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As the white stairs approached the colossal gates, soon the souls -- no point in denying it, they were souls -- weren't the only ones there. Angels awaited them. At first, dozens, then hundreds, then thousands. Classic angels to his surprise, men and women standing six to seven feet tall, sometimes taller, with enormous wings of white feather at their backs, and each wearing silver and gold armor straight out of a medieval fantasy.

The glorious beings stood along the outer edges of the stairs, each with a giant spear in their right hand, and a five-foot shield in their left, the base of it resting on the stairs. Their helmets had a T slit, exposing their eyes, nose, and mouth, and Mia and David both stared as they drifted toward the right side of the stairs to get closer looks at their faces. Those, were gorgeous faces. Really gorgeous faces. Each second angel was male or female, the women usually slightly shorter and slenderer than their male counterparts, but every one of them was utterly beautiful.

And they smiled. Calm, patient, welcoming smiles, with vibrant eyes that struck him still. Brown eyes? No, not quite. More like... a brown mineral? Like a pretty brown stone, the kind with different shades and white lines in them. Others had green eyes likes his own, but again, green just didn't fit. Emerald. Blue? No, lapis. Red? No, ruby. Intricate, powerful colors, that left him and Mia staring at them.

"Um, hi," Mia said, approaching one of the angels, David in tow. "I uh... um..."

"Welcome," the woman angel said, a black woman with eyes so powerful they almost glowed. Amber? "Rest in peace."

"Rest in peace?" Mia gulped and stared up at David. "That's ominous."

The angel's smile did not waver, but she did chuckle, a quiet, but deep and warm sound. It matched the warmth of the stairway to Heaven perfectly.

"You are welcome here, in Heaven," the angel said. "Come, and rest in peace."

"We're welcome?" David asked. "I thought we'd have to be judged or something."

"You have been judged. Heaven would not have opened herself to you otherwise."

Oh thank God. Literally, apparently. Both Mia and David breathed deep, with heavy sighs as relaxation coursed through them. They weren't climbing the stairs just to get judged and tossed into some dimension of eternal torture.

"The... gold light doors we kept finding?" he asked. "And... her?" Was Heaven a woman? Nah, probably a metaphor, like a ship.

The angel nodded, amber eyes staring into his soul. Beautiful, and warm, but also terrifying. Those weren't human eyes, and eye contact was more than enough to warn him this woman was powerful, and ancient. He didn't know how he knew. He just knew.

"She has welcomed you, and opened herself to you."

"Sounds sexual," Mia said, snickering slightly before coughing and standing up straight. "Sorry, I-."

"Do not be sorry. You will have no need for guilt or shame or regret here. Heaven believes you belong here, with all your quirks and desires intact."

David smiled. He couldn't help it, this angel was so perfectly direct.

"And if... Heaven hadn't wanted us?" Mia asked.

The angel sighed and shook her head. "Then no golden door would have come to you. Hell herself would have reached up and fought to rip your souls from the In Between."

Mia and David looked at each other, and gulped. That sounded horrifying. Dying and finding gold doors everywhere inviting them to enter had been scary, but what the angel said made it sound like Hell would have come at them, chased them, and pulled them down. He couldn't help but imagine a closet door swinging open behind them, filled with fire and bones, with demon hands reaching out and trying to pull them into a world of endless pain.

"Scary," Mia said.

"Indeed. But you are safe here in the warmth of Heaven's embrace." Nodding again, the angel gestured up toward the gold gates waiting for them. "Go, be blessed with new bodies, and enjoy the light and waters of Heaven for as long as you desire."

"New bodies?" David asked.

The angel grinned, a little playfully at that, but didn't answer.

David and Mia looked at each other, shrugged, and started the climb again. More and more angels waited, a line of armored bodies with magnificent wings, all of them standing guard, but not as emotionless statues. Now that David and Mia walked near the angels on the right side, they couldn't help but look at them, meet their eyes, and scan them for any sort of hint about what was going to happen. Nothing. The angels gave nothing away, except that they were all ridiculously handsome. Absurdly, almost disturbingly beautiful, and sexy. And tall. David and sis paused to stare at a few more than once, and from the looks the angels gave them in return, they were used to it, and didn't mind. One of them winked. One of them frowned. Okay, so, most of them were friendly, but not all. Good to know.

They got closer, and closer, and squeezed each other's hand harder as the stairs tapered off into a flat path, and the giant gates of Heaven waited for them. While the armored angels with giant shields and spears remained, there were angels closer to the gate in different clothes. Still in armor, but the armor was lighter, showing bits of white silk hanging from between the joints, and their helmets left their faces completely exposed.

He thought the angels lining the stairway were beautiful. These new angels, still just as tall and fit as the other angels, were ridiculous. Not all of them wore armor, either, some of them apparently happy to be wearing simple silk white robes and sandals, showing dozens of gold bracelets, necklaces, stomach chains, ankle bracelets, rings, and even gold tattoos. Compared to the insane majesty of the gold gate, the angels and their bling looked subtle and tasteful. And their robes did absolutely nothing to hide their curves. Yeah, the men had Mia staring and borderline drooling, and the women had David doing the same. That, was a lot of muscles, slim waists, and enormous breasts, and their robes showed off a lot of it. No bare breasts, but considering the silk was borderline see-through, nothing was left to the imagination.

He was going to like it here.

While all the angels seemed to look basically like extremely tall humans who'd all won the genetic lottery on beauty and fitness, there was one angel who did not fit the bill. And unlike the other angels, this one was straight-up terrifying and made no efforts to suggest otherwise. They stood at the center of the stairs in front of the gate, behind a huge pulpit of white marble and gold metal. They held a massive sword with both hands in front of them with its tip against the floor, and their helmet hid their face in shadow save for two glowing gold eyes.

But the biggest difference was the size, and the wings. Whoever this juggernaut of an angel was, they -- he couldn't see any sex-defining features -- were twelve feet tall, and they had six wings. Six giant wings that somehow fit together perfectly against their armored back. Looking at this angel felt less like looking at an angelic being of beauty and grace, and more like like some sort of titan guardian, ready to awaken the moment someone stepped out of line. Thankfully they didn't so much as breathe as Mia and David walked by.