballs. *Damn that smarts.* She reached up a hand to shield her eyes; a slim tube filled her vision. It was then that she noticed she had an IV inserted and taped down to the top of her hand. *Now, that looks like it should hurt, but it doesn't.* That would be the only thing that did not hurt by her way of thinking.

Her eyes finally adjusted to the light coming into the room, which really was not much with the blinds pulled, but everything hurt, so why not a small beam of filtered light? Candi let her eyes slowly roam down her draped body, noticing she was wearing a hospital gown, then her eyes zeroed in on the major lump that was her lower left leg.

She tried wiggling her toes. *Holy hell that hurt! Okay, now what?* Looking around the white washed walls of the room decorated with strands of Christmas garland, added a festive touch to the walls, Candi's father really never decorated much for Christmas, so she did not realize how the beauty of it would affect her until now. Twinkle lights were draped around the one window, giving off a heavenly sparkle. What really stirred her emotions though was the most scrawny 'Charlie Brown' type Christmas tree someone had overloaded with decorations weighing down its poor fragile limbs. The top of the Christmas tree bowed with the weight of a glass tipped topper set precariously at its tip. That someone had taken the time to lovingly decorate a tree, which more than likely someone else would have thrown away, was touching to Candi.

She tried pulling herself up on her elbows to sit up, but she did not have the strength and fell back onto the pillow. This was all her fault. If she had not run away from her problems, taking off for who knows where on her motorcycle, she would not be lying in some hospital bed, in some strange place with a bum ankle and who knew what the rest of her body looked like. She had royally screwed herself this time. *Great job Candi Kane. You haven't a clue who you really are or where you fit into this world. Half-human and half-fey leaves you without a real sense of heritage or belonging in either world. You really don't fit in the human realm, being fey, yet you have zilch in magical department talent wise for being half-fey, so that half of your family tree wants nothing to do with you.*

To the fey, she was a mongrel, no better than the dirt beneath their feet. The only thing remotely un-human and magical about her was her telepathic ability for communicating with her father, and even that was draining on her human half, so her cell phone came in handy most of the time. *Crap, she was truly a misfit, unable to find her place or discover whom she was.*

Her father had been left alone to raise her after her mother passed away during childbirth. He had tried so hard to give her a balanced and normal life that at times, and without meaning to, he would smother her emotionally, giving her too much attention and overreacting to the littlest things. But, he was a great father and she loved him more than anything, so she was always trying to do and be the best daughter. She was afraid

she had let him down this time. Running away from her fears and doubts seemed to have created more problems, rather than helped.

He had given up the magical realm of the fey to be with her mother, he loved her that much. He'd been stripped of all his magic, but mental telepathy. Sometimes Candi wished that hadn't been given to her. It was the only reminder that she was half-fey. Leastways that was how she looked at it.

Candi could remember bits and pieces of the telepathic conversation with her father while she was unconscious. She would call him when she felt stronger and more in control of her emotional state. Right now, she felt so empty and hurt. She could barely keep her eyes open.

A tickling of tears threatened to overflow from behind her eyelids. Dammit! Candi would not let herself cry over this anymore. She needed to suck it up and deal with the here and now, whatever the hell that was, good or bad. How much worse could things get? With her run of luck that could mean anything.

Now, what was she to do? *Don't be emotional about it, use logic Candi. You are banged up and lost and hurt, and unsure just where here is.* All this worrying had drained her injured and tired body. Sleep quickly quieted her mind and put her soul searching to a blissful standstill, as darkness became her muse.

* * * *

Christopher woke up refreshed with just the two hours of sleep he had gotten. He was used to very little sleep during his days as an intern and he never got out of the routine of snatching a couple of hours here and there. He would sleep on empty gurneys and stiff old cots. He had even slept on the floor when that was all that was available to him. If he could stretch out, then he could sleep on it.

A quick shower and he would be ready to face his patients and whatever else might be thrown his way today.

It was around seven thirty a.m. when he descended from his living quarters upstairs and made his way down the stairs ending right by his little office. He looked down the hallway, which led down through the two examination rooms and two rooms

with hospital beds, one now occupied by Ms. Kane and then straight to the outer waiting room. Just as he stepped off the last step he heard voices coming from Ms. Kane's room. He stopped dead in his tracks, straining to hear what the two ladies were saying. He could make out Janice's voice, hers was strong and with a forthright tone to it, easily discernable from anyone else's.

"How are you feeling Candi?"

"I feel pretty good for a girl that feels like she kissed the grill of a semi using only her body for introductions," Candi chuckled through the pain that it caused her sore upper body when she laughed.

Her sultry voice and laugh licked deliciously at his senses, it sent a direct hit to his already overactive groin area. His cock pushed up against the front of his pants, and the zipper started to bite into its expanding length and girth. *Holy hell, if her voice affects my body this way, what will I do if she talks to me or touches me?* Christopher mentally berated himself.

Without making a noise, he quietly crept back upstairs to change into his longer white medical jacket, the one with his name clearly embroidered in blue threads on the front breast pocket. Hanging all the way to his knees, it would camouflage his arousal if need be, since his cock was going to start acting like a Yule log at a Christmas harvest, large and hard. All he needed was a tent in front of his pants announcing to the world, "look at me" while standing front and center. That would be too damn embarrassing for words.

With a resigned exhalation of breath, he turned on his heels and made his way back downstairs, trying to take light steps so that the planks in the wooden steps would not squeak in protest. This was going to be a true test of wills today, dealing with Ms. Kane if his body was any indication of how she affected it – him.

Would he be able to control his woody or wouldn't he? He shook his head at his own silly twisted sense of humor. He needed to get laid at the rate his hormones were bouncing all around in his pants. Before he quietly opened the door to his office, he

tried to recall when the last time he'd had sex. When? Damn, he was not really sure. Crap! How pathetic.

Chapter Three

Christopher walked to the doorway of Candi's room a little while later, minus a woody and found Janice sitting by her bedside. The two of them were chatting away like they were two old friends. Janice did have a wonderful and instant rapport with people, but these two acted and talked as if they had known each other forever. The conversation flowed with an easy and unhurried current. For a second, he was jealous of Janice having something he did not; this lovely woman's attention, smiling and talking to him. Christopher wanted that with Candi for some insane reason. His emotions were getting the better of him and he scolded himself. He had no reason to be jealous of Janice. She was sweet and kind to a fault. And he was being an ass.

Neither woman had noticed him standing at the doorway. As he watched them talk, the full impact of seeing Candi awake took his breath away. Wouldn't you know it, his right ass cheek started to burn and itch again and that bothersome hard-on was back again in full force. What was it about this woman that could cause him to lose control of his body in a matter of seconds by just watching her talk? He had never reacted like this with another woman before. He needed to find out who and what she was, and fast, before he lost his control completely and did something he might regret. For starters, babbling like a fool or falling at her feet professing his overwhelming feelings for her. That would be *just* special.

Just before he made his presence known to the two women by clearing his throat, he overheard Candi ask Janice if they had the fanny pack that she'd had on her when

she had gotten into the accident and if she could have it. It contained her cell phone and she needed to call someone. *Who did she want to call*, he wondered? A boyfriend? A husband? Someone as beautiful as she would have a boyfriend or husband stashed away somewhere. *Why the heck did he care? Get a grip, Christopher. Your professionalism has just hit rock bottom. Doctors aren't supposed to have sexual urges and raging hard-ons toward their patients.* Doctors were to keep their point of focus on the medical welfare of their patients, not their bodies, as he was toward Candi's. Someone needed to tell his pecker that, cuz it had a mind of its own lately. And, he was having a hell of a time talking it down from its perpetual heads up position where Candi was concerned.

* * * *

The moment Candi opened her eyes she spied a woman standing at the foot of her bed looking down at a chart. She guessed it was the one that had been in the plastic bin attached to her door, since the one she noticed briefly when she'd woken earlier was now gone. The woman wrote something on the clipboard, before returning it to its resting place in the clear plastic bin hung on the door.

When the woman turned back, she noticed Candi was awake. "Hello there. My name is Janice." She then walked up to the side of Candi's bed and patted her hand, in a reassuring gesture. "How are you feeling Ms. Kane?"

"Please, call me Candi. Ms. Kane makes me feel old."

"You got it. Candi it is." Janice's face was an open book of kindness to Candi. She felt instantly at ease with this woman. "How long have I been here?"

Janice smiled, pulling up a chair right next to Candi's bed so they could talk for a while. "You were brought in last night about ten-thirty." Then Janice proceeded to grill Candi to see how her memory was, which surprisingly, for having a concussion, she remembered everything up to the accident and then after, conversing mentally with her father. Not that she would ever tell that to Janice. She would think Candi had more than a concussion, tilting toward a crackpot. "Candi, do you remember anything about the accident?"

Candi frowned in concentration. "I remember very little to be honest, Janice." Candi used two fingers to rub along the lines of her forehead. "I am sorry, but my mind is foggy up to the accident and until I woke up this morning."

Janice patted Candi's hand in reassurance. "That is okay, dear. Loss of memory is very common in patients with head trauma. You were very lucky you were wearing your helmet. Give yourself time and it might come back to you."

"You have been so kind and patient with me. Are you always this way?" Candi could not help but think Janice must have the patience of a saint taking the time to reassure her. She wondered if she was married and had children of her own. "Janice are you married? Have any children?"

With a smile of remembrance touching her lips and flowing up to her eyes, Janice spoke, "Yes, I was married until my husband died four years ago. Sadly, we could not have children."

"I am so sorry. I hope I have not offended you by asking all these questions."

"No dear." Janice shook her head. "We had almost forty years together. We were high school sweethearts and I was lucky to have met and married the man of my dreams."

Candi felt the sting of tears at the back of her eyes. "How wonderful for you. I don't have much luck with men."

"Don't be silly. You are still young and you are beautiful. Any man would be proud to have a pretty thing like you to call their own, you just need to rest and get better. You need anything, you just let me know." Janice's smile warmed Candi's heart and made her feel loved even though she hardly knew her.

"Thank you, Janice. It is comforting to know I am in such good hands." Candi smiled a weak smile. She really liked Janice; she was the ideal motherly type Candi would not have minded having her for a mother. Kind, considerate and soft-spoken, but she would not want to cross the woman. She exuded a backbone of sheer steel and strength. Candi could feel moisture gathering in the back of her eyes. She sniffed a

couple of times to gather herself together before talking. "I noticed I have a cast on my left ankle. How bad was it broken?"

"Well dear, it was a clean break, and it should be nicely healed in about six to eight weeks. You're young and strong, so overall, you will be back on your feet in no time." She took Candi's hand in hers. "You're in the best of hands now, so just relax and get some rest. Everything will work out fine. Aside from the mild concussion, thanks to your motorcycle helmet and the leathers you were wearing, you really came out of this accident with minimal skin abrasions. You will mainly have a lot of bruising and soreness for the next couple of weeks. You are a very lucky young lady."

Janice and Candi talked for a little while longer, when the sound of a clearing throat, caused both women to turn toward a gentleman standing in the doorway, *a good-looking one at that*, Candi purred silently.

Before entering the room, he took the clipboard out and quickly glanced down at what was written on it before speaking. "How are you this morning, Ms....Kane?"

Between his deep, caressing voice and striking good looks, it was as if someone had lit a firecracker inside the pit of her stomach, then deftly tossed that baby straight down to the muscled core that lined her innermost femininity. Her pussy was on fire! Her muscles clenched and released like they were doing their own happy dance of arousal and she was just along for the ride. *Holy hell, what will my body do when he touches me, go into sexual convulsion fits? And why pray tell is the right side of my ass cheek burning like someone branded me with a hot poker all of a sudden, when it hasn't bothered me before now?* It was all Candi could do to hold back a hiss and keep her facial features mute as the burning sensation deepened then slowly subsided.

Janice jumped up from the chair she was sitting on but before she got ready to leave the room, she gave Candi a gentle pat on the hand. "I will be back in a little while to bring you something to eat. Are you hungry?"

No sooner had she mentioned food, than Candi's stomach let out the most unlady-like growl. "Well, I guess that answers your question." A blush of embarrassment dotted the landscape of her neck and cheeks. *God, how embarrassing*, Candi mentally

rolled her eyes. *Here's a great looking guy, my doctor no less, standing practically on top of me, and my stomach decides to let out what amounted to an internal fart. What a great first impression I am making.*

Janice could see Candi's embarrassment written all over her face. "That is okay dear; we are used to all types of bodily functions around here. I will be back shortly with something to put in that hungry tummy of yours." Off Janice went leaving her to face the distraction of Mr. Tall, Dark, and Handsome all by herself.

Can't a girl get a break? I must look like shit. Her breath had to stink to high heaven. Her hair must look a fright, and her growling stomach was considered a bodily function. She wanted to bury her head under the covers and hope it all was a bad dream, *but that ain't going to happen.*

Chapter Four

Christopher waited until Janice left the room and had Candi alone before confronting her about her telepathic conversation earlier that morning. He had to find out exactly what she was before he would feel somewhat at ease with dealing with her. *God please don't let her be a witch!*

* * * *

Candi could tell that Doc Handsome had something on his mind—his uncomfortable body language clearly telegraphing his unease. The way he shifted from one foot to the other and his eyes never quite lit on anything in the room for very long gave him away.

Observing him, she could not help but notice the way his raven black hair had a sexy curl at the nape of his neck and slicked back off his face as if he had just taken a shower. His light gray eyes were deep set with long black swiping eyelashes that curled almost all the way to his pitch-black eyebrows. *Why is it that the men always seem to get the great eyelashes and I have to curl mine for days to get the same effect? Now that is so not fair.*

The bone structure that God created for this man could stop a radar tracking system dead, he was sinfully handsome in a way that made it hard not to stare. A straight nose with slightly flared nostrils, peered over his lips. His flesh-toned lips were full on the bottom and thinner at the top, giving a sinister cast to an already sexy appearance. What a kisser on that man! He even had a dimple in his chin that completed the rugged and sexually arousing image she had of him. She really could not tell how tall he was, but hell, everyone was taller than her own five-foot stature. She would guess he had to

be at least six feet if not taller. He looked to be in great shape, but it was hard to tell with that knee-length white jacket he was wearing over his clothing, the one that proclaimed him to be “Doctor Christopher Kringle” on the front pocket, in nice blue script lettering.

As her eyes had been busy devouring him like a succulent Christmas goose, yummy and edible, he had drawn nearer without her noticing until the faint tinges of his aftershave lotion sifted through her senses. It reminded her of the wild outdoors, woody and spicy. For a large man, he walked with a quiet sure step.

* * * *

Christopher noted the leisurely tour her eyes took as they traveled their way from his head to his feet. His body had hardened into a rock. It excited him that she seemed enthralled with him. Or maybe he was not reading her right? He could have sworn her pupils dilated from sexual arousal; maybe it was from the lingering affects from her concussion? No, it was interest; unadulterated female interest she was showing and it turned him on. Really...turned him on. He could not remember any woman in the past that caused his body to quicken with desire and excitement like this tiny woman did. It was as if his body was completely in tune with hers on some type of cellular level.

Finally getting a mental grip, it was time to get to the bottom of all his questions. “Hello, my name is Doctor Christopher Kringle and I am the attending physician that worked on you last night. I need to ask you some personal questions before Janice comes back with your breakfast. Okay?”

Candi started from the sound of his voice, she was so entranced by his looks the deep tone of it startled her, jerking her out of her sensuous perusal of his body. A girl could really have some great sexual fantasies with a fine-looking guy like him.

Doctor Kringle walked over, replacing the clipboard in the bin on the door and then closed it. He promptly sat down in the chair Janice had been sitting in earlier. When he had closed the door, Candi got that awful feeling in the pit of her stomach, the one she got when she felt a lecture coming on. Holy Fates, she was not looking forward to whatever was coming.

A kind expression blanketed his face before he spoke. "Please remember, whatever is said between us is private and confidential, okay?"

Candi swallowed a large lump that had formed in her throat. "Yeah, sure. Okay."

"Early this morning, without me trying, mind you, I caught the conversation between you and I am assuming your father?"

"I didn't call my father this morning." She answered with a poker face. Candi was going to play dumb.

"No...that is not what I meant. I am referring to the mind-to-mind conversation you two had."

Christopher watched the color drain from her face, and her hands that had been quietly clasped in her lap, started to tremble. He leaned forward to the edge of the chair, moving close to the side of her bed. He reached out and gently covered her shaking hands.

The second their skin made contact, they both let out an "ouch" snatching their hands away from the other.

He had to voice what was going on in his head. "Why is it from the moment you came into my life, every time I touch you or am near you something odd happens, like just now?"

"How the hell would I know? Do I look like a person in a position to understand anything right now? I've just been through a terrible accident. What kind of damn doctor are you anyway?" Candi could not help the defensive words that spilled out of her mouth. It was if her mouth had a will of its own and as soon as the words left her mouth, she wished she could have taken them back. She watched as his face drew into tight lines. Oh yeah, she'd pissed him off but good.

Christopher counted to ten before speaking. Normally he was easy going, but this gal got under his skin and he did not like it. Letting out a deep breath of frustration he started again. "Let's try this again, shall we?" His hands were now resting, one on each knee, with his wrist dangling freely. "Maybe it will help in you trusting me if I confide my secret?"

Candi said nothing, but nodded her head in agreement.

“My name is Christopher Kringle, as in the son of Chris Kringle, also known as Santa Claus to the human and magical world.”

Candi eyes rounded in shock. “You have got to be pulling my leg, right?”

“Nope, serious as a heart attack.”

“I don’t believe you.”

Without missing a beat, Christopher reached into his jacket pocket, pulled out his cell phone and dialed. “Hi Dad...No everything is fine. I have someone that doesn’t believe I am your son. Yes. Ahhh...yeah. I’ll put her on.” He handed Candi his cell phone.

He listened and watched as she spoke into the cell phone in an unbelieving manner.

“Hello? My name? Candi Kane. Yes, that is my father. Ah yes. No. I remember. That’s right! Yes, I got that when I was ten years—” Her stone-like features from before started to slip and her eyes glistened with gathering tears. Her voice was more child-like now and filled with emotion. “—old that Christmas.” She paused for a brief moment, taking a deep breath. “Yes, I believe you are Santa. I am sorry to have doubted you.” An awestruck look settled over her face. “I really hadn’t thought much about what I wanted for Christmas this year, Santa. Yes, I will think about it. Thank you and goodbye.” Pulling the cell phone away from her ear, she handed it to Christopher. “Santa...I mean...your dad wants to talk to you again.”

He took the cell phone from her unsteady hand carefully, trying not to let their fingers touch, putting the phone to his ear. “I’m here dad. Yes. *No!* I can’t talk right now dad. Yes, I love you. Tell mom I love her too. Talk to you later, bye.” He snapped the phone closed and put in back into his jacket pocket. His peaked eyebrows spoke volumes; he was ready for Candi to start spilling the beans.

She licked her lips in a nervous gesture. Christopher could tell this was going to be hard for her.

At first her voice came out in a harsh whisper. "I—" She stopped and cleared her throat a couple of times and started over again. "I am what you would call a misfit. I am half-human and half-fey. My father is fey and my mother was human."

Christopher interjected. "What do you mean your mother *was*?"

"My mom died giving birth to me."

"Oh, I am so sorry." Christopher should have known it would be something like that being a doctor and the way she had phrased it. Sometimes he was really was an unquestionable idiot.

"It was a long time ago and my father has done a wonderful job of raising me."

He nodded his head in agreement. "What brought you to the town of Wadeville?"

* * * *

The entire time they were talking, he held eye contact with her, and she finally looked down, feeling foolish by what she was going to say. "To tell you the truth, I was kind of running away from my wonderful and caring dad. I felt smothered and needed to think without him telling me everything would be all right, because it really isn't right now. Especially not now with my motorcycle accident."

"Do you want to tell me what is bothering you?" His gently relayed words slowly melted away at Candi's heart. Even as scared as Candi had been in revealing her true nature to him, she felt like a burden had been lifted off her soul, letting her breathe without the constriction of deeply held secrets. She had never confided to anyone what she really was. Only her father knew. Even her boyfriends had been left clueless and in the dark, she felt it had been better that way. They, more than likely, would have dumped her ass or had her committed faster than you could have said goodbye.

She ended up telling him precisely everything under the sun, including her relationship with all the men in her life. How they never lasted very long or had any real meaning or depth to them.

She could not believe she talked so openly with this man about things so personal to her. What was it about him that had her baring her heart and soul up on a platter?

She had never been what you would have called a blabbermouth, but she sure was today with him. Heavens. Sometimes she was such a dork.

Chapter Five

Janice finally brought her a delicious smelling breakfast of scrambled eggs, a piece of toast with jam and butter and a nice tall glass of ice-cold milk. Candi scarfed it down like she had not eaten in weeks, instead of yesterday afternoon. She also brought the black leather fanny pack that had her cell phone in it.

Being the thoughtful person she was, Janice stayed and talked to her. It would be a little while before Dr. Kringle would need her again, she had told Candi. He had asked Candi to please use his first name. They were now beyond doctor and patient level, heading toward something more intimate and she was not sure she would be able to handle it. He was unlike anyone she had come into contact with and his sexuality was drenching and consuming. Her sexual attraction to him was unbelievably fierce—as if he was already ingrained in her psyche. The immense sexual attraction was unsettling and something she had never felt toward another man. She wondered if her head injury could also be affecting her emotional state.

He left before Janice came back, telling her he would check on her later in the day after he finished his morning appointments. Before leaving, he reassured her he would never tell another soul about what she told him and asked her to do the same, which she gladly agreed.

Like she wanted him to tell everyone she was a loser when it came to men or that she was a mix breed mongrel that could not find her place in the world. Heck, she told him a hell of a lot more about herself, really. The only disclosure he made was that his

father was freaking Santa Claus. That one still blew her mind. Who would have ever guessed that little ditty? She had been told there was a Santa Claus, but as she got older the lore of Christmas and the emotions that came into play had paled. It was as if that spark of life slowly had gone out inside of her. Nothing had quite the same meaning or gave her the joy it used to. Confusion and unrest do that to a person.

He did ask her, before leaving, if she had any questions, she had said no, but she had one she was not going to ask him about. That was the damn itching and burning on the right side of her ass. It had gotten much worse since this morning. Yeah, her body hurt all over, but her ass cheek seemed to be getting worse by the minute, not better. And, she needed to do something quick or she would resort to using whatever she could get her hands on to scratch her butt.

Janice came back in after Candi had finished breakfast while she was talking to her father to let him know she was all right. Damn, that conversation did not go well at all. It took a lot of reassuring that she was not in any danger. She fibbed slightly, saying she just had the motorcycle fall on her – leaving out the part about the motorcycle eating a path down her left side – to get him to stay put and let her rest until she would be able to leave the clinic. Being incapacitated and with only time to think she grew bored. Maybe Janice had something for her to read. She loved a good juicy romance novel.

* * * *

Candi gathered her courage and asked Janice to take a look, telling her the symptoms she was having.

“Let’s have a look see, dear.” Janice gently helped her carefully turn onto her left side, lifting the covers away from Candi’s upper body and parting the back of her hospital gown, exposing her behind. “Well, honey, here’s your problem. This tattoo you have looks like it could be infected.”

A squeal erupted from Candi as she tried to contort her upper torso to get a glimpse of what Janice was referring to. “I don’t have a tattoo back there. In fact, I don’t have any tattoos; they have never appealed to me.”

“Are you sure that maybe one night you might have had too good a time and gotten the picture of Santa Claus slapped on your behind. It is a spitting image of him, no mistaking that.”

Candi kept trying to get a look at what Janice was staring at, but she could hardly sit up without hurting, and twisting and turning was definitely out of the question. “Could you get me a mirror or something so I might be able to see for myself what you are looking at?”

“You know, I think I have just the trick. Can you stay on your side for a minute or so more?”

With a less than cheerful voice Candi told her, “yes.”

No sooner had Janice returned and Candi got a good look at her ass or was trying too, when Christopher came strolling into her room, stopping dead in his tracks when he saw what the two ladies were doing. She could not imagine what must have been running through his mind at that minute. And to top it off there it was, a big as you please, tattoo of Santa Claus up high on her right ass cheek. Okay, this was really starting to weird her out.

“What in the world are you two doing?” His bewilderment clear in his voice.

Good old Janice did not hesitate to tell him, bless her heart. “Aside from having a darling derrière, she was complaining about pain on the right side. It looks like she might have an infection from a recent tattoo she had done.”

“Hello, I just told you I do not have any tattoos. Didn’t you hear me?” Candi sputtered.

Christopher rubbed his jaw line in contemplation. “I don’t remembering seeing a tattoo when we treated her yesterday.”

“I can’t say I did either, but things were pretty hectic there for a while and we might have missed it in all the goings on, Doctor Kringle.”

Again...hello...I am right here. I wish they would stop talking about me as if I wasn't here for crap sake, Candi mentally fumed.

“Let me take a look, Janice.” He moved with a quick gait and was checking out her butt before she could say, “kiss my ass”, which if her ass did not burn so badly, would not have been such a bad idea.

“Yes, that is—” Just like that, he stopped mid sentence. Candi leaned over and turned to look at him. His face was slowly sheeting to pure white and his mouth was partially hanging open. Great, he thinks I have a big ass.

“Y...yes it is a tattoo all right. Janice could you clean that area up and put a bandage on it, please. I forgot I had something I meant to attend to before the next patient arrives. If you will excuse me ladies”

Always cheerful it seemed. “Not a problem, Doctor Kringle.” A smile finished her sentence.

Man, he left the room as if the hounds of hell were nipping at his heels. Was my ass that bad? That big? She would have to take another peak with the mirror again later...

* * * *

Making a mad dash to his bathroom upstairs, Christopher had an awful feeling of what he would find when he dropped his pants. With shaky fingers, he did not even bother taking off his white jacket. He lifted it up out of the way, so he could get to the zipper and button on his pants, quickly jerking his pants and boxers down around his ankles, he turned his ass to the mirror hung on his bathroom door. Craning his head over his right shoulder and cocking his hip up, he had a bird’s eye view of his right butt cheek, holy mother of God, there plain as day—a tattoo of Mrs. Santa Claus.

This was like a bad dream. What the heck was going on here? Candi had a tattoo of Santa Claus on her ass, and now he had Mrs. Claus on his, no mistaking that one. If anyone was an expert on that subject, he was. And to make matters even worse, her tattoo had his face on it. Thank God Janice did not seem to notice, because this was definitely Candi’s face portrayed as Mrs. Claus on his ass, too.

With the snap of his fingers, it hit him. I’ll call mom, she will know what is going on here and if she doesn’t she will surely get to the bottom of things. She had a mind as sharp as a tack and the magic ran deep in her family; it never extended to him, not that

it bothered him any. The only thing magical about him was his Harley and the mental telepathy he had with his parents and that suited him just fine. He was not into all that hocus pocus, anyway.

Pulling his boxers and pants back up and then fastening them, he walked into his bedroom and took out his cell phone and dialed the North Pole. This was a needed phone call and not one he looked forward to.

"Hello Mom, just the person I need to talk to."

Mrs. Kringle's voice came through the phone in its usual way, lyrical and comforting to Christopher. "Has something happened?"

"Yes something has happened and I think you might be able to help me."

"What is it Son?"

Christopher thought for a moment before he replied, trying to think of the best way to phrase the next words that would come out of his mouth and not sound like a complete idiot. "Okay, here goes. There is this woman..."

His mother broke into his conversation with an excited squeal. "Ah, Son, you finally met someone."

"In a way, yes."

"I am sorry to have interrupted, go ahead and finish telling your old mother all about her."

"This might sound strange, but here goes. She was brought in yesterday after having a motorcycle accident. The moment I started to examine her, the right side of my behind started to burn and itch profusely." He took a deep cleansing breath then continued. "Today, she...by the way her name is Candi Kane."

Interrupting him once more. "Well Merry Christmas and color your father and I happy, what a perfect name. Oops. Ah...sorry, Son, I did it again. I swear this will be the last time."

"That's okay Mom, the name is unusual to say the least. Anyway, just now, I found her and Janice taking a gander at her backside. Mom, you are not going to believe this.

She has a tattoo of Santa Claus on her right butt cheek and I found one of Mrs. Claus on mine. And the resemblance to Candi's face is uncanny on my tattoo."

"Does the one on Candi's heiny look like your face also?"

In a single strand sentence, Christopher quickly relayed his feeling. He was afraid if he did not get them out fast, he would lose his nerve. "Yep. I am hoping Janice didn't pick up on that. Mom, I am confused and at my wits end here. What does it all mean? What is going on here?"

"Son, son, this is all natural. Now listen to your old mom." Her gentle voice soothed and caused his breathing to decelerate, going back to semi-normal, not coming out in a puff of anxiety, threatening to blackout if he did not get his mind and body calmed down. "This seems to be something that runs in the family."

"What do you mean, Mom?" He knew he would regret asking this, yet he had to know everything he was dealing with.

"It happened with your dad and me, too. You should see the cute tattoos we got right after we met. Your dad has Donner and I have Vixen. It still looks great on your dad's behind. All brightly colored and his tight—"

This time it was Christopher who interrupted his mom. "Whoa...TMI Mom. I get the picture, no more needs to be said on that subject." Now that image was burned into his brain. Holy hell, how did one cleanse his mind of that mental image? He knew his parents had sex; he did not want to be reminded of the fact, though.

"Let me sum it up this way, Son. Candi is your true mate, your wife to be. The tattoo is our calling card to marriage. It is the way it is, plain and simple, Son."

"How can that be, Mom? What if this is a mistake?" His voice was hoarse as his throat started to tighten down again. Point blank, he was a little nervous and excited at the same time.

"Son, listen to me. This is foolproof. The attraction between you two will keep getting stronger and stronger. You can't stop it, so go with it. As for the itching and burning, here is my best advice: Got an itch, scratch it...take care of it."

"Mom!"

“Christopher Kringle, stop being such a prude. How in the world do you think your father and I had you for heaven sakes?”

“I understand the birds and the bees, Mom. I don’t want to be reminded my parents had sex.”

“What do you mean had? We are still going strong.”

“Mom! Enough with the sex talk. You have gotten your point across and I now understand better what I am dealing with. I need some time to think this out and get a plan of action.”

“I understand, Son. You were always the strategist.”

“Hugs and kisses, Son. Everything will work out fine, you’ll see. I am off to see how the Elves are getting along with the newest toy orders.”

“I love you too, Mom. Talk to you soon.”

Christopher snapped his cell phone closed a little too hard. Crap...he was big time flocked, no two ways about it. It was not like he did not find Candi sexy. Hell, every time he thought about her, he got a hard-on. His body definitely liked her.

He was completely past the benchmark of frustrated and well on his way to insanity at this point. He would limit his contact with her until he knew better how to deal with all his jumbled emotions. The consuming hard-on was not going away. *Time to get your act together, Christopher Kringle and bite the bullet.*

Before he did anything though, he needed to relieve some sexual tension. His stiff erection was butted up tightly against his zipper and he could not think in that condition—one of intense sexual frustration and desire to explode any minute, physically and mentally. It was time to take matters into his own hands, or Candi would find herself fucked in more ways than one.

Heading back to his bathroom, he quickly stripped his clothes off and turning the shower on full blast. Within minutes a cloud of steam invaded the bathroom, soothing his frazzled nerves. He was starting to feel better already.

Stepping into the shower, he let the spray of warm relaxing water work its way from the top of his head, drowning his skin all the way to his toes. The muscles in his

body began to immediately soften and relax, but not his damn overactive cock. That was still as heavy and hard as before. Reaching over and taking a bottle of liquid soap off the wall shelf, Christopher poured a generous amount in the palm of his hand and soaped up this body, paying special attention to his agitated and stiff member between his legs. Using his tightly fistful hand, slippery with soap, he worked it up and down his sex, stopping from time to time, to run the pad of his thumb over the swollen head. He watched his hand pleasuring himself, imagining it was Candi's tight moist pussy clenched firmly around it, sucking it in and out of her wet heat. Her inner muscles would flutter and grip his cock in a rhythm that matched his now pumping fist.

Beads of pre-cum pooled at the head of his cock. He tried conjuring up what Candi's moans and whimpers of sexual arousal would sound like hot and needy close to his ear as he worked his hips, grinding them against her clit. Holy hell, he was going to come. Streams of pearly white rope covered his fist, overflowing to the floor of the shower, washing down the drain, much like the tension of his body.

If he came this hard without even being inside her luscious pussy, what would his body do when he sank balls deep? Thinking over that idea was very appealing to Christopher, a smile of satisfaction caused his lips to crease into a lecherous grin. Very appealing indeed.

Chapter Six

Candi thought back over the events that had happened the past week while helping in the clinic. She was up walking on crutches and even helping Janice with paperwork and booking patients. Stir crazy had become her motto and Janice was the one that came up with the idea for her to help around the clinic where she could. For the first time in a long time, Candi felt useful and wanted. Janice had become a wonderful confidant and friend to her.

Her father called her almost daily. Always telling her he loved and missed her, asking her when she would be coming home. She told him soon and left it at that. Candi was still waiting for an insurance check to be sent to her to cover her totaled motorcycle. When she got that, she could purchase another and return home. Did she really want to go home? The thought of leaving this wonderful town left her heart heavy and sad. In the short time she had started interacting with the people who came into the clinic, she had grown to really care for them. They made her feel welcome and at home. No wonder Christopher decided to settle in Wadeville. The town's people would stop in and chat with Candi even when they did not have appointments. They were truly concerned and cared about her. Their loving attention to her affected her beyond words.

There were always some type of goodies or treats brought in from the patients just for her. Today it was chocolate chip cookies. Yesterday it was a pan full of fudge. Their generosity was genuine and humbling. Touching her heart in ways she could not explain, but felt deeply. These homemade treats never failed to reel Christopher in. Candi purposely would put the sweets next to her so he would have to brush up

against her or bend close to her to snatch one. That seemed the only way to get him to come near her. His presence felt so right, so perfect. Her feelings toward him had skyrocketed in such a short time, making her more aware of him as a red-blooded man. A man that completely dominated her thoughts and dreams of late, she reminisced as she reached out and snapped up her sixth cookie today. Her eyes shut for a moment and she groaned in pure bliss as the chocolate chips melted, flooding her mouth with their sweet richness. These really were the best chocolate chip cookies she'd ever eaten.

The sexual tension between her and Christopher was thick enough she could cut it with a knife. Though they were in the same building, she hardly saw him—unless it was for cookies, treats or patient's charts—and they spoke infrequently to each other.

Everything was healing nicely and the damn tattoo had stopped burning. In its place was an intense sexual arousal every time Christopher walked into a room she occupied. Hell, even his sexy voice could get her wetter than a sponge dipped in water. Whenever they did see one another or happened to brush by each other, her knees grew weak and her nipples hardened to diamond tips, threatening to drill a hole in her bra. She had as much control over her body as she did breathing. Which meant—zilch.

All conversation between them went like this, as she thought back over the past week.

"Good morning Doctor Kringle." She always kept her response professional when they were out front before the clients, tone light and happy. What she got in return were one-syllable words, with an unmistakably gruff tone to them. Nice...real nice, just what every woman looks forward to hearing early in the morning and most of the day to boot—great ego booster.

If she was lucky she might see his stiff façade crack the ends of his mouth turning it up into, unbelievably...a half-assed smile. Whoopee! If she had not felt such strong feelings for him, wanting him, having totally obscene thoughts of ravishing every part of his body until he yelled her name, she would have told him to kiss her ass. Hey, that was not such a bad idea; she could not stop herself from giggling out loud. What woman would not like some attention to her luscious behind? Hers seemed to have

been the root of all her problems. Thank goodness that had changed, yet the burning down below was getting harder to deny, stretching her already tattered nerves even more. Having nothing to do with her ass, more like her pussy gone wild.

“Morning.” From a cranky doc, drove her close to screaming in frustration. What girl wanted to put up with that crap? One morning she did not even get a reply only a, “huh”. It seemed he was getting crankier with each passing day. She could tell by his haggard face, he had gotten little sleep. That was something they definitely had in common: No sleep. Candi spent nights tossing and turning, thinking about what his body would feel like pressed close to hers, covering and dominating her completely. She hoped he was suffering as much as she was.

Even with those short tense single words, her body drew up tight and achy like a traitor. Turning on her. A sexual battle of mind over body and it was not hard to tell which one was winning – her over sexed body! *It is as if Christopher and I are playing this perverse mating ritual, seeing who can last the longest without losing it.*

Then there were those lingering, sexually intense looks Candi would catch him giving her throughout the day. Again, her damn body would go into overdrive and she would find herself clenching her legs together to try and calm the throbbing twinges deep within her sex. Wanting to pinch her nipples to satisfy overwhelming wanton desires that were threatening her very sanity.

The attraction grew each day they were in sniffing distance. One minute she wanted to reach out and brush back the wayward lock of hair off his frowning forehead. The next, she would have happily scratched out his eyes. Her emotions ran hot and cold, but her body was constantly overheated and ready to be consumed by his.

When he strolled by her during different times of the day, his unique scent of musk smelled as if he had rolled in a heady earthy scent. It filled her senses; coating them with his special smell she would associate with him as long as she lived.

The nights here were the worst. She had spent more than one lonely night working off the sexual tension by masturbating. Imagining that it was Christopher’s hands that

roamed over the dips and curves of her body, touching, squeezing, and stroking her, pinching her distended and peaked nipples until she screamed her pleasure.

Her hand between her legs became his wicked tongue licking and sucking her swollen clit, giving it deep wet open-mouthed kisses. She would grind her pussy against his face, working her clit deeper between his warm lips and heated mouth. Candi cried out as her orgasm flowed through her body, leaving her twitching and shaking. Each time she masturbated, her orgasm seemed to grow stronger, more intense. She would find herself staring at Christopher's lips, as he talked, thinking of them all over her body, working her into a carnal delirium.

This fantasizing started spilling over into most of her waking hours. *Wake up girlfriend; he is avoiding you like the plague lately.* Time for a reality check!

If she did not know better, she would think she had fallen head over heels in love with Christopher. Would he be like every other man that had been in her life – with the exception her father – leaving her and breaking her heart?

* * * *

Sounds of whimpering and soulful moans woke Christopher. Afraid Candi was in pain or distressed, he quickly slipped his robe over his naked body and made his way downstairs to her room.

What greeted him was not what he expected to find. Candi lying on the top of the bed, the covers bunched around her ankles. She was completely naked except for her tiny silk undies, dangling and caught around her bulky cast. Her knees were bent and splayed down upon the mattress, opening up her sex to his view. Her sex...a shiny deep blushing pink, looked swollen and ripe. The starkness of her cast ankle, only further fueled his ardor for her, perversely reinforcing her sexual appeal for him.

Silky long strands of blond hair whipped wildly about her face and neck as her head thrashed from side to side, grinding back into the pillow exposing the fine lines of her throat. Her back was stiff and arched much like a tightly strung bow. She had two fingers sunk deep inside her wetness. He could hear the suckling wet sounds of her thrusting fingers as they worked in and out of her dew-lined sheath. The smell of her

excitement was heady, it went straight to his hard cock, like a whiff of fresh air filtering into his nose and down throughout his body. He never smelled anything that delicious or had ever wanted anyone as badly as he did Candi right this moment. He hungered to lick her sex clean and it would still not be enough for him. It would never be enough. He knew that now. She was thoroughly ingrained within every pore of his body.

She was absolutely beautiful in her sexual freedom, pleasuring herself, loving her own body. His mouth watered as he drank in her lustful appearance. Lush curves and valleys formed her petite frame. Her nipped in waist curved gracefully into slender hips, hips now rocking and thrusting to the tempo of her fingers, a carnal dance amid the twisted sheets.

Watching her was uncontrollably arousing. She had gotten under his skin without him realizing it; she had become a drug he now knew he could never live without, not even for another moment. This must be how a drug addict felt, cravings that could not be denied, that clawed at their insides. Only it was his insides that felt torn up and needy and his fix was Candi. He had to get the taste and feel of her body into him. His body had known that she was for him. Now his heart knew what his body had all along, they were meant for each other. Soulmates. At that thought, his heart rate accelerated dramatically and his palms began to sweat.

* * * *

“Son, son, what’s wrong? I can feel your raising tension all the way to the North Pole. Has something happened? Is there a problem? Why is your blood pressure sky high?” Mrs. Kringle’s mental questions came in rapid succession. Her mental push into Christopher’s mind stopped him in mid thought.

“Mom...mom, not right now.” Even his mental connection had a breathless tone to it.

“What do you mean Son?”

“I am trying to do that scratch thing we talked about, remember?”

“I...uhhmm...Oh! I am so sorry Son. Mom, over and out.”

Chris Kringle looked over at his wife who had the sexiest pink blush crawling up her neck, blushing out her cheeks. *“What’s got you blushing Mother?”*

Mrs. Kringle snickered softly. "Our son has found the light of his life and it is about darn tooting time."

Mr. Kringle rolled his eyes and nudged Mrs. Kringle, leaning down, he whispered in her ear, "Christmas will never be the same again, but then, nothing ever stays the same. Ho. Ho. Ho. What say you and me take ourselves off to the bedroom for a little pre-Christmas cheer?" He gave her an eyebrow raising gesture and then winked suggestively at her.

Mrs. Kringle reached over and playfully snapped her husband's suspenders. "You randy old man you" Giggling, she took off with a few seconds head start toward their bedroom.

* * * *

As rapture drifted along the soft planes of Candi's face, her impending orgasm tightened her stomach causing it to cave in, arching her shoulders and head up off the mattress as her orgasm washed in quivering waves through her body. Her one free hand was fisted in the sheets. The loud feminine cry of fulfillment echoed around the room and was music to his ears. Christopher took his place next to her bed entranced by her evoked passion. She opened her eyes in between pants. Eyes that were hooded with blissful enrapture, obtained by her hand.

Finally it registered with Candi's orgasm fogged brain he was truly standing not only in her room, but practically on top of her and heavily aroused. Christopher's well-endowed sex thrust out from a curly bed of black hair tightly nestled at his groin. He had let his robe slither down his muscled shoulders and broad back, onto the floor as he approached the bed. It would not have done her any good to play innocent at this point; he caught her red-handed pleasuring herself.

The hungry look of "male interested" was undeniable. He wanted her with his whole being. Her body called to his and she opened her arms wide in offering. Christopher did not need any further encouragement to join her, slipping down onto the bed, wrapping his arms around her body to enclose her against the warmth of his

hard muscled frame. The feeling of his body next to her was pure heaven and it felt as if she had come home at last.

Chapter Seven

Candi could not believe her eyes when she saw Christopher's gorgeous nude body standing next to her bed, with his cock jutting erect and proud from the apex of his body. Veins intersected and traveled the long length to the fully bloomed mushroom head that oozed his arousal. Her tongue peeked out from between her lips in anticipation of what his warm seed would taste like melting on her tongue. The shadow of unadulterated desire fired brightly in his eyes, letting her know his want of her, his great need of her.

She let her eyes roam freely over his muscled physique. A shaft of moonlight streaked through the blinds, falling across the top of his head, setting off blue highlights in his raven black hair, making the gray of his eyes even paler within the darkness of his shadowed skin. He looked like a pirate about to plunder his booty, taking what he wanted and that was fine with Candi. She liked a firm hand when it came to sex. She may seem dainty and petite, but she wanted to be taken and ridden hard. The sound of passionate yells from him would be what she desired, sounds of totally and unequivocal fulfillment wrapping around her, taking her over the edge of completeness.

More than likely, she might shock the hell out of Christopher when he found out she was kind of kinky, wanting her sex a tad bit rough. For some reason, maybe her small size, people considered her delicate and sweet in bed—*Wrong!* She had a feeling he was more inclined that way also, why she thought this she was not sure, she just did.

She watched the play of muscles caged under smooth flesh that ran along the length of his big body. They rippled and pulled as he shifted onto the bed, wrapping his arms around her and dragging her against the hard length of his body. It was like a live blanket warmly engulfing her.

The feel of his swollen cock pressing against her curved stomach, made her pussy clench in eagerness of what it would feel like, sunk deep within the walls of her sex, parting her slow and sure. Stretching her to the limit with a little pain mingled inside the bounds of pleasure. The very thought of him covering her body with his, working his cock inch by thick inch, deep between her legs, caused her to squirm and moisture to gather thick and creamy upon the curls of her mons and down between her legs. This was the first time she could recall being this wet that her arousal coated her sex and inner thighs.

He broke the silence by growling close to her ear. "God, I could smell you from across the room, up close it's even better. I want to taste you, lick you, eat you."

His growled confession made Candi whimper as her body ratcheted up even tighter with sexual expectancy. Her excitement was becoming almost painful to bear, as sharp threads of awareness wove through her, in a downward path to her dripping sex. She just had a mind-blowing orgasm, and she was even more aroused than before. If she got any hotter, she was afraid she might go up in flames from the fierce flares of passion that licked at her flesh and sex. No man until now made her experience this kind of sexual awareness of her body, making her feel beautiful, desirable, sensual.

Kissing her exposed neck, licking a wet trail back up to her ear. Warm words coated her ear. "Do you want me to eat you, Candi? Put my mouth and tongue between those pink wet lips of yours? Would you like that?"

Would she? Who was he kidding? What woman didn't like getting her pussy eaten? She would not dare voice these thoughts, only nodding her head yes.

Christopher used his wily tongue to lick a moist zigzagged path from first one plump, pink tipped breast to the other, sucking each deep into his mouth, running the

flat of his tongue across each nipple until Candi could not stop herself from moaning out loud.

“Your skin is velvety soft and tastes heavenly. I bet that hot pussy of yours is even better,” he said between his teeth, as he worried one stiff nipple with enough pressure to make her mew in a deep breath.

He moved on from between her breasts, spiraling his tongue down the flat slope of her stomach to play amid the shifting muscles that quivered and jumped when he lightly nipped at them, groaning in pure masculine pleasure.

Oh holy mother of God, she was totally right, he was a beast in bed, fucking fantastic for her!

“Please, Christopher, don’t torture me. I can’t stand much more of this slow sexual kind of loving. I want it hot and hard. Do you get what I am saying?” Her begging plea got his tongue moving again toward her aching sex. A chuckle told her he was thoroughly enjoying himself, tormenting her body with his lips and tongue.

“Don’t worry my love, I am going to fuck you so hard and so deep, you will never want another man, no man will be able to satisfy you like I will. But first, I need to fill my mouth, coat my tongue with your cream. I want to hear your screams as I drill you with my tongue.”

Another soul wrenching moan escaped from Candi’s lips. She was going to explode before he ever got his damn face buried between her legs. *Hurry. Hurry!* She chanted silently.

Wedging his shoulders down between her legs, he then lifted first one leg and then the other over his shoulders, bending them at the knees to dangle freely down his back. Being careful of the cast on her left ankle. This position spread her wide, opening her up for his perusal, his brand of erotic tongue play.

Christopher put his face close to her pussy, taking a deep whiff of her arousal that was slowly seeping from between her swollen lips.

Candi could not take her eyes off his face as it disappeared amid her splayed and bent legs. She almost lost it when he licked her from her anus to the top of her pussy.

Dragging his tongue slowly, seductively through one side of her moist folds, never quite touching the one place that needed his attention the most—her damn clit.

A growl of frustration had his eyes lift up over the top of her mons like an alligator in shallow water, the passion on her face bled into her eyes, which in turn caused him to hum his pleasure and snap his teeth, knowing he was driving her nuts with his wicked tongue.

He drove his tongue deep into her rippled core, lapping out her thick arousal and moaning at the ripe taste coating his tongue. He drew her aching clit between the warmth of his lips, putting pressure down on its swollen hood, worrying it back and forth with his tongue at the same time. It shot her pleasure from zero to sixty in a matter of a couple of shallow pants. God, he was lethal with that mouth of his. She had to kiss him and soon, wanting to experience that tongue of his between her lips.

“Christopher you are killing me. Please baby, eat me.”

That was his clue to pull out the big guns, so to speak. Using his teeth, he gently clamped down on her clit and sucked it deep in mind-altering pulls. Sparks exploded behind Candi’s eyes, shutting her mind down as a gut wrenching orgasm set off a chain reaction of shakes and full body tremors, all the way to the tip of her toes. Her scream could have woken the dead as it ripped through her lips. He kept nursing her clit, slowly bringing her down in rhythmic side-to-side caresses of his tongue until her body settled and calmed.

Looking over her blond thatch of curls, he gave her an evil, knowing grin. *Why that egotistical man, he knew he was good.* Now, that was a side of him she did not expect, and it too turned her on. Everything about this man turned her on.

Kissing a path back up her body, he whispered against her parted lips. “I want you to taste how damn good you are.” Melding his lips over hers, dipping his tongue into the recesses of her mouth. Giving back a little of what he found so intoxicating between her legs. His kiss was scorching and decadent, eating away at her lips and tongue. Damn did this man have to be so good at everything?

One kiss blended into another, then another, and before long, she lost track of anything but what his mouth was doing to hers. If she'd had any resistance before, it was totally gone with his sensuous mouth.

Candi was so lost in her passion with him; it was his deep thrust that brought her back to reality. A gasp contracted her lungs from the force of his invading cock into her moist muscled sheath. Even though he fit to the hilt, it was a tight and gripping fit, like a glove on a hand, molding and securely snug together.

"What do you want Candi, how do you want me to fuck you, hard and fast or slow and sweet?" His words muffled against the pulse at her neck. The words coiled over her skin, and aroused her with their impassioned force.

It was now or never to let him know exactly what kind of woman he had under him. "I want to feel like a ripe peach that you are going to split open with that cock of yours. I want you so far up inside of me, I won't know which end is up nor will I care. Now fuck me!"

A deep growl was the only warning she got before he dug down with his hips in a jarring thrust, wedging his cock as far as her tightness could possibly take him. Then, he started to work her pussy over with his thrusting hips and driving cock. Her breath left her lungs each time the head of his cock rammed into the cushioned tip of her uterus. She tightened her inner muscles, loving to hear the moans and groans from him that accompanied that act of pure torture on her part. Adding pressure to Christopher's sensitive rock hard cock, she caressed and squeezed it in her warm tight wetness. Candi swore she could feel the beat of his heart throughout the length of his sex inside of her.

She would show him two could play at this game. She was more than enough woman for him. She would twist him up nice and tight. He would never look at another woman again, that was for damn sure.

She could feel his cock throbbing and knew he was near his climax and she was not far behind him. Colors danced before her eyes as her orgasm built in tense waves and then broke over her body.

The roar Christopher let out as his climax tore through his body crashed around her ears and flowed across her skin like decadent silk fabric.

Later after they had calmed down and their passions were extinguished for now, they had a serious talk about their future and Christopher explained to her about the tattoos and what that all meant. Candi took the news rather well and that made Christopher love her just that much more. Even with all the suddenness of their relationship the whole thing came perfectly into focus like a well-made jigsaw puzzle, where all the pieces fit nice and tight, creating cohesion.

They both agreed magic came in all forms and theirs was the magic of love. Complete and utter true love.

The next morning proved to be a very special one, indeed. Christopher and Candi woke to the sight of ice crystals clinging to the window in her room. The twinkle lights set the ice crystals off like *aurora borealis* suspended in glittering refractions throughout the room. It really was a magical sight. They could almost reach out and grasp the beams of brilliancy dazzling about.

But when they got out of bed early that morning and gazed at the landscape through the window, the majestic lure of newly blanketed snow took their breaths away. With the sun shining down from above, gleaming onto the snowy covered streets and yards, it reminded Christopher of home, Kringle Town. Reminiscing of icing on a beautifully splendid cake curving and dripping, forming the winter wonderland that was now Wadeville, Christopher wondered when he could take Candi home to his parents.

It was a sign that their relationship was truly blessed by all. The Fates had spoken loud and clear. Christopher and Candi had found the greatest love of all – each other.

Epilogue

Three and a half years later – Christmas time in Wadeville

As Christopher walked out of exam room one, he saw his pregnant wife, Candi, waddling after their two and half year old son, Christopher Junior, or CJ for short. On short, chubby legs and with his arms swinging wildly in a pumping motion, CJ scrambled toward the stairs with his mother right behind him to stop him from trying to climb them by himself. “CJ Kringle, if you don’t stop this minute you little scamp, I am going to tickle you to death, I swear.” Candi Kringle laughingly hollered after CJ as he breezed by Christopher. She winked at her husband and kept waddling along until she caught up with their wayward son, swinging him up into her arms to give him tons of raspberry kisses on his now exposed little white belly. Giggles erupted from CJ in abundant peals and spurts between breaths. “Topit mommy, topit.” He grappled with little fingers to pull down his white T-shirt over his stomach, but to no avail. His mommy kept on kissing and loving him.

Christopher watched the interaction between his wonderful wife and his adorable son. He could not believe how lucky he was to have someone as loving and caring as his wife, Candi. She was truly a wonderful mother and his best friend. He thanked his lucky stars she had come into his life. He never realized how empty and unfulfilled his life was until she came into it. Christopher loved her more today than yesterday. He could not be happier right now if he tried. A big smile lit up his face thinking about how blessed he truly was.

Now he did not have to worry about taking over his father's business of gift giving, hopefully his son, CJ would grow up to be the next Santa Claus delivering presents throughout the world, spreading joy to every life he touched, but he would have a long time before that would need to be addressed.

He reached back and lovingly touched the spot on his right butt cheek where his tattoo of Candi's face as Mrs. Claus was. The tattoos were what ultimately had been the catalyst that brought them together. Binding them as mates—true soul mates. Some nights he would worship Candi's tattoo, licking, kissing, and nipping at it. It was a standing joke between them that that was the only time he would kiss her ass and mean it. The thought brought an immediate smile to Christopher's face, along with his love for her silhouetted in his eyes, a tender testament to his profound love for her and the family they had together. Even without the tattoos, he knew in his heart he would have fallen in love with her anyway. It might have taken a little longer, but it would have happened. She was his other half. Candi could bring him to his knees with a look or a sexy sigh. She was unpredictable and charismatic. He would never tire of her. Never.

It looked like Candi had everything under control and he could get back to what he did best, caring for and healing the people of Wadeville, the place he would grow old in, lending a helping hand every day that he could. Helping and healing that was his bag.

His next patient, Mrs. Thomas, had just walked in. Her arthritis was acting up again she had complained when she made this appointment days earlier, but he knew better, she would chew his ear off for forty-five minutes or so talking about her problems. Since her husband had died last year, God rest his soul, she was lonely. She just wanted some attention and he could do that too. He had gotten very good at listening since meeting Candi. She brought all the good out in him.

Then there was good, old dependable Janice running off to marry Candi's dad. That was a real shocker for him. Every once and a while a postcard would arrive from some exotic local, filled with their happy lives together and that was what really matter. They were happy and very much in love.

With a deep sigh he straighten his medical jacket, smoothing out imaginary wrinkles and strode forward to spend some time with Mrs. Thomas, humming a Christmas tune as he did.

The End and Merry Christmas Everyone!