

IN THE NAME OF MALONEY – CHAPTER ONE

“I don’t understand why we need to tell them anything. Why can’t we leave it between us?” Teddy stood on the sidewalk, not budging.

Siobhan knew he would say that. Anything to get out of a conversation with her family.

“Just get in the car.” Siobhan threw the last of the shopping bags behind the front seat of Teddy’s new black roadster. Sliding into the passenger seat, she slammed the door so hard that the car vibrated side to side.

“Hey, take it easy on my baby!” Teddy leaned over the car’s hood. He had one foot lodged in the gutter and the other planted on the curbstone. Pulling a chamois cloth out of his back pocket, he wiped away a spatter of dust on the hood. As he buffed the shiny black paint, he made each circle wider than the last, until the remaining bit of dust disappeared.

“You should be thinking about the other baby. You know, the one we hope to adopt, not this toy that cost most of the advance on your latest comic book.”

“‘Graphic novel.’ You do that on purpose.” He flung his red fleece on top of the shopping bags in the back and jumped into the driver’s seat.

March 17, 2007. Bunker Hill Street bustled with families getting ready for Charlestown’s Evacuation Day. But her father, Joe Maloney, said it was really a day for Boston’s large Irish population to celebrate Saint Patrick’s Day. He would say this every year.

Deep navy clouds loomed over the tightly packed houses on the narrow street. Although only a few blocks from fashionable Monument Square, this blue-collar side of Charlestown lay dormant for decades. Until now. The neighborhood was flipping over to a new generation. In the last few years, young couples had migrated from Boston’s Back Bay and South End and now owned most of the homes on the street. With

their move back from New York, Brooklyn to be exact, Siobhan and Teddy were part of the new influx.

Dressed in a Kelly-green sweater with white piping around the crew neck and wrists, Siobhan felt sweaty already. The pullover was a hand-me-down from her mother, who used to wear it to the Irish sing-alongs at Lacey's Pub down by the monument.

Siobhan waved to a man across the street wearing a green Celtics T-shirt. His arms flailed as he corralled his kids into the back of his gray SUV. The children, two girls and a boy, pressed their faces painted with green shamrocks against the rear window. Within seconds, Siobhan could see only green streaks smeared across the glass.

“Say hello to your father for me! The old neighborhood misses him.” He waved his keys in the air.

“We need to get out of here before the townies get liquored up on Pabst Blue Ribbon and Guinness.” She lowered the window, the cool breeze brushing her cheeks.

Moving into her parents' house was inevitable. How could she leave Aunt Peg alone now that her parents were living in Concord with Hannah? The house had good bones. But there were enough boxes from four generations of ancestors on the third floor that it would take weeks to sort through. And now, she was the keeper of it all.

“Wait. I forgot about Peg. I guess I had too much going on this morning.”

“Hannah swung by and picked up Aunt Peg last night.” The corners of her mouth turned up. “Where did you expect to put her in this two-seater? On the roof?”

“I’ll have to thank your sister. As much as I don’t want to thank Hannah for anything. Why is she so smug anyway? Sometimes, it’s hard to believe you have the same parents.”

Teddy turned the key in the ignition. The engine whirred, then he turned it off. “What I mean is ... I don’t know if we even have to tell them anything. It’s not like it’s going to make a difference.”

“Why did you do that? We’re going to be late! And Max is at the window. He’s going to start barking.”

The oversized Labrador retriever stared at them from the first-floor window, his paws tapping on the glass like he was digging an imaginary hole.

“Yeah.” He ran his palm around the red leather trim of the steering wheel. “I just don’t want to get into any heated arguments today. I can feel it already, all the way in Concord.”

“Look, they’re my family. They’re opinionated, I get it. But they’re going to be part of this adoption.”

“Whatever you say. You’re the boss.”

“Hardly.” Shifting her body to get a good look at him, she paused for a moment before blurting it out. “Does this have something to do with your family, the way you’re acting right now?”

“Something like that.” He brushed his fingers across his chin.

Teddy wrapped his hands tight around the wheel. “And then all those questions from the adoption agency. Can’t they tell we’re good people?”

“You’re not making any sense right now. Of course they need to ask questions. And Ellen from the adoption agency is asking what’s taking us so long to fill out the basic forms.”

As he maneuvered the car out of the tight parking spot, Siobhan turned to look at the old house. It needed a fresh coat of paint. She put “paint house” on her growing mental list, right after “pick out baby names,” and then, right after that, “talk to Teddy about his mother.”

Siobhan slipped on her black sunglasses and leaned back into the headrest. “Let’s get this over with.”

The Maloneys, with their booming voices and over-the-top reactions, could be a lot. For once, it would be nice if they acknowledged the news and celebrated it.

Quietly, Teddy extended his hand and hooked his pinky finger around hers.

“We’ll get through this. Together.” He flashed a grin at her before returning his eyes to the road.

Heading down Bunker Hill Street, they passed the few blocks that formed Siobhan’s insulated world when she was a child. Her mother would say if she got as far as the Schrafft’s Candy building, she had gone too far.

Away for fifteen years, she was home.

She stretched her arm out the window, the light wind stroking her palm. If she never brought up the adoption again, would he even say anything?