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## At a Distance

by [otp324B21](#)

### Summary

Things have settled down quite nicely. Delphine is getting used to her new life in America and Cosima is getting used to her new life out of the spotlight and just being a normal college student...or are they? Conflicting schedules and longing hearts put major kinks into this Olympic duo.

### Notes

This takes place about 5 months later after Delphine has gotten everything sorted and has finally moved to San Francisco.

## Chapter 1

"No no no no...stop." Alison closed her eyes as she tried to control the urge to scream. "These are not hockey skates." She looked at her identical that was laying face first on the ice.

Cosima grunted, pushing herself up onto her knees, ignoring the cold that radiated through her tights. "You know what...this isn't working." She gave her sister a look as she held her hand out for help to get up. "Why can't I just learn this on hockey skates?"

Yelping as she was almost pulled down by the fumbling athlete, Alison shook her head. "You can't jump in hockey skates." She shook her head. "If you want to impress Delphine, you can't do it on hockey skates."

The mention of the French blonde brought a smile to Cosima's face. It had been about 2 months since the blonde officially moved to San Francisco and while it had been a rocky start, they were in a great place. It had been a bit of an adjustment for her foreign girlfriend, suddenly thrust into the spotlight after her Olympic win. While Cosima was used to the pressures of training and dealing with publicists and sponsors, it had been quite a shock for the blonde.

*"I feel like I never get to see you." They were laying in bed, skin to skin, both out of breath as they drifted in and out of consciousness.*

*Cosima traced a bicep muscle with a fingertip, humming softly. "Dude, that's just the nature of the beast." She looked up to find confused hazel eyes watching her. "I'd rather be spending one or two nights a week with you in person, than every night with you over skype." She looked around the new apartment that was littered with unpacked boxes. "Believe me I know what it's like having to go from practice to photo shoots and then to meetings and barely making it home in time to sleep."*

*Delphine blew out an exasperated sigh. "Am I being a crying baby?"*

*Moving to straddle the strong abdomen, Cosima pushed herself up, reaching up to straighten her dreads. "Maybe just a little bit." She laughed as a hand moved to tickle her side. "It will slow down in a few months when the Olympic hype cools down." She brought the assaulting hand up to her lips to kiss each knuckle. "I love having you here and every moment I have to be with you." She pulled the woman up into a sitting position, wrapping an arm around her neck. "Having regrets?"*

*Giving the woman a wry look, Delphine wrapped an arm around her waist, pressing her closer. "Non." She brushed her lips across the woman's. "Not a single one."*

*Cosima smiled brightly, her tongue showing between her teeth as smooth hands slipped over her skin.*

"I wish you would stop doing that." Alison waved her hand in front of her sister's glazed over expression. She shook her head when the woman's eyes refocused on her. "You are always going off to god only knows where."

Cosima smirked, pushing away from her sister and feeling the cold air coming off of the ice. "Sorry."

"Where is the Nike tour this week, anyway?" Alison caught up with her sister, obviously much more at ease on the ice than her clumsy sister.

Cosima scrunched her nose in displeasure. "Dallas." She sighed as she looked down at the ice skates strapped to her feet. "She should be back in a few days." She scrunched her nose.

"So are you going home tonight or...?" She followed her sister who moved to the exit, catching her as she stumbled slightly onto the rubber surface.

"Nah." Cosima hobbled over to the bench. She could feel what felt like blisters starting on her ankles and she aggressively untied the boots. She didn't know why she felt the sudden urge to pick up the skill that her French counterpart was a professional at, and she probably should have asked the blonde to teach her, but something about being able to surprise the woman really appealed to her. She had asked Alison, who coached a beginners ice skating class, to assist her, but she was learning that the lack of patience she had as a child was still present in the uptight suburban mother. "I like staying at Delphine's place, even when she's not there." She slipped her own ankle boots on with a relieved sigh. "There's just something about being wrapped in her sheets and breathing in the scent that's all Delphine..." She grinned.

"Too many details." Alison cleared her throat, storing her own skates in her bag. "Well if you don't want to cook, you can always swing by our house. You know we always have room for another plate at our table."

Pushing her glasses up, Cosima shouldered her bag. "Thanks but I've got some pasta in the fridge." Pausing for a minute, she reached out and pulled Allison into a surprise hug. "Thanks for being awesome. I'm sorry I suck at this."

"Well...Don't worry, Cosima. Everyone stumbles their first few times." Alison smiled, her lips a thin line. "Let's get you home. Put some ice on your ankle."

Digging through the fridge later that night, Cosima wrinkled her nose in distaste. How high had she been? Apparently she'd forgotten she had eaten her pasta the night before while working on a research paper. With a sigh she rooted around the kitchen drawers until she was rewarded with a stack of delivery menus. "Alright alright." She flipped through the sheets, settling on their new favorite pizza place as she reached for her phone.

It wasn't often that they ordered in. Delphine was an amazing cook and of course was still on the never-ending Olympic diet which often did not compete with pouting lips and puppy dog eyes. Cosima, on the other hand, was happy to trade her previously rock hard muscles for the thin layer of softness her body seemed to settle on. Now that her life wasn't completely surrounding competitions and getting ready for competitions, she was enjoying it a little more.

By the time there was a knock on the door, she had her school books spread across the dinner table, the air just slightly hazy from the joint she set down. "Coming!" She called out as she finished the paragraph she had been reading before bounding to the door, not bothering to look through the peep hole.

"Did someone order pizza?" A rich, French voice asked with a smile.

"Oh my god...You are a sight for sore eyes." Cosima grinned as she reached out a hand and grabbed the black coat. She buried her face in the sweet scent that was all Delphine. "You're so much cuter than the normal delivery person." She mumbled before pulling the woman down for a kiss.

Delphine laughed against the woman's lips as she shuffled around the pizza box so she could wrap her free arm around the shorter woman's waist. "Cosima." She inched the woman back towards the dining room table. "Let me..."

Cosima cut her off with another searing kiss, her fingertips fighting with the belt holding her skirt up.

"Cos.." Delphine was cut off again and she giggled, managing to get them close to the table and setting the pizza down. Dropping her shouldered duffle bag, she wrapped both arms around the shorter woman's waist, pulling her close.

This is how it always was between them, Cosima thought as she finally got the belt unbuckled. There was never a simple hello, always a flurry of passion from built up frustration due to their constant separation. They had once made it halfway through a cup of coffee before nearly scandalizing an entire coffee shop. She yelped in surprise as she was lifted up and propped on the edge of the dining table, her books hitting the floor as they were pushed off. She laughed against persistent lips as she pushed off the woman's coat, her own eager fingers tugging at clothes.

Cosima felt sleep still tugging at her mind as she propped herself up on her elbows, a grin spreading across her face as she looked to her right. Delphine was fast asleep, laying on her stomach with her face turned to the American, the dark purple silk sheet covering just up to her hips. Unable to resist, Cosima slipped an arm around the bare waist, pulling their bodies together so skin pressed against skin. "I missed you so much." She whispered, brushing lips across a shoulder blade.

## Chapter 2

Cosima stretched slowly, a smile etched across her face as she breathed in the scent of coffee and cinnamon. Delphine was home. She squealed in delight as she rolled out of bed, tossing on the kimono style robe Delphine had brought home for her a few months ago. She peeked around the bedroom doorframe and saw the blonde moving around the kitchen area with purpose. She could just barely make out the sound of Delphine singing along to the French lyrics that poured from the sound system. After a quick trip to the bathroom, Cosima found herself wrapping an arm around a tank-top clad torso, brushing her lips against the bare shoulderblades. "Mmm, you're totally home. I was afraid I was dreaming."

"Bonjour, ma cherie." Delphine grinned as she continued her preparations, applying liberal amounts of frosting to the steaming rolls. Having grown accustomed to an early schedule, she had already gone out for a long run, showered and dressed, and began preparations of breakfast for her lazier companion. "You're finally awake."

"Hey!" Cosima reached past her and stole a fingerful of frosting. "I had a busy night."

Delphine tsked in disapproval, her cheeks flushed softly with a blush. "That is unsanitary, Cosima." She separated one of the buns and set it on a plate, offering it to the shorter woman with a cup of coffee. "Sit down before you make a mess."

Plopping down with a grin on one of the stools, Cosima pointed to the text books piled on the woodgrained surface. "Hey...you're the one that..."

"You should eat. You're going to be late for class." Delphine cut her off, her cheeks burning a darker shade of red.

Cosima chuckled, taking a bite of the roll. It was sweet and gooey, just how she preferred it. She was surprised the blonde was making something so sugary considering their breakfasts consisted more of hot cereal and fruit, but she wasn't complaining. She looked at Delphine who was leaning against the counter, a far away look on her face as she blew into her cup of coffee. "Hey...I was thinking. Maybe I could..."

"Non." Delphine stopped her in mid-sentence. "You cannot keep skipping classes everytime I am home."

Cosima sighed at that. She knew the skater was correct. She had missed quite a few days this semester and while she was always months ahead in the school work, she was sure she had a test. While in the past her professors were more than lenient when she was competing, she was sure she was running out of favors now that she was retired.

When she found a disappointed frown in response, Delphine moved closer, not surprised when an arm wrapped around her body, a head resting against her side. "Besides I have to go to the market today and if you come we will have a basket full of pastries and sweets." Looking down she found furrowed brows and felt a soft sigh against her hip. "Hey, how about I make you some of that soup you like?"

Perking up just slightly, Cosima looked up. "Ciopino?" She licked her lips at the memory of Delphine's version of the seafood stew.

"Oui. I was planning a trip to the wharf today. I could pick up some shellfish."

Cosima wrinkled her nose at that. She loved seafood. She didn't love smelling it in mass quantities. "Fine." She huffed, leaning back and looking the blonde over. "I begrudgingly accept the terms of your agreement..." She paused as she licked her lips. "...on the condition that we add in the customary sexy underwear clause."

Delphine felt her cheeks blazing as she shook her head in embarrassment, capturing the American's head between her hands and leaning their foreheads together. "Cheeky...always so cheeky." She tipped her head down and was rewarded with a sweet and sticky kiss that tasted of cinnamon rolls. "You should get ready for class."

"Are you going to be back home after my English Lit class?" Cosima asked hopefully. She had an hour before her lab and while most times she would stay at school, studying in the library, when Delphine was home she would head home and...well those days she usually missed her lab.

Knowing full-well what the woman intended, Delphine shook her head. Cosima was a brilliant student, but she knew she couldn't keep missing her classes. "Probably not."

Cosima sighed heavily. "Fine." She popped the last of her roll in her mouth and hopped off the stool, a thought filling her mind. "I need to shower."

Setting the dirty plate in the sink, Delphine turned to find the silk kimono fluttering down off strong shoulders that disappeared into the bedroom. She could feel an almost animal magnetism at war with her brain that kept telling her the brunette was going to be late. Unsurprisingly, she found herself leaning against the doorframe of the bedroom, watching as the now nude woman walked confidently around the room, laying out the wine-colored dress on the bed along with a black scarf, reflecting light off the sequined skulls.

Cosima smirked as she felt the eyes following her into the bathroom. She turned the shower on, the room almost instantly filling with steam. Looking over at the door, she found light hazel eyes watching her closely and she couldn't stop herself from stepping up to the woman, rising to the tips of her toes as her fingers worked at the buttons of her button-fly jeans. "You can't join me if you're still dressed." She would have laughed at the speed the blonde's tank top hit the floor if it weren't for the moan that ripped from her throat from the sudden rake of nails over the small of her back, pulling her tight against the solid form.

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"Hey, you're Cosima right?"

Cosima looked up from her text book as her light was blocked. She was sitting in the library between classes, having been highlighting some of the passages she'd been assigned to read. She had, of course, already read the entire book, but she wanted to mark the testable material. She smiled at the short and petite woman who was hugging a stack of books to her chest, her cappuccino skin barely peeking through the few places that weren't covered in tattoos and a smile that was quirky and mysterious. "Yeah, that's me." Cosima gave her a friendly smile.

"I'm in your Comparative Anatomy class. Eve." She offered her hand to Cosima who shook it warmly. "I was speaking with Professor Grayson about who I would be the best to bother about getting some help with some of the work and he said you were to best in the class right now."

With a laugh, Cosima leaned back in her chair. "I'm sure he's lying through his teeth. He's just saying that because I bring him coffee every Wednesday. Are you having trouble with the material? It's pretty intense."

Leaning against the desk Cosima was working at, the woman rolled her eyes. "Intense is an understatement...and the way he drones on and on, it's impossible to pay attention."

Nodding her head in understanding, Cosima's hands flew up as she spoke in agreement. "Totally. He knows his stuff but obvs not a people person. I've been trying to get him addicted to caffeine so he maybe picks up the personality or something." She straightened up a little.

Eve laughed at that. "That's pretty smart, but I hear you're a genius so I'm not surprised. I mean I'm sure you have people asking you for help all the time, but I was just wondering if you would mind explaining some of the concepts to me." She bit her bottom lip. "I mean, if you have time and all. I don't want to be a burden. I just can't fail another class. My dad would kill me."

Cosima rose a hand to stop her. "No no it's cool. I totally understand." She thought about her schedule and nodded. She had a little over a half an hour before that class on Wednesdays and she figured it would be enough time to go over some of the basics. "If you need some help we can totally chat about it before class tomorrow or something. I'll just meet you at the table closest to D building around 10:20 ok with you?"

"That would be amazing." The girl's eyes lit up and almost seemed to be jumping in place. She rocked on her heels as if unsure of what else to say. "I'll um...I'll leave you to your studying then."

With a shake of the head, Cosima returned her eyes to her text book. It wasn't rare that people asked for her help, even when she missed a lot of classes, so she didn't even think twice about it.

She didn't see the giddy girl rejoining the group of other girls, whispering excitedly. "She wants to meet before class tomorrow. God she's so hot."

## Chapter 3

*"Let me see." Cosima grinned as she opened the Sports Illustrated. She flipped to the page the blonde indicated and whistled at the full page ad. "Ooh la la." A full smile revealed the pink of her tongue poking out between her teeth. It was the skater's first Nike advertisement and it was definitely an eye catcher.*

*"Stop." Delphine was blushing as she reached for the magazine only to have it escape her reach as the American hopped out of the way.*

*"I think I'm going to get it framed." Cosima looked closer at the ad, the tall blonde caught on camera running down a beach path, decked in Nike running gear and shoes, abs glistening in the light of the rising sun. "This is pretty hot, Delphine. You have to admit it."*

*Rolling her eyes, Delphine returned to the pile of mail. It wasn't her first advertisement. Over the years she was used to having to go to photo shoots and being poked and prodded. This was, however, the first time she'd had so much skin revealing in a photo shoot. Granted, running shorts and a sports bra weren't exactly scandalous, but it was just...different.*

*Sensing the woman's discontent, Cosima set the magazine down and sidled up to the tall frame, wrapping an arm around her waist. "You don't like it."*

*Delphine shrugged. "It's not that."*

*Sliding between Delphine and the table, Cosima grinned. "You are so cute." She braced herself against the table as the blonde couldn't resist leaning forward for a kiss which she happily returned. "Don't tell me you're shy, because you are gorgeous." She bumped their noses together. "It's so awesome. I can totally take this around with me and when people ask who my girlfriend is I can be like BAM bitches."*

*"Merde." Delphine pulled away from the giggling woman, turning instead to start dinner.*

*"Come on." Cosima held up the picture. "You know you look good in this." She hummed softly as she traced a thigh muscle on the page. "Dudes can keep their Playboy. I've got something even hotter."*

*Quickly grabbing the magazine, Delphine tossed it aside, pulling the woman to her. "You don't need a magazine, ma cherie."*

*"No I don't." Cosima laughed as she tangled a hand in blonde curls, raising to her toes to meet soft lips in a kiss. "The real you is a lot sexier." She slipped her other arm around the strong waist, raking her nails along the pale skin. "I'm still getting it framed. Maybe blown up to...mmph." She was cut off with another kiss, the body pressing warm against her.*

*"Merde"*

Having been barely on the edge of sleep, Cosima yawned as she rolled over in bed, still bordering on full from the rich tasting seafood stew Delphine had prepared for dinner. She reached out and found Delphine's thigh within arms reach, snuggling closer to hug the limb. "Merde what?" She asked without opening her eyes.

Setting her tablet down, Delphine looked at the slumbering woman, a distraught look on her face as she reached down and ran her fingers through the dreads that were spread across the pillow. "I have to go to LA tomorrow. " Only then did dark hazel eyes blink open to look at her through

slitted lids. The arm wrapped around her thigh tightened. "Since they cancelled the tour after all those tornados, they are pushing up the photo shoot that was supposed to be next week." She caressed the soft skin of her cheek as she felt a long sigh brush against her thigh "It should only be a couple of days." The only thing worse than being separated from the American was being separated for a photo shoot. While Cosima enjoyed seeing her in magazines and bus stops, she wasn't a fan. She knew she couldn't refuse. Nike was pretty much paying for her entire life these days, having found her a new coach to train under and helping her get the very apartment they were sleeping in. "Just one night."

"I know. I just...usually we have a few days together before you have to go off on another trip." Cosima grumbled. She released the leg as she felt the blonde sliding down to lay beside her. Soon light hazel eyes were just barely an inch from her own, holding a heavy sadness in them that she understood completely. "I don't want to be the weird clingy girlfriend...I just miss you so much when you're gone." She tangled a hand in blonde curls.

"I know, mon amour." Delphine pulled the woman to her, smiling as their limbs twined together. "I have such trouble sleeping when you are not there stealing all the space." That earned her a soft bite to the shoulder and she laughed. "Ow. No marks please. The last thing I need is to spend hours in a makeup chair with them trying to cover them up again." She curled a finger under Cosima's chin and leaned forward for a kiss, feeling the lips press closer, parting slightly for a tongue to caress her own lips. Delphine was wrapping an arm around the strong waist, pulling her even closer when a hand ended up on her shoulder, pushing her back.

"Whoa...you can't just tell me you're leaving town again and expect some instant nooky to tide you over till you come back." Cosima was fighting back a grin as she got a glimpse of the shock on the woman's face. "I mean seriously, I'm not that kind of girl." She tried to put on an offended face but could tell by the way the smile spread across the blonde's face that her ruse had been seen through.

The momentary rejection Delphine had felt quickly passed as she heard the note of playfulness in the brunette's voice. She instead nodded, rolling away. "You're right. Let us sleep instead." She commented seriously before she turned her back. She counted the seconds and got only to four when she felt fingertips walking a path down the center of her back. The bed shifted slightly and a distinct warmth pressed against her back, the hand moving around to rest between her breasts, a hot palm pressed against the center of her chest as she felt the warm breath against her neck.

"I love you."

Delphine blinked as she caught the changed tone in the normally confident voice. Turning back over, she found shaking eyes brimming with tears. "Hey..." She traced the soft jaw, wiping away the stray tear that spilled. "It is only one night."

Cosima nodded, not wanting to push the subject further. She knew the blonde had to do this. This was her livelihood, everything she worked for since she was little, but it didn't mean that it didn't have an effect on the American. She had her family and her classes and homework and research projects, but late at night, when she was wrapped in Delphine's blankets and hugging her pillow close, she felt the distance between them. "I just..." She shook her head. Words were never a problem for her. Sometimes they just flowed even when she didn't want them to, but she knew she had to choose her words carefully in this situation. The last thing she needed to do was let her feelings out completely. "I change my mind." She smiled a shaky smile. "I think we need to get with the nooky to tide ME over until you come back."

As she was pulled forward for a kiss, Delphine could feel the desperation in the lips pressed against her own. She could feel the brunette's need to not talk about it, but she also knew they needed to. Not tonight, of course. Hands gripped at her, pinning her to the bed as her hips here

straddled by the shorter frame. Tonight was for promises of the flesh.

## Chapter 4

"Holy watershed." Cosima commented as she typed away at her cell phone, a dopey grin pulling at her face. She saved the picture Delphine had sent her from the photo shoot she was currently at, reaching for her drink. She'd had more than a couple drinks. Was it 4? or maybe 5? She'd remembered somewhere it had said that if you couldn't remember than it was too much, but quite frankly she didn't care. She was finally feeling better after spending half the day sulking.

"You are bloody horrible." Sarah shook her head as she tipped the shot glass back. "You need another drink and to stop looking at your effin phone." She nudged her sibling.

"Leave her be." The slim man slipped into the booth, sliding over two shots and lifting his own. "She's a bleeding heart lesbian."

"Whoa with the labels, Fe." Cosima stuck her tongue out at their flamboyant childhood friend that was really more Sarah's friend than her own. "I'm not going to apologize for my heart, okay? Besides... I can't help it. She's always hot, but when these photo shoots come around...damn." She downed the shot before quickly reaching for the glass of pineapple juice she was using as a chaser.

Moving quickly, Felix snatched up the phone before the screen could be locked. "Let's see what the lady lovers are saying..." He held a hand out in defense as the brunette reached for the phone, easily finding the pictures. "Oh...now I see." His eyes lit up as he let the phone be snatched away. "You go, Cos. I can't believe I still haven't met her."

"That's cause they don't leave the bedroom when they're together." Sarah joked, chewing on one of the small plastic swords.

"Well I wouldn't either." Felix laughed, nudging the blushing olympian. "I'm sure I'll meet her eventually. God knows I have to drop off enough weed to this little deviant."

Cosima blew out a heavy breath. So maybe her mood was a little better, but the alcohol wasn't doing anything to numb the nagging feeling of being alone. She enjoyed spending time with the pair, but they couldn't fill the hole that was left by the empty bed. Her mind was stuck thinking about the French woman, filled with visions of beautiful hazel eyes and smiling lips. She was never one for being co-dependant, and it was pissing her off. Her fingers twitched and it was like she could still feel the soft skin and silky blonde hair running between them.

*"Don't forget your sunglasses." Cosima tucked the shades into the blonde's pocket, pressed against the taller frame with intent. "And don't forget about me while you're there." She smiled seductively, her fingertips brushing along the edge of tight denim jeans with intent. She had ended up skipping her entire first half of her day, chosing instead to give the blonde a reason to come home, as if she needed one. Sure she had missed a quiz as well as her tutoring session with Eve, but none of that mattered. No...Delphine mattered.*

*Delphine swallowed, having been the subject of the brunette's lingering touches all morning, even after a rather eventful shower. "How could I ever forget you?" She grabbed the scarf off the back of the loveseat, wrapping it around the American's neck.*

*Cosima reached up to pop open the top button of her girlfriend's button down shirt, always preferring to see the pale expanse of collarbone despite Delphine's need to be propped and elegant. "You know, all those half-naked fake-baked blondes running around in bikinis all oiled up." She laughed.*

*Pulling back slightly, Delphine had a look of confusion all over her face. "Fake-baked? I do not know it."*

*With a roll of her eyes, Cosima kissed the blonde deeply, pulling their bodies together. She wanted to re-commit the feeling and taste she already memorized, just to make sure she didn't forget anything.*

*Delphine groaned against the soft lips, feeling herself pulling away much to her reluctance. She looked down to see the button on her jeans undone and a completely innocent look on the American's face. "Cosima, you are pure torture."*

*"Good." Cosima grinned, tugging on the button of the jeans momentarily before redoing the fastening. "Because I love you and I hope you have as miserable a sleep as I will tonight." She buried her face in the long neck, breathing in the scent of her perfume. "This doesn't get any easier." She whispered, feeling the blonde's phone vibrate in her pocket, probably signalling the arrival of the cab.*

*Leaning back slightly, Delphine tipped the shorter woman's face up, leaning forward to brush a soft kiss against her lips. "I'm going to miss you. I will see you tomorrow night, mon amour."*

*"Well you better be ready because your ass is mine as soon as you get back." Now there was the grin that Delphine adored, hints of pink flashing between white teeth.*

*"I will look forward to it." Delphine grinned as she leaned forward for one last kiss.*

"You know, Cos." Sarah slid closer to her sister, Felix off by the bar trying to sweet-talk one of the bar's patrons. "If it weren't for the fact that I've never seen you happier..." She paused to gather her thoughts...or maybe the courage to continue. "I'd say it's not healthy to obsess like this..." She winced slightly, half expecting an angry look or a snide comment. When she didn't get either, her brows furrowed.

"I know." Cosima spoke finally as she toyed with her glass, rolling it between her palms. "I've been kinda shutting everyone out these past few month. I don't mean to." She shook her head. "I love you guys. I love spending time with you guys."

"But we're not Delphine." Sarah nudged her shoulder. "Look I get it. Honeymoon phase. You guys aren't around each other enough to get tired of each other yet, so it's all sex sex sex."

Cosima rolled her eyes. "It's not all sex, you know..." At her sister's pointed look she grinned. "Ok...so maybe there's a lot of sex, but there's other stuff too." She shrugged.

Sarah laughed. "Look...all I'm saying is that we never get to see you when she's home. The only time you come around is when she's gone." She nodded in thanks to the waitress who dropped off the glasses of water. "How about we start small? She come's back tomorrow, yeah?"

Nodding, Cosima resisted the urge to check her phone. She had felt it vibrate a minute ago but she guessed checking her messages in the middle of Sarah's tangent would be a little insulting.

"How about you bring her over for dinner at the parents' place." At her sister's hesitant look, Sarah punched her in the arm. "Come on. Kira's been asking about you two."

Cosima's eyes narrowed as she thought about it. "Do you normally offer up to invite people to our parents' house? Or...are you really a spy acting on their behalf." At her sister's overly innocent look, she groaned. "They totally sent you didn't they?" At the continued innocent look, she sighed. "Fine, I'll ask but I make no promises."

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"It sounds like fun."

Emerging from under her bed victoriously tossing her missing shoe in the corner with its pair, Cosima whined as she looked at the screen of her tablet which was propped up on what had recently become Delphine's pillow. "But Friday nights are our movie and make out nights." She pouted.

"You are describing almost every night we have together, mon amour." Delphine commented smugly. She was sitting up in the hotel bed, leaning against the headboard with her tablet propped up on her knees.

"Yeah but Fridays are the day we have specially assigned for it." Cosima sighed softly. "It's not that I don't want to share you with my family or anything, and I'm trying not to be irritatingly clingy...but..." She blew out a long stream of air. "Am I being an asshole?"

Delphine rolled her eyes. "Cosima...of course not."

Cosima dropped onto her bed, already regretting the lack of Delphine in her bedroom. Looking at the screen, she sighed and hugged her knees to her chest. "Am I going crazy? I mean I feel like we don't ever have enough time together but everyone else sees us as being too involved with each other." She sniffed, pushing her glasses further up on her nose as she rested her chin on her knees as she regarded the blonde. "You would tell me if I'm being too obsessive, right?"

"You are not obsessing."

"Are you sure because I know I can be a bit much some times." With an irritated huff she tossed her glasses on the night stand, slipping under the covers and laying on her side, reaching out to caress the edge of the tablet as she watched the blonde copy the position. "I just don't do this whole girlfriend thing very often so I kind of suck at it." She wrinkled her nose.

"I think you do it very well." Delphine hummed softly, trying to think of something to distract her with.. "Sooo...what are you wearing?"

In response, a grin spread across Cosima's face. "Well I'd say I were naked but considering we're skyping right now and you can see what I'm wearing." She chuckled as she gestured to Delphine's shirt that she was currently wearing. "I could be wearing a lot less." Licking her lips, she sighed softly. "If you were here I'd be wearing a lot less."

Delphine smiled. "Well, if I were there I couldn't imagine such a belle as you being covered by something as trivial as clothing."

A sparkle of intent entering her eyes, Cosima chuckled. "Why don't you tell me exactly what you'd do if you were here." Her eyes narrowed in challenge as she saw the blonde pull her bottom lip between her teeth, the corners of her mouth turning up in a grin.

## Chapter 5

Cosima was staring at her text book...not really reading, and not really gathering any information. She had tried to read the same sentence maybe ten times and the words still weren't processing. She was sitting in the library trying to study during her time between classes but all she could think of was that it was about six more hours before Delphine's plane got in. Then it was the 30 minute wait or so for the cab ride and then...Cosima grinned, chewing on the end of her highlighter. She wished she had a car. She contemplated buying one at one time but Alison had talked her out of it, pointing out the three accidents she'd been in as a teen and her tendency for talking with her hands even if she were driving. Delphine refused to learn to drive after a near miss when she was younger so the two relied mostly on cab rides.

She let her mind wander with her fingertips that picked up the Women's Fitness magazine peeking out from her bag. Sure she could convince herself that she was really that interested in the article on the sudden rise of popularity of Hip Hop Abs. Alison had been bugging her to join in on the class she'd been taking, but she didn't care. If she wanted to work out she'd join Delphine on her runs, and occasionally they went to the gym together. No her eyes drifted to the left of the article and over the ad. She wondered if maybe she was a little bit off her rocker. She shouldn't be obsessing so much over the sleek form that was balancing on one ice skate supposedly in mid-turn...supposedly.

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*"Alright let's take a few minutes." The photographer stood up straight from his crouch, shaking out his limbs.*

*Delphine huffed out a long breath of air, dropping her leg wearily from the difficult pose before skating to the edge of the rink. It would have been a long and aggravating day if it weren't for the grinning brunette waiting for her with a robe and a cup of hot tea. "You are a sight for sore eyes, ma cherie."*

*Cosima was practically bouncing with energy. It wasn't often that she got to join the blonde while she was working and although they didn't exactly get to spend the day together, it was interesting. Considering that her own photoshoots were always action shots out in the open, it was odd to see the different setting. "Your legs must be killing you." She spoke sympathetically as the blonde slipped into the robe. "And cold."*

*With a nod, Delphine sipped from the cup of tea. "The punishment for doing winter sports, oui?" She smiled, pulling Cosima close for a kiss. "You are better at warming me up than tea."*

*Cosima had beamed at that, pressing closer, practically on the blonde's lap even as the photographer came over with his tablet.*

*"Ahem." He sat on the other side of Delphine, waiting till he got her attention.*

*Delphine sighed. "Time for more pictures?"*

*"Actually." He pulled up about half a dozen of the digital shots. "We got some really great shots during that last bit." He handed the tablet to the skater.*

*Cosima reached over and flipped through the photos. She smiled, most of them looking incredible to her eyes. Stopping on one, she nudged the French woman. "I like this one a lot."*

*The photographer smiled as he took the tablet back. "You have a good eye. That's the one I was*

*thinking we were going to use."*

*Looking around Delphine's shoulder at the man, Cosima grinned. "Thanks. It's a great shot. I don't suppose I could get like a poster size of mmmph."*

*Delphine rolled her eyes as she held her hand over the brunette's mouth. "Don't mind her." She looked at Cosima who was grinning when she dropped her hand.*

*"Oh...I don't mind at all." He laughed and winked at Cosima before standing. "Well we're done here so enjoy the rest of your day."*

*Cosima stood suddenly, slipping her hand into the blonde's. "Well looks like you're done working for today." She tugged until Delphine was standing. "I have the day off too." She pulled the blonde backwards towards the locker room that was acting as a semi dressing room. "I'm thinking we could maybe have an early dinner and ..." She pressed closer, brushing her lips against the warm ear. "Well, maybe head home for a little dessert?"*

*Delphine laughed softly, feeling the pleasant hum coursing through her body. "You are such a tease."*

*Pinning the blonde to the lockers, Cosima chuckled, pushing the robe off her shoulders. "Teases have no intention of following through."*

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"Hmm, I never saw you as a Hip Hip Abs type of person."

The voice brought Cosima out of her musings and she looked up in surprise. "Oh, hey Eve. Didn't even see you."

The student grinned as she leaned against the desk Cosima was at, hugging a book to her chest. "Sorry. You looked pretty out of it. I didn't mean to scare you, I was just wondering about what happened. Were you sick yesterday?"

Cosima leaned back slightly, an embarrassed look on her face. "Sorry about that. Something came up that I had to take care of and I ended up missing most of my classes. I didn't have your contact info."

"Oh...well..." The student grinned brightly as she reached over Cosima's notes, picking up the pen and scribbling her number in the corner of the snowboarder's notebook. "There you go. Call me anytime. Maybe we could reschedule. I'm still pretty lost." She laughed. "When you're not busy with Hip Hop Abs, that is."

Cosima laughed at that. "Yeah...I'm totally not a Hip Hop Abs type of person." She rose a hand in defense. "I'm not saying theres anything wrong with it, my sister's big on it and all, but it's just not my style. " She cleared her throat. "I'm more into going to the gym like once a month these days ."

"Well you certainly look fit enough. I say whatever you're doing, keep at it." Eve pointed to the magazine. "So whats with the studious look?"

With a blush, Cosima pointed to the shot of the blonde. "I was actually just spazzing out staring at the Nike ad."

Confusion painted its way across the woman's face. "Big fan of workout gear?" She reached out and turned the magazine so she could see it. "Or just blonde ice skaters."

"She likes both actually."

Cosima turned in her chair and a grin spread from ear to ear as she resisted the urge to hop up. "You're back early." She pushed herself up slightly, meeting the blonde halfway for a kiss. She hummed softly as the kiss went deeper than she expected considering they were in public. After a lengthy moment, she broke the kiss off and gave the blonde a questioning look.

"Photo shoot was done early." Delphine smiled as she stood to her full height, giving the darker woman a curious look before holding a hand out. "Delphine Cormier: blonde ice skater...and you are?"

There was a momentary pause before the student accepted the hand, pasting a smile on her face. "Eve: Biology student." She smiled a tight lipped smile. "So you're a model?"

With a laugh, Cosima looked down as Delphine's hand slipped into her own. "Nope, she's an ice skater. Only the best in the world right now, though she totally could be a model." She beamed proudly at the blonde and was rewarded with a cup of coffee.

"I didn't mean to interrupt your studying." She looked Eve over for a long moment before turning to Cosima and smiling. "I just stopped by to bring you this and to tell you not to linger too long after school." She leaned down for another kiss, much briefer but she paused and caressed a cheek, leaning her forehead against the brunette's for a moment. "I will see you in a couple hours, and don't even think about skipping your classes."

"So unfair, Dude. As if I could think of anything else now." Cosima pouted, reluctant to release the blonde's hand.

Delphine chuckled. "Go to all your classes and I'll let you have the present I got you." Standing up again to her full height, she gave a half-smile to the student. "Pleasure to meet you, Eve." With one final look, Delphine disappeared back in the direction she came.

Watching her hips sway as she walked away, Cosima cleared her throat, blowing out a long stream of air. "Well, there went my damn concentration." Cosima shook her head, closing her books and slipping them into her bag. "Sorry, she was in LA and wasn't supposed to get in until tonight. This is twice this week that she's surprised me by coming home early."

"I take it that's your girlfriend?" Eve's voice was softer now, less perky than it was before.

Cosima didn't notice. "Yeah. I'm surprised you didn't know about me and my scandalous relationship with an Olympian from another country." She laughed as if she was used to being the center of conversation, which of course she was.

Eve shrugged with a look of nonchalance. "I don't follow sports much." She sighed. "Well I have class. I'll talk to you later."

With a look of surprise, Cosima watched the student leave quickly, shaking her head as she gathered the rest of her things. She only had two classes left and all she could think about was how her lips still ached from the kiss. "This is going to be a long two hours." She mumbled as she slipped her bag over her shoulder.

## Chapter 6

"What are you cooking?" Cosima stepped up behind the blonde, wrapping an arm around her waist. "It smells really good." She had stripped out of her school clothes and was now sporting one of Delphine's Nike t-shirts and a pair of boxer shorts. Now free of her heeled boots and completely barefoot, the height difference between the two women was that much more obvious.

"You think all food smells good." Came the dry response from the blonde.

Cosima chuckled, pressing her nose against the woman's back. She had arrived not that long ago but Delphine had been halfway through cooking to properly welcome her. "You smell good too." She brushed her lips against the surface before pulling away and moving to the prep counter, pushing herself up onto it's surface before reaching for her bottle of cider, taking a long sip. It had been an agonizingly long day knowing Delphine was at home and she was forced to stay in class. She barely remembered what was covered, but like a high school teenager, she suddenly found her notebook covered in hearts and Delphine's name. "You know today I was sitting in the library totally day dreaming about you coming home tonight. It's a good thing you dropped by cause I was totally thinking about taking a cab to come pick you up."

It was a long moment before Delphine responded as she stirred the wok full of noodles. "I did not mean to interrupt you and your friend."

"Who Eve?" Cosima picked up the stack of mail sitting on the counter, absentmindedly flipping through the envelopes as if there would be anything for her going to the apartment. "It's cool. We weren't talking about anything important." She chuckled as she tossed the mail down. "You get so much junk mail." When she didn't get a response she looked at the blonde who seemed to be deep in thought, staring at the noodles as if they held the secrets of the universe. "Hey...are you ok?"

Nodding her head quickly, Delphine forced a smile onto her face. "Yes." She cleared her throat, reaching for her wine glass and taking a long sip. "So...how do you two know each other?"

Cosima tilted her head to the side, taking in the tense frame of the woman. "We have a class together." She let the end of her sentence die off as she tried to decipher the odd feeling of disconnect she was getting. "I was supposed to help her with some of the course work yesterday but I was here with you."

"She seems very...friendly." Delphine reached to flip off the burner. "It seems a little early in the semester to need tutoring, non?"

Cosima's brows furrowed. The way the blonde was acting, it was almost as if...There was a silence before realization dawned over her. "Holy crustaceans." She set her bottle down and wrapped her fingers around Delphine's bicept, pulling her into her space. When hazel eyes refused to meet her own she curled a finger under the woman's chin, tilting her head back. "Are you jealous?"

With a huff, Delphine pulled away, facing away from the woman and muttering a few French curses.

"Hey hey hey." Cosima slid off the counter, wincing slightly when her feet hit the cold floor. "What's going on?" She moved in front of the blonde, trying to get into her line of sight. "Talk to me." With a concerned look she pushed a lock of blonde hair behind an ear.

"Merde." Delphine crossed her arms over her chest, shifting her weight. "I don't know." She

shook her head.

Cosima's brow furrowed again. "Come on." She forced herself into the woman's space, her fingers slipping into the belt loops of her jeans and pulling their bodies together. "Please tell me you're not jealous." She pushed herself up to her toes to brush her lips against the tip of Delphine's nose. "I love you."

Delphine sighed heavily. "I'm sorry. I love you too. I just.." She blew out a heavy breath.

"Then talk to me." Cosima leaned back, seeing eyes finally focusing on her. "Because right now all I'm getting is that you don't trust me to be around other people."

"What? Non!"

"Are you sure?" Taking a step back, Cosima's eyes narrowed. "Because I've heard it all. The whole 'oh she likes girls and guys she must be a horror to date' and the 'twice the attraction, twice the danger' bullshit that I've come to expect from everyone."

"Non!" Delphine shook her head, capturing the brunette's face between her hands. "It's my fault." She pulled the woman forward for a kiss. "I'm just away all the time and my brain starts thinking and it is not your fault." She closed her eyes, leaning their foreheads together. "I just walked in and saw her leaning over you." Pursing her lips she shook her head against the image. "It was so obvious she was hitting on you and ..."

"And so your possessiveness took over?" Cosima gave her a look. "Because that's pretty primitive...like cavemanish almost..."

"I know I know." Delphine sighed softly, stepping away. "I'm sorry, Cosima. I just... She was just... I don't trust HER around you..." Her voice trailed off, words a loss to her.

Cosima bit her bottom lip, taking in the sad puppy dog look on Delphine's face. The independent side of her was screaming in her mind. In previous relationships, she didn't tolerate jealousy. Having a sexuality that was far more fluid than most people, she was used to comments about her possible infidelity. She felt like it showed a lack of trust and a judgement of her own character. Cosima herself was never a jealous person. She just didn't see the point in it. Oddly enough, the irritation was held at bay by an odd sense of flattery she couldn't understand. It was an odd realization that part of her wanted Delphine to be jealous and possessive, something that surprised her. It also didn't help that the blonde just looked so damn cute looking like she had been caught with her hand in the cookie jar. "Delphine...look at me." She internally winced at the level of command in her voice but didn't let it show when those surprised eyes looked at her. "Do you trust me?"

"Of course, mon amour." Delphine responded immediately. "I just..."

"You just nothing." Cosima cut her off, grabbing the front of her tank top and pulling her forward. "I love you, Delphine." She smiled, pressing her lips against a smooth jaw. "So stop because for someone with such a beautiful brain, you're being pretty silly. I didn't even notice she was hitting on me because I was daydreaming about you." She hummed softly when the arms finally wrapped around her waist, pulling her closer. "Even when you're in another country across the globe, you're always right here with me."

Delphine hugged her tight, burrying her face in dreads and a soft neck. "Je t'aime, Cosima." She leaned back, lifting the woman slightly off her feet and being rewarded with a surprised squeek.

Cosima hummed softly as her entire length was pressed against the sleek form before she was set

back down. Leaning back slightly, she reached up to push another loose lock of wavy blonde hair behind an ear. "We should eat." She traced a line down the woman's cheek. " All this emotional talk is making me hungry...and horny." She wrinkled her nose in a grin as she moved to pull away. A hand on her cheek stopped her and she found lips pressed against her own, another arm slipping around her waist and pulling her closer. She couldn't stop the groan that emerged from her throat, feeling the teeth rake over her bottom lip and the chill that went down her spine. It was a long agonizing moment before she pulled away, feeling her body wanting to press closer. "Mmm, so I really like where this is going, but I'm starving and those noodles smell almost better than you do." She laughed at the look on the blonde's face. "You are just adorable." She brushed another light kiss against bruised lips. "Now feed me!"

## Chapter 7

Hearing Delphine moan her name was far better than any song Cosima had ever heard. Everything about the French woman was better than anything she'd ever experienced. Her skin was like smooth silk, a pale tone that was freckled with beautiful spots everywhere Cosima's lips touched. Her hands were strong yet dainty, her fingers long and tapered that felt amazing locked in her dreads, pulling her closer. The taste of Delphine was no less than addicting. As her tongue moved against slick flesh, Cosima hummed in delight, one arm wrapped around a strong thigh, attempting to still rolling hips. She could feel the muscles quivering, French curses being mumbled between shuddering breaths. As her fingers slipped into delicious warmth, fingernails bit into her scalp and pulled her closer, the blonde obviously trying to smother her. 'What a way to die.' Cosima thought as she rode it out, feeling the muscles clamping around her fingertips as hips thrust up once more. Yeah she definitely loved the way the woman's body reacted to her touch.

Delphine made a sound that was half a laugh, half a whimper as her body collapsed on itself. She untangled her fingers from Cosima's dreads, throwing her arm over her eyes as she struggled to catch her breath. "Merde."

Cosima chuckled, laying her head on the tense abdomen that was moving up and down with each breath. Her own body was humming with arousal but for the moment she was content to just lay there and absorb the heat radiating from the body beneath her.

"I am sure you are trying to kill me." Delphine mumbled, looking down until she saw dark hazel eyes look up at her, accompanying smirking lips.

"Me?" Pushing herself up, Cosima crawled her way up the long frame until she was nose to nose with her accuser. "I'm pretty sure you were trying to suffocate me, Miss Cormier." With a quick kiss she pushed herself up into a sitting position, straddling hips and grinning menacingly.

"Hush." Delphine wasted no time sitting up, finding welcome lips waiting for her. She could taste herself on the brunette's lips and pressed her tongue past them.

Cosima slipped her arm around the woman's neck, feeling hands moving down her sides, one slipping between the bodies as she melted against the touch. She had never been with someone who had been so in tune with how exactly to make her squirm. It never ceased to amaze her how comfortable and confident the blonde had become, very different from their first time together.

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*"You talk too much."*

*Cosima grinned against the blonde's lips as she was pressed backwards onto the bed. She moaned softly against the lips as hands caressed her body. They had been getting closer over the last week and while she had been working up the courage to confess her growing feelings for the blonde, she didn't really expect to be stripped of her clothes and pressed into the rough sheets, the strong body covering her own. She hadn't meant for things to go this quickly, but the moment the blonde pulled her close and the tongue slipped past her lips, she was so lost.*

*As if suddenly realizing where they were, Delphine pulled back, a war obvious in her eyes as she bit her bottom lip. Her hand pressed against Cosima's shoulder, holding her slightly at bay. She was looking down the lengths of their bodies pressed together and she swallowed audibly.*

*Sensing her hesitation, Cosima reached up to caress a cheek. "Hey, are you ok?" She could feel her own hands trembling. The bottle of wine was doing it's job to dull her inhibitions and it was*

*taking all her willpower to show restraint. Her own arousal was coursing through her veins and her hands ached to reach out and caress every inch of pale skin.*

*Nodding, Delphine leaned into the hand, closing her eyes momentarily. "Oui. I just never..." Her words trailed off as her cheeks reddened even darker. "I want to, but I don't know what to..." She shook her head in embarrassment.*

*"I know." Cosima smiled, pulling her down for a kiss. "I'll teach you." She whispered. The small bed was a little unforgiving in space as she managed to switch their positions, laughing slightly at the awkwardness of accidentally getting an elbow to the ribs in the move. "Ow." She chuckled against lips as she laid beside the blonde.*

*"Désolé." Delphine's brows furrowed as she wasn't quite sure where to put her hands. One was suspended in the air, halfway to the American's chest, trembling slightly. She bit her bottom lip, looking from the soft skin and back up to hazel eyes.*

*Cosima smirked in understanding, guiding the hand to cover her breast, closing her eyes against the sensation. She directed the hand to brush a circular pattern against her nipple before she felt the tentative touches continue without her guidance. With a chuckle, she brushed her lips up the warm neck, feeling the heart beating wildly. "You are so beautiful." She whispered softly as she slipped her thigh between the blonde's, leaning forward to meet parted lips that moaned against her own. She caressed the long expanse of skin that was before her, mesmerised at the soft whimpers that were coming from the skater. Her nails raked over ribs that expanded with a sharp breath. She felt fingers on her shoulders, nails leaving slight indentations in her skin as she continued her path south, nipping and tasting the delicate skin. Adjusting her position so that she was between the blonde's legs, she brushed her lips along the long expanse of sleek muscle. "So beautiful." She mumbled in amazement, not sure if the blonde heard her. She was lost in the musky scent of arousal, her mouth drawn to the slick flesh as she locked her arms around the woman's thighs knowingly.*

*"Merde!" Delphine's hips just about flew off the bed, barely held in place by the strong arms wrapped around her thighs.*

*Cosima smiled as the blonde's shyness and insecurities were tore down by her need and want.*

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Cosima moaned loudly as she rolled her hips, hugging the blonde to her as she thrust against the fingers buried inside her. Now the French woman didn't need to be told anything at all. Cosima felt teeth bite down on her neck and her own nails scratched a path down the long back. There would definitely be marks everywhere on both women, and she didn't care. She knew Delphine was using the opportunity to claim her as her own, and she didn't care one bit because she was. Despite the insecurities and jealousy, she willingly gave herself over to the blonde completely. "I'm yours and yours alone." The whispered words were almost a stutter as she felt her abdomen begin to shake, her own body betraying her as she wished the pleasure would last forever.

Delphine moved from Cosima's neck to the waiting lips, their tongues moving against each other even as the American's body tensed against her own, her lips swallowing the high-pitched whimper that came from her.

When she felt her body was under her own control again, Cosima pulled back, leaning her forehead against the blonde's. She grinned brightly, feeling the fingers still inside her, still sending tiny jolts through her body. "God I love you so much."

Brushing her nose against Cosima's, Delphine grinned. "Je' t'aime." She whispered.

Cosima hummed in delight as she closed her eyes, one hand running through the damp blond waves. She was still straddling the woman's lap, enjoying the trembling closeness.

"Move in with me."

Cosima blinked her eyes open. She found light hazel eyes a bare inch away from her own. Move in with Delphine? It seemed like such an odd request. If she looked around the apartment she would no doubt find more things that were hers than the blonde's. She smiled. "Some would say I already have."

Rolling her eyes, Delphine shifted their positions, pressing Cosima into the soft pillowtop bed. "Move in with me, mon amour...permanently." Her fingers pressed deeper into the slick flesh, the heel of her palm brushing against the bundle of nerves.

Moaning, Cosima's back arched into the touch.

Delphine brushed her lips over Cosima's neck, kissing the marks that were already turning a lurid purple. "I never want to wake up in this bed without you here beside me."

With a smirk, Cosima licked her lips. "Sounds...plausable." She released a shuttered breath. "But...I might need some incentive."

There was a momentary pause on the blonde's behalf before she took the not so subtle message of the hands on her shoulders, pushing her lower. "Incentive..." She brushed her lips down the center of the American's body. "I can do that."

## Chapter 8

Cosima groaned as consciousness pulled at her senses. It was Friday morning which meant she was normally allowed to sleep in since she didn't have any classes. That is of course if she wasn't being nudged into consciousness. The first thing she recognized was the lips brushing over her shoulder, a warm heat pressed against her back. "Mmmm...if I open my eyes and it's not bright and sunny...you're in big trouble." She heard a soft chuckle as lips brushed up her neck and she felt a warm breath brush against her ear.

"I have to train, ma cherie and your phone keeps buzzing."

As if on queue, there was a loud buzz of Cosima's cell phone vibrating on the night stand. "Damn it." Cosima growled, reaching out and not even bothering to check to see who it was before hitting the speaker button. "What?"

"Finally...Cosima, I'm going to need you to come in today."

Cosima's nose scrunched up as she rolled onto her back and opened her eyes, staring up at the ceiling. Another reason she had purposely avoided classes on Fridays was that it gave her a weekday in which she could schedule all her meetings that she for some reason found herself needing to schedule. "Aren't you all demanding. Good morning to you too, Art." She smiled as Delphine readjusted her position and an arm slipped around her waist. "Why am I coming in today? Aren't I retired?" It was the same argument she tried every time her manager called and he responded the same way he always did.

"What does that have to do with making money?" There was a chuckle before he cleared his throat. "Anyway, I've got some offers and deals to go over with you."

"It's not even snow season yet." Cosima whined, pulling the sheet up over her head. She felt a hand sliding under the sheet and over her abdomen which caused her to pull the sheet back and glare at the smirking blonde.

"Oh there will be plenty of winter photoshoots when the snow comes, but that's not what this is about. How's noon for you?"

"I don't even know what time it is now." Blowing out a long stream of air, Cosima rose an eyebrow at Delphine. "How's noon for me?"

Rolling her eyes, Delphine gave the brunette a quick kiss before responding. "She'll be there."

"Oh hey Delphine. Long time no see."

"You too, Art." Delphine smirked as she moved to straddle the brunette's waist. "How is your wife Angie?"

"She's good. She's good. Almost 8 months now." Came the delighted response. "Are you coming in with Cosima? I'd love another chance to convince you to join us."

Cosima rolled her own eyes. Morning was definitely not her best time of the day and took a lot out of her to be sociable. Except of course with Delphine, she thought, running her hands up the blonde's bare thighs. The woman was wearing a tank top and running shorts, obviously just back from her morning run.

"You're very sweet Art, but I'm very loyal to my manager." Delphine leaned down and brushed

her nose against the brunette's.

"Alright then ladies. I'll leave you to your morning. Cosima I'll see you in a few hours."

Reaching out and hanging up the phone, Delphine smiled. "You are are such a brat."

Caressing the strong thighs, Cosima grinned. "You like it, or ese you wouldn't have asked me to move in with you."

"You also did not agree to yet."

Stretching as much as the straddling form would let her, Cosima sat up, meeting the soft lips that were waiting for her. "I need a shower."

"Yeah you do." Delphine laughed. She ran her fingertips over a purple mark on the woman's throat. "And maybe a little concealer, non?"

With a smirk, Cosima ran her fingers over a mark on Delphine's collarbone. "I haven't seen the damage yet, but considering how hard a couple of your bites were, I wouldn't be surprised."

Delphine's cheeks flushed as she gave the woman an apologetic look. "Je suis désolé." She whispered, despite the corners of her mouth turning up in a smirk.

"Don't apologize. It was hot. Totally high schoolish, but still hot." She caressed a soft cheek, pulling her closer. "How long do we have before you have to be at the arena?"

With a quick kiss, Delphine slipped off the bed, offering a hand to the brunette. "Enough for a shower." She commented with a knowing smirk.

"Lucky me." Cosima responded as she was pulled towards the bathroom.

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"Cosima... be reasonable."

"Why can't I just go to school and spend all night and morning in bed?" Cosima tossed the offers on the desk and dug through the candy dish, pulling out a lollipop. "I've been doing this for over a decade, Art. A DECADE! I think I deserve some time out of the spotlight."I

"And you have been for six months, Cosima." Art dropped down into his chair, shaking his head. "Ever since Delphine got settled in you've been living in this tiny bubble and I've been laying low, letting you live your life." He shook his head. "You know, most people are ecstatic to get as many offers as you for interviews and sponsorships."

Cosima rolled her eyes. "I'm retired, remember."

"And they're not asking you to go to the Olympics. All they want is for you to sport their crap around and take some pictures." He huffed loudly. "You know I've got a wife and family to support. If you don't make money, I don't make money. These offers are eventually going to stop trickling in and then what?"

"You're a pain in my ass, Art."

"Ditto." He rolled his eyes as he picked up one of the manilla envelopes. "How about this one? Come on, they want both you and Delphine. The exposure will be great for her."

Picking up the folder, Cosima rose an eyebrow. "Are you serious? I don't do talk show interviews,

Art. All I ever get asked about is my sexuality. It's not the most interesting thing about me."

"Damn it, Cosima."

Cosima couldn't stop the smirk from spreading across her face. In truth the interview was quite tempting. Of course she would have to run it by Delphine, but it wasn't something they'd ever done. With different managers and different sponsors, they're fame circles didn't overlap. Really she just wanted to see the veins popping out of the man's forehead. Art had been her manager for over a decade and he was almost like a second father to her...or at least a quirky uncle. "Look, I'll bring it up to Delphine. Did her manager get a copy of this?"

"I'm sure he did."

Flipping through the documents, she wrinkled her nose before tossing it on his desk and reaching down to her bag. "I'll talk to her about it." Removing a thick folder, she tossed it on the desk. "I've been working on something I need you to help me with."

Reaching for the folder, Art glared at her. "What? You want favors now?" He grumpily flipped open the folder. His hands paused as he read the first page, his brows furrowing momentarily before flipping the page. "This..." He read over the next couple of pages before looking up at the brunette. "This is your idea?"

With a smirk, Cosima sat back in her chair, resting her arm on the back of it. "I've been busy the past 6 months doing some research, coming up with the idea."

With a surprised chuckle, Art turned one of the graphs. "Damn...this is... What does Delphine think of this?"

"I haven't...discussed it with her." Cosima looked around innocently. Part of her felt a little guilty for not discussing something so big with her partner. "I wanted to get your opinion on it. I don't need sponsors, but this might."

Art looked Cosima over and closed the folder, sitting back with a surprised look on his face. "You're serious about this?"

"Obvs."

Tossing the folder on his desk, Art laughed. "I'll start feeling around. Never expected this from you...damn."

Cosima looked at her watch. "Thanks. Look I've got to head out. I've got a family dinner to mentally prepare myself for so, thanks." Shouldering her bag, she grabbed another lollipop. "Call me."

## Chapter 9

"Hey, Gorgeous." Cosima grinned from where she was seated on the bed, her legs folded under her, her laptop sitting on the bedspread. She had spent the last couple hours since her meeting with Art going over a few of the offers. Some of them didn't seem so bad, and maybe required an appearance here or there. More than a few of them involved her sporting their gear at her future competitions, meaning they hadn't even done the research or ignored when she had declared her intention to retire. "How was practice?"

"Horrendous." Delphine winced as she hobbled over to the bed. "How was your meeting?"

Cosima closed her laptop and set it on the nightstand, a concerned look on her face. "Are you ok?"

Delphine slipped out of her boots with a grimace. "Just breaking in new skates." She grimaced as she removed her socks, the bandages sticking to the material. "How was your meeting?"

Cosima pouted as she took in the bandages. "It went fine. Do you want me to run you a bath? We have some time before we have to get ready."

"You are switching the topic, ma cherie." Delphine moved closer and brushed her lips across the brunette's. "Tell me about your meeting."

With a huff, Cosima shrugged. "It wasn't horrible. There were some sponsor offers, but nothing I would really take seriously." Reaching out, she traced the edge of the blonde's hoodie, running a fingertip up the zipper. It's not that she didn't want to talk about the offers or her project, she just didn't want to get into it when they didn't have the time to have a full discussion. "I like the color of this." She tugged on the smoky blue material. "It makes your eyes look really smokey."

"Cosimaaaa"

With a grin, Cosima gripped the material and pulled her close again for another kiss. "You know how boring those meetings are." She laughed.

Delphine rolled her eyes. "Did Art get the interview request?"

Her eyes narrowing, Cosima gave her a suspicious look. "How long ago did you hear about it?"

With a shrug, Delphine shucked off her hoodie. "I was emailed about it yesterday. I was going to talk about it with you after practice but then Art called so I guessed he would talk about it with you." She chuckled at the look on the snowboarder's face, leaning forward to brush her lips across the pouting lip. "I'll go with whatever you want, of course." Another kiss and she felt the fingers curling in her tank top, pulling her closer. "It's your choice."

"I choose...you." Cosima grinned.

"Well you already have me." She stood up to her full height, pulling off her tank top and tossing it on the small pile of laundry forming in the corner, adding laundry to her long to-do list. "I have to shower." She slipped out of her jeans with a wiggle of her hips, looking over her shoulder to see Cosima shamelessly watching her. "You are much worse than a twelve year old boy."

With a chuckle, Cosima watched the tall, half-naked form sorting through the clothes in the closet. "Well, I don't know about 12 year old boys, but you've definitely got my heartrate up." She grinned, not inclined to move from her reclined spot.

Hanging her clothes on the hook beside the bathroom door, Delphine paused, raising an eyebrow at the brunette. "Have you showered already or are you coming?"

Cosima paused for a split second before moving. She had showered less than an hour ago, but of course she had no inclination to mention that.

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"Aunty Cosima!"

"Whoa!" Cosima caught the form that was leaping through the air at her. With a laugh she brushed her lips across the small forehead before leaning back. "You can't be my Monkey. You're too big. Who are you?"

"It is me, silly." Kira laughed as she was set down.

Cosima gave her a speculative look. "I don't know. The Kira I know has to be 4 inches shorter." She leaned back and tapped her chin. "If you're really my Monkey...what is...the value of pi?"

Kira grinned. "It's 3.14...15...9..." She wrinkled her nose as she tried to remember the rest. "2..." She stuck her tongue out. "I don't remember what's next."

With a big grin, Cosima pulled the girl to her for a hug. "That was very good. A lot better than I could do at your age."

"Loads smarter than the lot of us." Sarah commented, pulling her sister into a hug. "Glad you could make it. You as well, Delphine."

"Hello." Delphine smiled shyly as she hung up their coats near the door.

"So this is the illustrious Delphine."

"Mrs. S!" Cosima perked up instantly, pulling the older woman into a tight hug. "When did you get back?"

"Just last night. I'm sorry I couldn't be in Russia to see you win, Chicken. I was cheering for you from Ireland though and everyone thought I'd finally gone off my rocker."

Cosima's smile turned sympathetic. "I'm sorry about your mother. From what you always told us, she was a great woman."

Mrs. S nodded, pulling her in for another hug. "Don't you worry, Love. She lived a long life and fought till the end, but enough of that. I thought I brought you up with more manners than this. Introduce me to this lovely woman here."

Sniffing slightly, Cosima laughed. "This is Delphine Cormier, the best singles female figure skater in the world and best girlfriend in the world. Delphine, this is Mrs. S...um Siobhan Saddler, our nanny growing up but now one of our closest family friends. She's pretty much the sole reason we didn't kill each other growing up."

"Well, then I believe I owe you a debt of gratitude." Delphine offered a hand and was surprised as she was pulled into a tight hug, the wind being knocked out of her from the surprise move.

Pulling back and holding the blonde at arms reach, Mrs. S looked the tall woman over. "Well, aren't you a looker." She laughed at the blush that came over the blonde's face. "Oh, come now. Surely 6 months with this one has all but destroyed any bit of shyness you've left."

"Oh I'm working on it." Cosima rocked on her heels. She laughed and wrapped her arm around Delphine's waist, leaning her cheek on the shoulder that was at the perfect height for her. "But I dunno, she's kinda perfect the way she is now." Looking up she saw the blush darken. "See...beautiful."

"Oi! Some of us are trying not to get sick before dinner." Sarah nudged them. "Come on, Cos. Help me get the table situated before Alison gets here and starts with the yelling." Just then Helena came out with a basket of rolls, one sticking half out of her mouth. "Stop eating all the food before everyone gets here, Meathead."

"Do not call me this." Helena ripped off half the roll and offered it to Kira who accepted it with a wink. "Hello, blonde puppy." Helena grinned at Delphine, her cheeks puffed out and full of bread.

"Bonsoir, Helena." Delphine smiled nervously, still uncomfortable under the stranger sister's haunting gaze.

Cosima watched with a smile, setting out the place settings as Delphine struck up a conversation about Europe with their old nanny. Mrs. S had been away in Ireland for almost 8 months now, caring for her mother who had only a month ago passed away of emphysema. The woman had paid a very pivotal role in her life, helping her mother and father pick up part of the burden of suddenly having five children to care for. Although Cosima loved both her parents, there was a special place in her heart for the woman who had been the one she'd turned to when Beth had died. Seeing Delphine laughing with Mrs. S was enough to form a ball of happiness inside her that kept growing.

"You are so whipped."

Her attention suddenly grabbed by her sister's statement, Cosima shrugged. "She asked me to move in with her." She kept her voice low so that neither the blonde or Mrs. S heard them.

Sarah paused just briefly as she set out the water glasses. "You haven't decided yet?" At Cosima's headshake, she tilted her own head. "Why?"

"It's only been 6 months...not even that...and half of that we were in different countries..." With a shrug, Cosima bit her bottom lip.

"Bull." Sarah laughed, but lowered her voice when she saw Delphine and Mrs. S look over momentarily before continuing their conversation. "6 months...6 years...you're so wrapped up in her. Just get it over with and move in." She laughed again at the look on her sister's face. "You're only playing with her because you know there's no other way this is going to play out."

Cosima put her hands on her hips, looking at Sarah in disbelief. "Weren't you the one saying we spend too much time together?"

"No." Sarah shook her head, pulling Cosima into the hallway. "What I said was that when you're together, you forget about everyone else." She held her sister at arms reach. "Just move in with her. You've been happier than I've ever seen you and it's bloody sickening, but your my sister and I want you to be happy, you big geek."

With a big grin, Cosima rolled her eyes. "Fine...if you insist...Punk."

"What is going on here?"

"Hey mom!" Cosima pushed Sarah out of the way roughly and hugged her mother. "How've you been?"

The older woman hugged her tightly before kissing her temple. "Better now that my favorite daughter is here."

"Hey!" Sarah protested.

Mrs. Niehaus laughed. "Where have you been, oh wayward child of mine?"

"Busy as always." Cosima allowed herself to be pulled back into the dining room. "You know...school...photo shoots..."

"And she's moving in with Delphine!" Sarah mentioned loud enough for the whole room to hear.

Cosima glared at her sister who was standing with a smirk. She let her eyes drift over to Delphine who had a surprised look on her face, even though the corners of her mouth tugged up in a smile. It was Cosima's mother who finally broke the silence.

"I thought you already lived together, Dear."

"Merde." Cosima cursed, massaging her temple.

## Chapter 10

Cosima ran her hands up the back of Delphine's thighs, concentrating on massaging out the tense muscles. Dinner had been just like every other dinner went when the quadruples got together: a complete disastrous success. Cosima had been embarrassed mercilessly for a good half an hour about her moving in with Delphine before the attention turned on Sarah and her newest relationship with some military contractor named Paul. On the plus side, Alison had only been driven to tears once by Sarah, which was an all time low for a sibling meal. After dinner they had spent a little over an hour at the apartment's rarely inhabited gym. Of course, working out tonight consisted mostly of Cosima sitting on the inclined bike watching Delphine run on the treadmill. They had been trying to form something even close to a routine of work outs and since Cosima flat out refused to join the blonde for her morning runs, she would occasionally join her for her gym time every other night. If anything, it gave her an excuse to massage the well-toned body. "Sooooo?"

"Hmmm?" Delphine hummed in question, having been lost in the feeling of the probing fingers. "So what?"

Cosima rolled her eyes, kneading the soft skin. They hadn't spoken at all about their earlier discussion since they left for dinner and she definitely wanted to get at least one thing situated. "The interview." She slipped her hands up further, teasing the soft skin where boxers ended, contemplating her plan of attack on the warm flesh. "Are you going to give me your honest opinion on it?"

There was a long pause of silence before Delphine finally responded. "Whatever you want to do, Cosima."

Her brows furrowing, Cosima concentrated on the muscular thighs. "Delphiiiiiiiiine..." She groaned. "If this...if WE are going to work, you can't start that Stepford routine..." She paused before grinning. "Unless it involves you naked and just in an apron waiting for me with a martini when I come home from school."

"The what routine?" Delphine pushed herself up slightly to look at the brunette before she was pushed back down.

With a laugh, Cosima continued on with her massage, her mind now almost completely distracted with visions of Delphine in just an apron. Feeling her hands sliding over the firm muscles didn't help much either. "Stepford...it's an old scifi movie where all the suburban wives are replaced with robots and they'll just cooked and agreed with whatever...nevermind. We can watch it later. I'm just saying I want to know what you want, not just what you think I want."

Delphine shrugged. "I don't know, mon amour. Of course it would be interesting, but I don't want you to do it because I have shown interest in it. I know that you would prefer to avoid these things."

Frowning, Cosima moved up, pushing the blonde's tank top up as she moved the massage up, her fingers slipping under the black brastraps. "Well we both know how much of an asshole I am about things, but what do you want?" She smiled as she brushed her lips over a spot in the woman's shoulder as she pulled the tanktop up and off, tossing it to the side. "You know she's a lesbian right?" She asked as she began a shoulder massage.

Now it was Delphine's turn to roll her eyes as she turned to look at Cosima. "What does that have to do with anything?"

Cosima shrugged. "You know. She's probably going to ask a bunch of questions about you and me and now we're moving in together..."

"I do not mind talking about us." Delphine started, only to be cut off by the shorter woman.

"Oh don't give me that." Cosima protested with an indignant snort. "I know your manager rejects any questions referring to our relationship." She held a fingertip up to the blonde's lips as she was about to protest. "It's not a judgement, Delphine. It's your career and your manager is trying to protect you. I'm just saying that I can understand not wanting to talk about our personal life, but in this situation you're opening a door to actually talk about us in public with someone who is probably one of the most well known lesbians on the planet. We may as well be guest judges on Ru-Paul's Drag Race."

Delphine pushed herself up into a kneeling position, reaching for her tanktop. "I am not ashamed of us, Cosima. I can deal with those questions." When the material was pulled out of her reach, she narrowed her eyes at the American. "Cosima..."

"Stop putting words in my mouth, Delphine." Cosima tossed the tanktop at the hamper across the room, missing it by a good two feet. "I didn't say you were ashamed." "You also did not tell me you were moving in with me. Why did you tell Sarah before me?"

Her eyebrows shooting up, Cosima sat back. "OK...whoa." She held up a hand, stopping the woman's words. "Holy watershed, what blind corner did I just walk around?"

Delphine exhaled loudly. "I don't care who knows about us, Cosima. I also want you here with me all the time, but not unless you are ready." She gave the dreadlocked woman a pensive look. "Are you sure you're ready? I don't want to rush you."

With a huff, Cosima moved to straddle the blonde's legs, capturing her face between her hands. She waited until the hazel eyes focused on her before speaking. "You're not rushing me...and Sarah kind of weaseled it out of me." She leaned forward and brushed their lips together, smiling as arms slipped around her waist, pulling her closer. "I will admit that I didn't say yes or no right away because I wanted some time to think and Sarah brought up a few valid points which may or may not have nudged my decision in the affirmative." She nibbled a path down the long neck, smiling at the sharp intake of air. "I'm completely ready for this and I would have told you tonight if my sister didn't open her mouth. She's just a bitch that enjoys ruining things for the fun of it."

Delphine slipped her hands under Cosima's shirt, caressing the smooth skin of her back. "I'm just happy you are going to be here with me." She brushed her own lips along Cosima's neck. "And I would love to do an interview with you, even if all I'm asked is how amazing you are in bed."

Cosima leaned back, narrowing her eyes at the blonde. "Cheeky little French puppy." She laughed, tangling her fingers in soft curls. "I love you."

"Je t'aime." Delphine pulled her forward, brushing her lips against the corners of Cosima's mouth. "I think we should do the interview. I just have one question."

Cosima wrinkled her nose as she dipped her head to the side to nibble a path down the long neck. "Ok, but you only get one question." She smiled against the thrumming heartbeat she could feel just beneath the surface.

Delphine cleared her throat, taking a minute to remember the question. "Oh...um...Who is RuPaul and what sort of racing required dragging things?"

Pausing in her ministrations, Cosima sat back, trying to see if the blonde was serious. When she

saw there was no kidding expression, she grinned. "Seriously, I love you so much." With a chuckle, Cosima turned to crush their lips together, pressing closer until not even light could pass between them.

## Chapter 11

"Toe Pick!" The frustrated voice yelled, echoing off the rafters of the empty rink. There were maybe one or two maintenance workers in the building in addition to the two forms on the ice.

Cosima groaned as she pushed herself off the ice for what seemed like the hundredth time that day. Her mood was starting to take a rapid decline and the last thing she wanted to hear was her sister yelling at her. "You know I'm not one of the kids, right? You can't just keep yelling at me." There was a chill in her cheeks from the hour of skating she'd already done and she could feel her ankles beginning to get weak. The worst thing about her mood declining was that she wouldn't have anyone to make her feel better when she got home. Delphine had left a week ago for Paris, fulfilling some of her country's Olympic duties, and leaving Cosima to find something better to do than sit around the apartment with nothing to do. This was her first time back to the ice in weeks and she felt like her sister was punishing her for her time away from the training.

"I am sorry, Cosima, but you are not remembering a thing that I told you." Alison was toying with the gold cross around her neck, the other hand on her hip. "If you continue to start steps with the tip of your toes, you're going to keep falling." She reached up to push the pink headband back slightly. "This is what happens when you come and go as you please. There are weekly practices for a reason, Cosima. The only way to learn is through flawless rep..."

"Repetitions of the Basics...yeah I know." Cosima rolled her eyes. Her sister had shouted the phrase at her many times in their life, having learned it when they were in soccer together at the young age of six. "You know I'm trying to do this on the down-low."

"Which is ridiculous, I must add." Alison turned in place as her sister circled around the rink. "You are living with quite literally the best female figure skater in the entire world and you insist on learning from me." She sighed, pinching the bridge of her nose. "You have to keep your center, Cosima. It will make it easier to balance. It's not the same as snowboarding. The skates lift you higher, so you have to readjust your center of gravity on them."

"You don't snowboard, Alison." Cosima tensed her abdomen a bit, bending her knees a little more, trying to find that spot that she could be as comfortable on skates as she is on a snowboard. "I asked you because I want to surprise her."

"You've said that. Straighten your legs just a little bit more."

Cosima did as she was told and felt her balance shift significantly. To her surprise, she felt things seem to even out. She didn't feel like she was going to topple forward and her legs felt a little more comfortable. "Hey that worked!" She pushed forward a little faster, trying to keep the center.

"I told you. We have the same gosh-darn height. I know where your center of balance is." With a shake of her head, she watched the snowboarder circle a few times. "I think this whole surprise thing is a cop-out." Alison pushed forward, easily catching up with her identical and skating beside her. "I think you just don't want her to see you falling."

Going through the motions, Cosima sighed softly. She could feel her legs beginning to burn from the exertion and she frowned. She definitely needed to work out a little more instead of just watching the blonde. "Maybe that's a little true." She commented softly, as if saying it too loudly would change anything. "I know it's not the same thing as what happened in Sochi, but I don't want her seeing me get hurt. Every now and then she gets nightmares." She shook her head, not wanting to say too much that would embarrass her partner.

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*"Cosima!"*

*Cosima sat up quickly, having heard her name shouted in panic. Having been deep in sleep she was very disoriented as she looked around in the darkness. She reached over for her glasses and turned on the bedside lamp.*

*"Wake up!"*

*Glancing to her side at the blonde's voice, Cosima saw Delphine deep in sleep, her head tossing back and fourth, her eyes moving wildly behind her lids. "Hey." She reached over and caressed the woman's cheek that had a thin layer of sweat on it. "Delphine. Come on, wake up." She pushed the wild blonde hair back. "It's just a nightmare." She spoke calmly, running her fingers through the curls. Finally, sleepy eyes opened and blinked several times, focusing on her. "Hey..."*

*"Cosima!" Delphine immediately pulled her forward in a hug, her whole body shaking. "You're ok...you're ok..." She repeated as she hugged her as tightly as possible.*

*"Hey, I'm right here." Cosima whispered, brushing her lips along every inch of skin she could reach while still in the blonde's vice grip. "I'm right here."*

*Finally Delphine let her grip loosen enough so that she could look at Cosima, pulling her forward for a kiss before she could protest. Her hands slipped around the woman's waist, tangling their legs together as she broke the kiss off. "Merde, it was just a dream."*

*"Must have been a doozy." Cosima laid back, smiling as the blonde's head moved her her chest and she continued running her fingers through the curly locks. "I must have been being a real asshole. You were totally yelling at me." She tried to joke, already knowing what the blonde had dreamed about. It wasn't the first time she had been awoken by the yells, Delphine having admitted that occasionally she remembered the fall Cosima had taken on the slopes during the games. Although apparently the dreams were less frequent when they were together, they came every now and then.*

*"Yeah you were being a real asshole." Delphine responded softly, listening to the soothing sound of Cosima's heartbeat. "Such an asshole."*

*Cosima smiled sadly. "Go back to sleep. I'll be right here when you wake up."*

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"I don't want to make it worse. It's going to be bad enough when snow season starts up again."

"Are you still going to be snowboarding?" Alison's brow furrowed, turning with ease to skate backwards in front of her sister. "I thought you were retired."

"Stop showing off." Cosima reached up to push her glasses up as she straightened up, immediately beginning to slow down, finally giving in to the ache in her legs. "I am, but it doesn't mean I'm not going to be hitting the slopes. Besides, I've got a project I'm working on and it's going to involve a lot of time on the mountain."

"A project?" Alison's interest was peaked as she followed her sister off the ice. "What sort of project?"

"A big one." Cosima knew her sister loved projects, and probably would be able to help, but she was still working with Art in rounding up a few sponsors. "I'm still deep in meetings and stuff but I haven't even told Delphine about it yet."

As they moved over to the benches to remove their skates, Alison gave the snowboarder a meaningful look. "You're being mysteriously ambiguous about it. You shouldn't be keeping so many secrets from Delphine. First the skating and now this 'project'? How would you feel if she was keeping things from you?" Alison could see her sister was preparing to argue. "It's your relationship, I'm just saying secrets and lies tear apart a family." She reached over and hugged the Olympian. "Be careful is all I'm saying."

"I know Ali. I just...I've never done this before. This big relationship and trying to live a normal life. I've been preparing for the Olympics, in the Olympics, or recovering from the Olympics for most of my life and here I am with nothing to train for... I'm afraid I'm going to mess something up." She sighed softly, slipping on her normal boots. "Even with the project, on one hand I'd love to tell her about it but then she'll want to help and she is busy to the max. On another hand I'm so worried about failing that it would be almost better that she doesn't see that side of me because we all know I don't fail well."

"That's for sure." Alison slipped her own cross trainers on before shouldering her duffle. "Am I bringing you home for dinner? We're having pot roast. It's been in the slow cooker all day so it should be about done."

Looking at her watch, Cosima bit her bottom lip. It was already past 4. "If you can get me home by 10. I've got a skype date to keep."

With a roll of her eyes, Alison led the way to the car. "Isn't France like 6 hours ahead? Why would you have a skype date so early in the morning?"

Dropping her own duffle in the back, Cosima shrugged. "It's what time she wakes up. She usually goes for a run so sometimes it's just her saying good night and me saying good morning, but sometimes she stays in and we can talk for a couple hours."

As they both dropped into the mini van, Alison turned it on to warm up, turning to look at her sister. "I say this with the utmost love and respect, Cosima, but you two are just completely disgusting sometimes."

With a huge grin, Cosima snapped her seatbelt in place. "I know. It's awesome."

## Chapter 12

"You're late, mon amour."

Stripping out of her clothes, Cosima chuckled. She had spent longer than she thought she would just talking with her sister, something she didn't do quite often enough. She smiled at Delphine who was still obviously laying in bed, meaning she wasn't going out for a run. "Sorry. I got talked into dinner at Alison's." She shrugged on the large sleeping shirt which just so happened to be one of Delphine's sponsor shirts, smiling in amusement at how long it was on her much shorter frame. "You know how Alison is sometimes. Get her talking about decoupage and she won't shut up for days. How's the PR thing going for you?" She stretched fully, reaching both arms up and feeling the discs in her back realign with a series of pops. When she got no response she turned and looked at the laptop screen, finding the blonde watching her with an appreciative look. "You're being borderline inappropriate, Miss Cormier." She joked, wagging a finger at the laptop.

A bashful smile was the response she got, accompanied by an "I miss you."

Cosima smiled as she dropped onto the surface of the bed. "I miss you too." She propped her chin on her hands, just taking in Delphine's face. As beautiful as she was, she could still see the hints of exhaustion framing the perfect hazel orbs. "You're not sleeping again." It wasn't a question, but a simple statement. She had to fight back the urge to stroke the screen, wishing she could reach out and rub away the dark circles under Delphine's eyes.

Delphine gave her a guilty look. "Oh...I'm getting enough."

"Am I going to have to start worrying about you again?" Cosima joked as if she weren't already worrying, but she didn't want to bring the mood down. "Only one more week and then it's me, you, and a week down south." She wiggled her eyebrows.

"Cosima..."

"What?" Cosima gave her an overly-innocent look. "I was talking about LA. What were you thinking about, perv? I meant a week in LA which is totally south of here."

"And the interview." Delphine added.

Cosima rolled her eyes. "And the interview." She had resigned herself to having to be an adult for one day of the week of complete hedonism she had planned. "But mostly just me and you naked in a hotel room dirtying the linen." She chuckled at Delphine biting her bottom lip. "Dammit I miss you so much. This apartment is too damn quiet without you here." She sighed softly, adjusting her position so she was slipped under the covers, adjusting the small table she had resting on Delphine's pillow so she could set up her laptop and not set the bed on fire. She had worked out the system when Delphine was still living in France, and given the right body pillow to hug, she could almost imagine the blonde was in bed with her. "I miss you laying here beside me, keeping me awake all night." She pouted slightly.

Delphine blew out a long stream of breath. "I know, ma cherie." She had a sad smile on her face as she spoke, the melancholy just as evident as the exhaustion.

Cosima hummed softly, a mischievous look coming over her face. "Wanna have skype sex?"

Her cheeks almost instantly brightening with a crimson blush, Delphine closed her eyes, a smile coming over her lips. "I want to have real sex." Opening her eyes, she looked directly into the

camera instead of at the screen.

Not expecting the direct response, it was Cosima's turn to blow out a long stream of air, feeling the penetrating stare tugging at her resolve. "God I want that too." She wrinkled her nose as she felt the tears threatening. "Would it be really bad if I were to fly out to Paris right now so I could see you?" With a sniffle, she could feel the spoiled child in here ready to cast aside all her adult responsibilities for even just a kiss from the blonde.

"As much as I would love that, you know we wouldn't have that much time together." She adjusted her position slightly. "Besides, you can't miss even more school."

"Ugh." Cosima sniffed again as she wiped away an errant tear. She hated just how right Delphine was. "Can we talk about something else please?"

Delphine nodded, biting her bottom lip as she tried to think of a topic that would cheer up the American. "So...I was thinking about getting a tattoo."

It definitely worked and Cosima's eyebrows went almost to her hairline. "What?"

Delphine chuckled in response. "I like your tattoos and I was thinking maybe you could help me choose something."

"Oh my god. You would look so hot with a tattoo...not that you don't look hot all the time, but yeah I could totally picture it." Cosima grinned at the camera, visions of pale skin and colorful ink taking over her mind. "Like how big were you thinking? You would look amazing with a full back piece."

"Cosima!" Delphine shook her head. "I am thinking something smaller like your flower."

As if on instinct, Cosima looked down at her arm. "Ok...I can start thinking of possibilities." Cosima hugged one of her pillows to her chest, grinning as she tried to brainstorm ideas.

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"Are you out of your mind?" Cosima was sitting across from her manager who had a very aggravated look on his face. Cosima's own expression was one to match. She'd been in Art's office for over an hour going over the details of her project until her manager had brought up mentioning it in the interview. It was the day before she was leaving for Burbank where Delphine was going to be flying directly to and she was just itching to get her hands on the blonde. "Like you're pulling my chain right? Tell me you didn't."

"Come on, Cosima." Art sighed heavily as he massaged his temples. "Stop being such a pain in my ass. The producers called with a list of questions and topics and they asked if anything special was going on."

"So you told them about the project?" Cosima pushed herself out of the chair, beginning to pace back and forth in the office. "Delphine doesn't even know yet." The last thing she wanted to do the night Delphine arrived was spend it with the blonde upset at her.

"Then tell her."

"We're not ready." Cosima shook her head, her hands shooting up in frantic motions. "We've just barely scratched the surface of this." She sighed in exasperation. "Why would you even mention it when I haven't even told Delphine yet. I'm not going on public television talking about it before I talk to my girlfriend!"

"And who's fault is that?" Art growled. "Look. You provided the initial capital, and we've gotten

a few investors, but we need more unless you want this idea to die."

"No way Art. I'm not ready yet." Cosima stopped pacing. "You realize I haven't seen Delphine in like 2 weeks. I'm not going to waste the time it will take to explain everything to her when I have much better plans." She shook her head again. "No you're going to call them and tell them not to bring it up."

"Cosima..." Art stood up and moved around to the front of his desk, looking her in the eye. "Look. I understand where you're coming from. I get it, but you are seriously going to pass up on this opportunity?"

Cosima dropped into a chair with frustration, tapping her fingers on the armrests. "I can't believe you didn't ask first, Art."

"You want guidance? This is it, Cosima. You need to pull on your big kid pants and get serious because this project is going to fade to black if you don't start focusing. Winter is coming and unless you want to wait a whole year before this project launches, you'll do what needs to be done." Art crossed his arms over his chest, giving her a pointed look.

Cosima's nostrils flared as she looked at the man. "You are a pain in my ass, Art."

"So are you." Art moved back to his seat, dropping into it. "They've requested a little more info about the project and I'm going to give it to them because god forbid you have a celebrity backer that over half the country worships." There was a long silence and Art looked at the snowboarder, who looked like she was fighting a grin. "What the hell are you smirking about?"

Gathering her coat and bag, Cosima stood up. "You totally said 'Winter is coming'."

"Get out!" Art pointed to the door.

## Chapter 13

*"Welcome to San Francisco. The current temperature is seventy one degrees with a light drizzle. Please stay seated with your seat belts fastened until the plane comes to a complete stop."*

*Delphine pulled her cell phone out, turning it on. She unfastened her seat belt and smiled at the stewardess who was standing near the door, waiting for the connection to the gate to seal. After being in the air for hours, Delphine was not only dying to stretch her legs, but she knew a certain brunette would be waiting near the baggage claim for her. She hadn't seen Cosima in over a month and her heart was beating at a ridiculously fast pace, the anxiety and excitement fighting for control.*

*"Ma'am, your bag." The stewardess had pulled the bag down from the first class overhead compartment, smiling at her as she handed it off.*

*"Merci." Delphine shouldered the bag. All of her things were being shipped over, her apartment back in Paris now completely empty, the keys having been traded for her apartment in San Francisco. She had sent over all her necessities ahead of time and all she had with her was the few changes of clothes she'd saved for her last days in France and her amenities. She was now officially a resident of the state of California and she was terrified.*

*The door opened and she was one of the first people off. It was an odd feeling, being in America again. She had already dealt with customs back in New York when she switched planes, answering a dozen questions. What were you doing in France? What were you doing in America? Did you bring anything over? Just a dozen macaroons that she knew Cosima would love. Nothing that would be of interest to anyone.*

*The excitement coursed through her as the end of the tunnel appeared. As she stepped out into the air conditioned terminal, she had all of 2 seconds to gain her bearing before the wind was knocked out of her. A shorter yet compact form collided into her, arms wrapping around her in a very familiar embrace accompanied by a familiar scent that took her all of one second to recognize. "Cosima!" She wrapped her arms around the form in surprise, having the sense to pull her a few steps out of the way of the other passengers that were trying to exit. "What are you..." She started but her lips were captured suddenly by very persistent ones. She laughed, her hands coming up to cup the beautiful face she missed so much. After a long agonizing moment that woke up nerve ending in her body, Delphine broke off the kiss, leaning her forehead against the American's. "I thought I was meeting you at the baggage claim. How did you get inside?"*

*Cosima laughed, reaching up to wipe away a tear. "I don't know. I missed you. It seemed like a really long time to wait knowing you were here. So...I might have bought the cheapest ticket I could to get on this side of security."*

*Delphine laughed at the absurdity of that, caressing the length of the woman's neck. "Such impatience, mon amour. You are...I don't even know anymore. You're everything I've ever dreamt of." She brushed another kiss against soft lips. She shook her head but the smile never left her face. "Je t'aime."*

*"I love you too, Delphine. Come on, let's get you home. We've got your whole new apartment to defile."*

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*"Bonjour, Cosima." Delphine smiled into the tablet's camera, watching as the American dropped in front of the screen, wincing as she sat down.*

"Hey Sexy." Cosima grinned before her face turned confused. "Wait...you're supposed to be in the air right now."

Delphine laughed, looking around her cramped confines. It was two hours into her flight from Chicago to LA and she was feeling very anxious, having spent way too many hours in the air already. "The plane has wi-fi."

"Did you just pay for wifi so you could skype me?" Cosima tilted her head in question. "You are adorable."

"It was pocket change and I missed you." Delphine shrugged, reaching for her cup of wine. At least she had the comfort of a larger first class seat which allowed her a small bit of privacy, as did her ear buds. "Did you get to the hotel alright?" She had been nervous all morning, knowing the brunette would be driving from San Francisco alone. She wasn't the best driver and the 5 hour drive left many opportunities for accidents.

Cosima nodded. "Yeah, it's pretty swanky too." The screen rotated slowly, showing the inside of the suite. "There's even a fruit basket. It's pretty fruity." The screen turned back to the cheesiest grin ever.

Delphine couldn't help but smile. "I miss seeing that smile in person." She sighed softly, just barely stopping herself from reaching out and stroking the screen. "Only a few more hours now." The cabin shook slightly and she grimaced. Flying was never something she was really a fan of, but she'd come to accept it as part of her life. "You sent a text earlier that you wanted to talk about something?"

Cosima's face instantly turned hesitant. "Yeah...um...we can talk about it when you get here." She smiled a tight-lipped smile.

"That makes me nervous." Delphine gave her a questioning look. Whenever the brunette was evasive, it was never a good thing. "Am I going to be upset?"

There was a nervous chuckle. "Well..." She rubbed the back of her neck. "Maybe...maybe not..."

"Cosima..." Delphine sighed, pinching the bridge of her nose. "I suppose we can talk about it when I see you. I..." The cabin of the plane shook once more, a little more violently and she looked up as the seatbelt light came on and the speakers crackled.

"Sorry to interrupt the movie everyone, but we're experiencing a little bit of turbulence. We've turned on the fasten seat belt lights and recommend putting away any electronics at the moment. It might get a little bumpy."

"Merde." Delphine closed her eyes as the cabin shook again. "Cosima I have to go for now."

"Everything alright?" There was a look of concern in the brunette's eyes.

Delphine nodded. "Oui, just some turbulence. We'll talk about this 'something' later when I get there."

"Oh yeah...totally looking forward to it." Cosima spoke sarcastically before grinning. "Maybe there will be spanking involved." She suggested.

"Brat. Je t'aime, Cosima."

"Love you."

Delphine tucked the tablet away, taking a deep breath as the cabin shook again. She looked up to see the stewardesses whispering, locking away the drink carts. She looked to her side to see the young man beside her sweating profusely, almost clawing at the seats. She instantly felt sorry for him, not being a fan of flying herself. "Relax, it is just some turbulence."

"I h-h-hate flying." The man stuttered.

"Me too." Delphine laughed. "I have to fly several times a month and I am still not used to it." She smiled at him, trying not to noticeably wince when the cabin rocked a little harder. "Are you from California?"

The man nodded quickly. "Yeah. I was at a conference...for work. You? I m-mean you don't sound l-like you are but..."

Delphine nodded her head. "I live in San Francisco now."

"This isn't g-going to San Francisco."

"I know." Delphine looked out the window, seeing rain and dark clouds whipping by. "I am going to Burbank for the week. I am supposed to do an interview tomorrow and then I believe my girlfriend is making me go to some amusement park there."

"Girlfriend huh?" The man turned to her and smiled. "You guys been together long?"

Another spike of turbulence hit the plane and Delphine took a long breath, nodding. "Seems like forever, but it's been about 6 months. We met in Russia."

"Russia...not exactly the place I imagine someone picking up chicks." He laughed nervously. "I'll tell my sister. She's been looking for a serious girlfriend for like 2 years now and she's getting nowhere on all the dating sites."

Delphine laughed at that. "It's not exactly the best place." She smiled at the memory it brought back. "We were there for the Olympics."

"No kidding. One of those turns of fate kinda things huh?" He laughed nervously. "I'm James by the way."

"Delphine." She looked nervously at the stewardesses who were quickly strapping themselves in. She turned and gave the man a grim smile. "It is a pleasure to meet you."

"You too."

Just then there was a bright flash and the sound of an explosion, the cabin shaking uncontrollably, the sounds of the passengers' screams filling the confined space.

## Chapter 14

"Come on, Delphine." Cosima held the chilled hand to her cheek. "Stop being an asshole and wake up."

It had been a long day and Cosima was at the end of her rope. Her day wasn't supposed to end like this. She had woken up that morning back at home, a light heart guiding her towards their week long vacation of hedonistic exploration. It was all she could think of the entire day, having not seen the blonde in what seemed like forever. She didn't expect, that when she parked her car, or even when she walked into the airport full of excitement, that she would get the most terrifying news in the world. The press should have been a dead give away. Reporters in an airport were never a good thing and the fact that they were bunched around the area of the same airlines Delphine was flying put a knot in Cosima's gut as she reached for her phone, quickly dialing Delphine's number even as she fought through the crowds.

"Bonjour! You've reached the phone of Delphine Cormier." It was her own voice, making fun of Delphine's accent, something they had jokingly recorded months ago. "Please leave your message after the tone." Cosima felt her stomach twist at that. The plane should have landed by now. She was late. She was always late. Delphine should have been waiting for her at the baggage claim.

"Please people. If you'll calm down, I'll repeat the information." There was a man standing in the center of a crowd of people and reporters. "Flight 1253..."

The flight number propelled Cosima into action as she moved closer as she tried to listen in.

"...emergency landing in Denver, CO. We are still getting information so please be patient."

It must have been adrenaline, maybe years of her body learning to hone it's reaction skills, but she hadn't even been thinking about anything except Delphine. She didn't remember the run to the other end of the terminal, to where the departures were going on. She didn't even remember how much she had spent to get a last minute ticket on the earliest flight possible to Colorado. She barely remembered threatening to bring down the wrath of the media on the airlines if they didn't tell her what happened, or the short ride to the hospital accompanied by some company buffoon who found it necessary to escort her. The man was explaining what had happened, but Cosima could only pick out words over the sound of her own heart beating.

Hit by lightning.

Engine failure.

Injured.

Hospital.

One dead.

Cosima closed her eyes at that, combatting the nausea that was threatening to overcome her.

One dead.

One dead.

One dead.

It wasn't Delphine. Cosima brushed her lips across the soft skin of the skater's hand, mindful of the IV taped to it. It had taken a small miracle of god and the threat of about 10 discrimination law suits to get her in the door of the hospital room. If it weren't for the fact that the head nurse was a big snowboarding fan, Cosima probably wouldn't be sitting in the most uncomfortable chair possible. It was worth it though, because the last thing she would want would be for Delphine to wake up alone and unaware.

---

*Losing consciousness in a foreign country was just as bad as it sounded, especially if you do it on live TV when there are millions of people watching.*

*She hadn't been unconscious for long. When she woke up after her fall in Socchi, the world was moving. That much Cosima was sure of. The world was moving and with each jolt pain shot through her head and side. To make things a thousand times worse, she couldn't move. "The fuck..." Cosima blinked her eyes open and struggled against the straps that had her tied down. There was a man on either side and she was obviously being carried on a stretcher. "What the fuck?"*

*The man beside her said something very quickly and very Russian.*

*With her Russian limited to asking for the bathroom and saying she didn't speak Russian, she had no idea what he had said. "What the hell does that mean?" She struggled again, wincing at the pain that seemed to be emanating from her side.*

*"He says, do not fight." The man on the other side said to her spoke as she was slid into a brightly lit ambulance. "You fall, you go to hospital." His accent was thick and Russian, barely understandable, but she was glad to just hear the English words.*

*"My family..." Cosima's brow furrowed as she took a moment to process, wincing when she remembered pitching forward on the slopes and the ear-splitting cracking sound just before everything went dark. She stopped struggling. There was no point in it. "I need to..."*

*"They will be at hospital." The quick and stern response deterred her from asking anymore questions. It turned out that not only did the Olympic hospital not appreciate being questioned, but apparently there were many tests she was forced to undergo before they would clear her to continue competing.*

*"Where's Delphine?" She was waiting for two more test results and Sarah had just been showed in, hopping on the edge of her bed and using the remote to flip through the channels of the old tube TV mounted to the wall.*

*"This lot here wouldn't let her past the doors." Sarah pointed out the door at the nurses desk. "Only blood and coaches, apparently."*

*Cosima's brows furrowed at that. She knew the blonde must have been worried. "That's so...stupid." She adjusted her position in bed, hissing in surprise pain from the dark bruise on her side. "Can I see your phone?"*

*"Signal's crap, Cos. I tried to send a few messages earlier but they came back rejected." Sarah gave up trying to find a station, not really that interested in watching Spongebob dubbed in Russian. Both women looked up at the sound of footsteps.*

*"Well you're cleared to compete." Her mother came in the room first, followed closely by her father and Alison. Helena had been tasked with taking Kira back to the hotel and watching her. "They want you to stay overnight just for observation."*

*"Ta hell with that." Sarah rolled off the bed, grabbing the bag with Cosima's clothes. "We're breaking you out."*

---

"Hey."

Cosima jumped slightly, looking up to see hazel eyes watching her. "Hey, Gorgeous." A matter of seconds passed before she found herself in the bed beside the blonde, careful of the tubes and wires everywhere. "I was starting to get worried for a second."

Delphine's brow furrowed and she winced, her hand coming up to feel the bandage on her temple. "The plane..." Her eyes shot open wide as she remembered the flash of light filling the entire plane and the screaming of the passengers as the plane pitched, uncontrollable shaking accompanying the feeling of falling. She remembered a sudden jerk in the plane and her head bouncing off the wall, darkness suddenly taking over. The feeling of nausea from the memory seemed to carry forward to reality and she had to bite her lip to regain control of her stomach. "What happened?"

Cosima ran her fingers through the blonde hair, settling it in the manner Delphine preferred. "I guess there was a storm or something and your plane got hit by lightning." She brushed a kiss against the nearby forehead. "I guess it hit an engine or something like that and they had to land in Denver, but I guess you like hit your head during it all." She sniffled slightly, the relief flooding through her. "It must have been pretty rough up there. There were more than a few banged heads." She didn't feel the need to mention the elderly man who'd had a heart attack, having passed his crying wife in the waiting room.

Closing her eyes at the soft hand that was caressing her cheek, Delphine sighed softly. "Denver...not California?"

"Nope." Cosima slipped an arm under the hospital blanket and around the trim waist. She didn't want to think about what she was going to do. She didn't have a hotel room, she didn't have a rental car or even a change of clothes. None of that had mattered back at the airport. The only thing she could think of at the time was getting to Delphine. "You know...if you wanted to get out of doing the interview there are easier ways." She could feel the tears threatening to spill and she was determined to not let it show how worried she'd been. "Don't ever scare me like that again, ok?" She whispered softly into the woman's ear, breathing in the scent that was half the hospital, half Delphine. "I don't know what I'd do without you."

Delphine nodded, her own tears showing in the glassiness of her eyes.

## Chapter 15

It was almost 10 in the morning, the light dancing across the clean linoleum floor. Two forms lay curled together in the small hospital bed, one sleeping, the other completely awake, tracing lines down a pale arm. The room was so quiet that she could hear soft footsteps coming down the hall. There was a soft squeak as the door opened, a gasp, and then the shuffling of a uniform as footsteps marched away from the room. Cosima chuckled, nuzzling the blonde's neck. Delphine had been sleeping soundly for most of the night, despite the many attempts of the nursing staff to enter.

"What are you laughing at, ma cherie?" The sleepy voice mumbled.

Cosima grinned, continuing to trail fingertips up a slim forearm, her legs tangled with the blonde's longer set under the scratchy blankets. "The nurses are all scared to come in here. They might catch the gay." She chuckled, brushing her lips along the woman's jawline. Under different circumstances, she might be a little perturbed at such a disrespectful view of their relationship, but she wasn't one to argue when it was keeping the poking and prodding at bay.

Delphine processed that for a moment, squeezing the American's hand. "You can tell them we're not gay." She smiled as lips traveled down her neck.

"I don't know, I'm feeling pretty gay right now." Laughing against the steady heartbeat tapping a soft rhythm against her lips, Cosima gently bit down, eliciting a startled yelp from the skater. "Besides, I am not having a discussion about the existence of bisexuality with the nursing staff...especially since they have been so nice and left us alone all morning. I'm enjoying the extra snuggle time." She took a deep breath, enjoying the closeness. "How's your head feeling? Still feeling nauseous?"

"Just a little, but I am also a little hungry." Delphine shifted in the uncomfortable bed. "Mmm. You should not have slept here all night. No sense in both of us being completely uncomfortable."

"Are you kidding me?" Cosima laughed, running her hand through blonde hair. "As if I would have been able to sleep at all." Sure she was feeling a few pains in her back and arm having slept awkwardly in the hospital bed, but she didn't regret it. She leaned forward, getting rewarded with a soft kiss. "I talked to your doctor earlier. He said they've got one more scan today and you'll be good to go." She ran her fingertips up long arms. "So...did you want to maybe rent a car? It's a nice drive back. I've done it a few times."

Delphine shook her head. "I'm not afraid to fly, Cosima." She reached for the controls, adjusting the bed so she was sitting up. "I think you promised me a week long vacation. I'm not wasting half of it in a car being scared to death by your driving."

Cosima sighed softly, adjusting her position for the new angle of the bed. She didn't even want to think about Delphine getting in a plane again. How close had she come to losing her forever? "I don't want you to feel pressured." She adjusted the blankets that had fallen to waist level with the new position of the bed. "You should just relax."

"I would be more relaxed in a nice hotel room with you naked in bed with me."

Her head shooting up, Cosima caught sparkling eyes and a wide smile. "You are such a tease." A quick kiss and she slipped off the bed, stretching out her cramped body. "I can totally get naked and in bed with you if that's what you really want."

The sentence came out just as there was a hesitant knock on the door.

Both women looked up to see a tall, thin young man standing at the door, wearing a rumpled slept-in business suit and holding a small flower arrangement. "Um...hey." He laughed nervously, a blush coloring his cheeks evidence of his overhearing of the last comment.

"James." Delphine smiled, nearly laughing when Cosima's head jerked back her way. "Come in. It is good to see you again."

Cosima's brows furrowed as she took in the man. He was cute, maybe a bit younger than she was. She looked at Delphine who seemed genuinely happy to see him. Now, she wasn't normally a jealous person, but maybe the recent events had brought the ugly side out of her, a sickening feeling in her gut that she wasn't used to and she didn't want to do anything but crawl into bed with the blonde.

"Yeah." He stepped in uncertainly, eyes drifting to Cosima momentarily before returning to Delphine. "I just wanted to see if you were ok. You um...you hit your head pretty hard." Stepping around the brunette, he set the vase on the table beside her bed, his eyes drifting up to the bandage.

"You didn't have to do that." Delphine nodded towards the vase, running a hand through her hair to straighten it. "It's just a bump on the head. James, this is Cosima, my girlfriend." She gestured to the snowboarder who quickly hid a scowl. "Cosima, this is James. He sat beside me on the plane."

When Cosima took his offered hand to shake it, James paused, staring at her before his eyes doubled in size. "Holy crap. You're Cosima Niehaus." He looked at Delphine. "You didn't say your girlfriend was the best snowboarder in the world! Man you totally killed it at the Olympics."

Cosima laughed at that, her body relaxing visibly. "Nice to meet you, James." She looked over at Delphine who was watching her with an interesting look on her face. "You know Delphine has a gold medal too, in figure skating." She smirked at Delphine who rolled her eyes dramatically.

"No way!" James looked at Delphine. "You didn't mention that." His eyes suddenly grew wider. "That's what you meant about meeting her in Russia!"

Cosima grinned, beyond pleased that Delphine had apparently been talking about her. Why was her brain being so ridiculous? "You were on the plane?"

"Yeah." He winced. "Totally not looking forward to any more plane rides. I'm taking a bus the rest of the way." There was a nervous tinge in his voice.

Cosima lingered on the outside of the conversation, watching as the two conversed about the flight. James had apparently been awake the entire flight and was recounting the long moments before they began the decent, reliving the unending turbulence and the rough landing. The more she heard, the less she wanted to risk it. It was such a weird notion. She herself hadn't even been on the plane. She'd been on more planes than she could even remember, and suddenly just the thought of Delphine getting on another flight...her heartbeat grew erratic and, needing the comfort, she sat on the edge of the bed, her hand slipping into the blonde's.

Finally after explaining his interactions with the ground staff and his own trip to the hospital, he laughed nervously. "Well. I just wanted to make sure you were ok." He scratched his ear, unsure of what else to say. "I know the stuffed suit guys from the airlines aren't telling people stuff so I figured I'd stop in and see if you got the scoop."

"Thank you for that." Delphine smiled sweetly. "I appreciate it and I'm glad to see you are well."

He turned to Cosima and grinned. "It was totally nice meeting you." He shook her hand again before disappearing out the door.

Cosima blew out a long breath of air before turning to Delphine, the blonde giving her an odd look. "What?" She swung her legs up onto the bed, wiggling into a more comfortable position.

"You are acting strange, mon amour."

"I don't know what you're talking about." Cosima draped her arm across the blonde's midsection, looking at the hand that began stroking her arm. "He seemed nice."

There was a silence before Delphine curled a finger under the American's chin, tilting her head up. "Are you jealous?" She asked incredulously.

"What?" Cosima pulled her head away, burying it in the blonde's neck. "Me? Jealous? That would be very hypocritical of me, don't you think?"

Delphine smiled at that, turning to brush her lips across the top of a head. Hypocritical indeed. "Je t'aime, Cosima. Even if you are a hypocritical brat with, how did you put it, cavemanish tendencies?"

With a soft laugh, Cosima snuggled closer to the blonde. "I love you too."

## Chapter 16

"I am fine, Cosima! Sit down!" Delphine massaged her unbandaged temple after dropping onto the soft bed.

Hands came up in defense. "Sorry...sorry." Cosima stopped fiddling with the air conditioner, slipping out of her coat and tossing it over the arm of a chair. "You're sure it's not too cold in here? Are you hungry? You didn't eat anything on the plane." She moved around the room, trying to busy her hands. After Delphine had checked out of the hospital and despite Cosima's protests, the blonde had insisted on continuing their journey to California. Thanks to her pain-killers, the skater had slept soundly through most of the flight, but Cosima, on the other hand, felt every bump and dip of the plane, making it a very stressful couple of hours. Now, after Cosima retrieved her belongings from the previous hotel, they were settling into the far more vibrant resort they would be staying at for the rest of their vacation and Cosima was trying to find anything that would burn off the anxiety she felt still coursing through her veins. "We could order room service. I bet we could get anything and they'd shape it like a mouse." She joked lightly as she unpacked their stuff.

"You need to relax, Cosima." Delphine had stripped out of her coat and boots and was now occupying herself with watching the shorter woman move around the room.

Cosima nodded as she shoved their clothes into the drawers of the provided armoire. "I just need to get this done. I don't want you to have to worry about it." She set aside their bathroom amenities before closing up the now-empty suitcase.

"Mon amour..." The words sounded from right behind her, melodic in its chastising tone.

A warm presence appeared, enveloping her, and Cosima smiled as arms wrapped around her waist from behind. No sense of duty could prevent her from leaning back, her hands abandoning their tasks to cover the blonde's. Her body warred with the desire to enjoy the presence, and the overwhelming need to protect what she came so close to losing. There was a tender brush of soft lips against her neck and in response she hummed softly. She contemplated telling the woman to lay down, to rest her body from the trauma she'd experienced and that Cosima herself couldn't stop dwelling on. "What are you doing?"

A soft chuckle accompanied the brushing of lips along the rim of her ear. "Repaying a favor from many months ago."

Cosima could hear the smile in the woman's lips even without looking at her. There was no doubt that she could identify the exact moment that Delphine was referring to.

---

*"What are you doing?" Cosima had woken up a few hours before sunrise, catching the blonde watching her sleep. After her long day in the hospital, her head was feeling groggier than she was willing to admit and there was a dull ache in her side.*

*"Watching you sleep." Delphine's voice was thick with sleep...or possibly something else, something slightly morose.*

*"Yikes." Shifting slightly, Cosima winced at the sharp pain in her side. She immediately regretted it when she saw blonde eyebrows draw together in concern. "Do I snore?"*

*Now the blonde's lips turned up in a smile. "Yes, but don't concern yourself with it. I'm sure it's the medication."*

*Cosima felt the hands slipping up her side, ever so lightly brushing against the bruise. There wasn't much light in the room, but when the blonde moved closer, light glistened off a tear. "Hey. What's going on?" Reaching up, she brushed away the tear, wishing she could brush away the blonde's heavy heart as well.*

*"My head cannot stop replaying your fall." Moving even closer, she buried her face in the brunette's neck.*

*It took everything in Cosima not to react to the jolt that shot through her when the blonde hugged her. Instead she rolled the woman back, covering the longer frame with her own body. "Maybe I can give you something else to think about?" She tipped her head forward for a tentative kiss, not surprised when a hand locked in her dreads, pulling her forward forcefully. She felt fingertips sliding down her sides and away from the bruise. She could feel the desperation in searching lips for a long agonizing moment before Delphine pulled away.*

*"Will you stay with me today?" The voice was timid and almost afraid.*

*A thousand thoughts went through Cosima's mind. She needed to hit the slopes to make sure she was able to preform. She only had two days to practice. Never had she let an injury prevent her from doing what she needed to do. Right at that moment, however, what she needed to do was not hit the slopes. She reached out and caressed a tear-stained cheek. "What about your roommate?"*

*Delphine smirked at that. "If she knows what's good for her she'll stay away."*

*Cosima laughed as she was pulled down into another kiss, her mind set on providing a thorough distraction.*

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Cosima grunted in surprise as she was pushed down onto the edge of the bed, a laugh escaping as her face was captured between strong hands and peppered with kisses. "Delphine..." Her lips were covered with another more determined set, cutting her off. She hummed in delight, scooting backwards as the blonde crawled onto the bed, straddling her lap. The kiss broke off only when Delphine yanked her top up and off, being less than gentle about it. "Hey..." She laughed as her lips were captured again.

"Stop talking." Delphine growled against her lips. She was working on the buttons of her own top, quickly stripping the material off without any help from the American. She tangled her fingers in dreads and lightly yanked the woman's head backwards, nibbling a path down the soft skin.

A shiver worked it's way down Cosima's back as nimble fingers removed her bra just seconds before she was pushed backwards, the blonde's eyes sparkling with mischief as she leaned over her, bracing herself with a hand on either side of her shoulders. She swallowed as the blonde nibbled on her bottom lip, so obviously contemplating her next route of attack. Taking a hint from the playfulness, she pushed on the bend of the woman's elbows, bracing herself as the blonde fell forward. With a laugh she rolled their bodies together, pinning the skater beneath her. "If you're trying to distract me..." She captured lips in a kiss, pressing into the longer form as arms wrapped around her waist, nails biting into her skin and leaving crescent-shaped marks in the small of her back.. "It's totally working."

## Chapter 17

The sound of retching woke her. How long it had been going on, she wasn't sure. Her head hurt and she blinked fuzzily, trying to place the sound before she heard the flush of the toilet and the sound of running water. A minute later and the bed shifted as a chilled arm slipped around her waist, lips pressing against the middle of her shoulders. "Are you alright, mon amour?" She turned to face the woman, seeing red eyes blinking in the dark.

Cosima nodded. "My stomach just being weird I guess. Must be all the stress...or all that chocolate sauce." She smirked, moving closer. "How are you feeling?" She snuggled closer, burrowing into Delphine's embrace, haphazardly throwing a leg over the blonde's.

Delphine shrugged nonchalantly. Her head hurt, both the bump and a headache. She was feeling a little nauseous herself but she didn't want to worry the snowboarder. "I think I just need a little more sleep." The clock read 3 in the morning and she was still very much tired. They had spent a few hours reacquainting themselves to each other, thanks to Delphine's pain killers taking away all her discomfort from the plane. Her body was very happy to be imprisoned by Cosima's strong form, having missed the closeness during her weeks away. The American was such a demanding presence, always snuggling up against her and never giving her much personal space.

God she needed it. If she tried to think back to a year ago, she wasn't even sure how she ever lived without her. Now she was a wreck when those arms weren't wrapped around her at night, the bed feeling so cavernous and alone without the adorable leech clinging to her. She brushed her lips across a forehead, humming softly in content. "I missed this." Her voice was a bare whisper, as if speaking too loudly would ruin the moment of pure bliss.

Cosima, however, had no such worry. "Me too." She blurted sleepily, wiggling even closer in an attempt to displace any bit of air between their bodies.

Hours later, Cosima was burying her face in Delphine's shoulder again, this time to hide the blush that was coloring her cheeks.

Delphine chuckled softly, brushing her lips against the nearby temple. "You are adorable, ma cherie." They were currently walking arm in arm around the French Quarter, having spent a few hours strolling through the shops and riding a few rides. They had just gotten off of the Indiana Jones ride which, much to Delphine's surprise, had caused the American to huddle against her in surprising fear a few times. "It wasn't even supposed to be a scary ride."

"I know!" Cosima was laughing. "You didn't have a sister that would torment you trying to rip your heart out every five minutes because of Indiana Jones." Her grin went almost from ear to ear, her cheeks red as roses as her tongue peeked out between her teeth.

Delphine smiled, looking down at her fingers that were intertwined with Cosima's. She didn't know what she expected of the day. They were two grown women, after all, and Disneyland was a place for children, but it was better than anything she could have imagined. Cosima was being just slightly clingier than normal, but she chalked it up to a reaction to the accident. After all, she didn't mind. "Cosima?" She turned to see the brunette staring at their joined hands.

Her thumb busy tracing the blonde's knuckles, Cosima looked up with a smile. "Hmm? What did I do now?" There was mischief there, as there always was.

Delphine's heart warmed at that. "You've been there for me for everything and anything I've ever needed." She commented quickly, bringing their joined hands up to her lips. "I just wanted to say

merci. Je t'aime, Cosima."

Cosima's smile softened. "I love you too, Delphine." She risked the glares of the nearby families to press a kiss against Delphine's cheek before stepping away. "I think...you need a mouse balloon."

Her eyebrows shooting up, Delphine bit her bottom lip. "A...what?"

"I'll be right back! You're gonna love it. Stay right here. I'll be quick."

Delphine watched as the woman rushed off, disappearing into the crowd of families. The woman's eagerness was endearing and Delphine did as she was told, leaning against one of the older-styled buildings as she watched couples toting tiny tots around.

*"Do you ever want children?" Delphine was sitting in the middle of their bed watching as Cosima stashed away the box of coloring books and crayons. They'd just spent the last few hours watching Kira for Sarah and unsurprisingly, Cosima was amazing with the little girl.*

*Cosima shrugged as she changed into the long sleep shirt. "I don't know. I mean I'm kind of selfish, but I think maybe sometime down the road. I don't know if I'd want to give birth though. God forbid genetics kick in and I end up with multiples." She cringed as she crawled onto the bed, a playful smirk appearing as she stalked the blonde. "Maybe I just need to find me a smoking hot girl to carry my kids." She chuckled at Delphine's rolled eyes. "What about you? Interested in popping out a few kids?"*

*Delphine nodded. "I mean, I always thought I would. I always thought I'd get married, have children, and tell them about all the gold medals I won when I was younger." She smiled as she found her lap suddenly straddled by a very beautiful brunette. "It was never a question about who would carry, of course." Running her fingers through brunette dreads, she brushed her lips against Cosima's. "I think you would be a great mother."*

*"I think you'd be a better one." Cosima nibbled a path down the expanse of a pale throat, pushing aside blonde curls. "What do you say, Delphine? Wanna try making a baby tonight?"*

*With a laugh, Delphine allowed her own sleep shirt to be pulled up and off. "You know that's not possible."*

*"Shhhh." Cosima silenced her with a kiss. "I'm up for trying." She pushed Delphine back before slipping her own recently donned nightshirt off before leaning over the blonde. "Even if we have to stay up all night long..."*

Delphine sighed softly as she looked at her watch. She didn't realize how long the brunette had been gone, twenty minutes having passed as she was lost in the memory. She looked around trying to catch sight of the snowboarder but to no avail. With a shake of her head, she retrieved her cell phone. The phone rang three times before the line picked up.

"Hello?" The voice was male and definitely not Cosima.

With a furrowed brow, Delphine looked at her cell phone and saw Cosima's picture on the saved contact before bringing the phone to her ear. "Hello? Who is this and why do you have Cosima's phone?"

There was a pause and a commotion in the background before another voice came on. "Hello? This is Grant and I am in charge of Disneyland security. Are you in the park with the owner of this phone?"

Delphine felt a sinking sensation in her gut as she looked around her, trying to see if the brunette was playing a trick on her. "Yes, I am waiting for Cosima. Why do you have her phone? Where is Cosima?"

## Chapter 18

"Are you feeling any dizziness or light-headedness?" The flashlight passed over the dark hazel eyes, looking for any unusual response.

"I'm fine." Cosima rolled her eyes at the paramedic who gave her a stern look, fastening the pressure cuff around her arm. She had just awoken a minute ago to the smell of something god-awful being waved under her nose by an unknown woman. There had been a crowd that had started and thankfully she had been ushered into the small guard area nearby away from the public eye. The last thing she needed was to see her unconscious on youtube...more than she already was.

She winced as the cuff got tight but tried to stay calm. She didn't know where Delphine was. She didn't know where her phone was. All she knew was that her head hurt. Her thoughts seemed almost muffled. Disorganized maybe? She couldn't really think of a good description for the feeling. "Is this going to take long? My girlfriend is probably worried about me." She had no idea how much time had passed since she left but she guessed it was more than just a few minutes.

"Ma'am. We need to make sure you are alright." The medic sighed softly, putting away the cuff and scribbling on her chart. "Your pressure is within normal range. Do you normally have fainting spells?" She asked as she turned to dig through her bag, retrieving the temperature monitor.

Cosima shook her head. "No."

"Do you have a low blood sugar problem? When was the last time you ate?" The woman slid a device over Cosima's forehead, checking her temperature. She nodded at the result.

"No." Cosima blew out a heavy sigh. Her chin hurt where apparently she had scraped it on the ground. She didn't much remember what had happen, just that she was walking towards the balloon vendor when she felt the world spinning. She had been feeling ill most of the day, but had pushed through it, determined to make the best of her time with the blonde. "And I ate lunch not that long ago. I'm not allergic to anything I ate if you were going to ask that."

The medic scribbled a few things down on a form before taking out a small alcohol swab, dabbing at the scrape on the brunette's chin.

"Ow!" Cosima shied away with a hiss. She gave the woman an unhappy look as she tried to sit still as the scrape was cleaned with a less than gentle hand.

"Cosima!"

Closing her eyes slowly, a smile spreading slowly across Cosima's face as familiar footsteps came down the hall and skid to a halt outside the room she was in. "Hey there pretty lady." She watched as a look of relief fell over the skater's face. "Long time no see."

"Cosima! Mon Dieu! Êtes vous blessé? Que s'est-il passé?" Delphine knelt in front of her, reaching up to cradle her face as the medic scrambled out of the way of the hysterical woman. She gingerly tipped Cosima's face up to look at her chin. "What happened?" She turned to the paramedic who was busying herself trying not to stare.

"She fainted." The woman commented. "And has been quite uncooperative."

Giving the medic a betrayed look, Cosima dismissed the woman before turning back to the skater. She reached up lovingly, caressing the blonde's cheek. "I'm fine, Delphine. I think they're just

trying to stop me from having fun." She pulled the woman to her for a chaste kiss, bumping their noses together before pulling back. "Sorry I scared you."

The medic rolled her eyes, packing up her supplies since her patient was obviously just fine. "Well, she doesn't have a concussion, and her pressure and temperature are fine. I do recommend that she takes it easy for the rest of the day, maybe get her to see her doctor when she gets home." She pulled out a small packet of ointment and handed it to Delphine. "Maybe you can get some of this on her better than I can."

Another roll of the eyes and Cosima was dusting off her clothes. "I don't know where my phone is."

"Oh." Pulling the device out of her bag, Delphine handed it to her. "Security had it. Now stop being rude and say thank you and apologize for being a brat so that we can go back to the hotel to take a nap." She offered her hand to the brunette.

"Oooo a nap." Cosima accepted the hand that slipped into her, allowing it to tug her up to her feet. "I think I need a bath first." She spoke before turning to the medic. "Thanks for the patch job." She cast one final wink to the woman before allowing herself to be pulled out of the room.

Back at the hotel, Delphine was busy turning down the covers on the bed, stashing away the souvenirs they had purchased on the way out of the park as Cosima filled the tub.

Stripping out of her clothes, she tested the water's temperature before stepping in. Cosima hummed in bliss as she sunk into the steaming bath, the scented water coming halfway up her chest. From her spot in the tub, she watched unapologetically as Delphine came into the bathroom and shook off her own clothes. "Yeah, Baby. Take it off."

Delphine nearly tripped on her underwear as she looked up at the brunette, giving her a well-deserved glare. "Stop that."

Cosima laughed as she flicked at the low level of the water. The depth only lasted a moment before it rose with the presence of another form entering the water in front of her. "Mmmm. Miss Cormier. You're looking quite lovely this afternoon." She commented as a backside passed her line of sight, unable to stop herself from giving the pale flesh a small swat and laughing as said body part plopped ungracefully into her lap.

"Brat." Delphine flicked a bit of water behind her as arms slipped around her waist and she leaned back into the embrace.

Cosima chuckled into the pale ear, nibbling along its edge, her hands beginning to roam over the strong form. The skater was a little slimmer than she remembered, but the blonde was like that, often losing her appetite when she was on over-seas trips. Not to mention, she was away from Cosima's own very poor eating habits. "I've missed this." She whispered as her lips moved down the long expanse of the smooth neck. The moment was about as close to perfect as she could imagine, having not been able to hold the woman for weeks. She wished it would never end, even if she could still feel the odd cloudiness in her head and the uneasiness of her stomach. All of that took a backseat to the splendor that was directly related to the blonde leaning against her.

Delphine tipped her head to the side to give the exploring lips more room. She was silent for the most part, her eyes closing as hands skimmed over her skin, caressing and massaging. She dropped a little lower in the water when the legs she was sitting on separated to allow her to fall to the bottom of the tub, knees pressing against either side of her. "Cosima..." There was a strange quiver there, a hesitation that was so rare for the woman who was used to being a public figure. "Are you ok?"

Hearing the tone in the blonde's voice, Cosima sighed softly, resting her chin on the slick shoulder. That was the question wasn't it? "I'm fine, Delphine." Her arms slipped around her shoulders, hugging her tightly. "I'm fine."

## Chapter 19

"You're going to feel like you have to pee." The technician grinned, her black bangs giving her a cute goth look. She had a mischievous way about her as she made sure the drip was set correctly. "I've had to get a scan before and when the nurse told me that I was like, no way, totally redic sounding, but it totally is true." Checking the entry point, she smiled softly. "You have really pretty veins. Don't take that the wrong way but some people are impossible to stick." Scribbling a few notes down on the clip board, she looked up with a smirk. "I know you've been asked a million times already, but they make us ask you at every stage cause some people like to lie. You're not preggers right?"

Cosima shook her head, flexing her hand almost instinctively. She could feel an odd warmth starting to spread through her arm originating where the IV was put in. "If I were, my girlfriend would have some major explaining to do." She watched as the technician's smile faltered and almost laughed. The girl had been so obvious in her flirting, and while she was flattered, she was certainly glad Delphine wasn't there.

God Delphine was going to kill her, but she didn't want to blonde to worry. This was all just a precaution she decided to take after the incident at Disneyland a few weeks ago. She was sure everything she'd been going through the past month or so was just something like the flu. She'd gotten extremely tired lately, awoken many nights by coughing fits laced with blood which occasionally turned to nausea and vomiting. She'd managed to hide most of the symptoms from Delphine who was thankfully busy with training and dealing with her sponsorship duties, if only she could just shake this.

A warmth spread through her pelvic area and Cosima's brows furrowed. Damn it she really wanted to use the bathroom.

"Haha you feel it now, don't you." The technician laughed, leading her from the room to the flat table that was suspended at the opening to a large circular machine. "Like I said, totally weird but it's normal. Giddy up." With a pat to the flat surface and a cheerful smile, she helped Cosima recline on the table, positioning the pillows in necessary places. "Ok, so we need you to put your arms over your head and lay them up here." She tapped the pillow around Cosima's head, guiding the arms into position. "Now get comfortable cause I'm gonna need you to keep still. I'm going to be in the room behind that glass so let me know if you need anything."

Cosima nodded, looking up at the ceiling. Taking a deep breath, she exhaled as the the table began to move. It was just a chest cold.

*"Cosima?" Delphine was sitting up in bed, obviously having been up for a few minutes. How much had she heard?*

*Cosima cleared her throat, her tongue burning from the mouth wash she'd used to clear her mouth of the taste of blood. Her chest hurt and she'd been awoken, gasping for air, struggling to find her breath. "Hey Beautiful." She tried to laugh it off but her voice was hoarse and she cleared her throat again. "What are you doing up?"*

*"What are you doing up?" Delphine threw back at her, watching her with a sadness in her eyes. Of course she'd noticed. Despite all her trying to hide it from the blonde, the woman could see it. "Please be honest with me, ma cherie." She reached out and caressed Cosima's cheek, turning her face that was still damp from the water she'd splashed on it. "Are you ill?"*

*Cosima laughed it off, circling her fingers around the slim wrist and bringing the hand to her lips,*

*brushing a kiss across the knuckles. "It's probably just a chest cold. I'll get it checked out." She moved closer, pressing a kiss to the corner of Delphine's mouth. "Don't worry about it."*

*Delphine gave her a doubtful look. "Of course I worry." She gathered the brunette in her arms, enveloping her in a hug that nearly brought tears to her eyes. "Just the idea of losing you..." She shook her head.*

*"Hey." Cosima pulled back, smiling softly. "I'm not going anywhere. It's just a cold, wait and see." As if needing the comfort, Delphine pressed forward, capturing her lips for a brief moment before Cosima pulled away. "Hey. I'm sick remember. I don't want you to catch whatever it is."*

*"I don't care." Delphine pulled her back in, moving to cover her body as she pressed the brunette into the pillows.*

*Cosima smiled, tangling her fingers in blonde curls, arching into the delicious heat of the toned body over her.*

Cosima looked at the scan, needing to see what was being explained to her. There were so many words being thrown around, and she didn't understand most of them. There were statistics, and options and further tests. Words of reassurances were spoken by the doctor who sat behind her at his desk, giving her space to think about what he was saying.

"I don't understand." Cosima shook her head, looking at the scan closer. She could see the segments that were marked, but she still wasn't comprehending anything. There was only one thought that kept occurring to her. One fact that she clung to that made all of this impossible, at least in her mind. "I don't even smoke cigarettes." She shook her head. "There's something wrong with your machine."

"Cosima..." The older man sighed softly, removing his glasses and cleaning them with his tie. "There's nothing wrong with the machine." He cleared his throat. "No one is saying this is a death sentence, Cosima. There are many possibilities for what could be going on. We need to schedule you for a biopsy to identify the mass. It's a simple procedure called a fine-needle aspiration biopsy. We don't even have to cut anything. We just go in with a hollow needle inserted through the chest." He gestured for her to sit down in the seat across from him. "You haven't told your partner yet, have you?"

Cosima shook her head again as she dropped into the seat, her thumb instantly finding its way between her teeth as she chewed on the short nail. "I didn't want to worry her if it was nothing." God how was she going to explain this to the blonde? "We've been dating for less than a year. She didn't sign up for this."

He nodded as if he'd heard it a million times. He probably had. How many other patients had he told they were going to die? How many lives were ruined in this very room? "It might be time to tell her. While the biopsy is a simple procedure, it's not without its risks." He cleared his throat. "I have been doing this for many years Cosima and I've learned many things along the way. One of those things is that the more support you have, the easier this will be for you."

Cosima nodded. She knew what he was saying, and she understood the reasoning behind it. It didn't change one fact.

Delphine was going to kill her.

## Chapter 20

"Fuck. Fuck fuck fuck." The string of curses accompanied the sound of the fire alarm as Cosima rushed to the oven, opening the door and wincing when a waif of black smoke emerged. "Mother fucking fuck fuck." She cursed again, pulling out the roasting pan and dropping it on the stove with a growl, trying to wave the smoke away from the alarm. "Shut the fuck up!" She continued to wave the pot holder until finally it silenced.

Five days. That's how long had passed since her initial appointment with the doctor which revealed some questionable x-rays. It was two days since she'd spoken with the oncologist after taking the CT scan. One since she'd lost all hope. "Shit." She took a deep breath, coughing against the smoke that filled her lungs from the burning chicken. The cough seemed to take a hold of her from the inside, turning her inside out and leaving the taste of blood in her mouth. "Fuck." She sunk to the floor in despair as she gasped in air, resting her head back against the cupboard. What the fuck was she going to do? Delphine was coming home tonight, having headed to Oregon for something sponsor related a couple days ago. She'd meant to tell Delphine the day she got the CT results, but she'd only seen the blonde for an hour before she had to fly out.

How was she going to look the woman in the eyes, knowing what she knew. She hadn't even been able to carry out their normal nightly video chats without breaking down. A thousand thoughts went through her mind. She had wanted everything to be perfect for when the woman got home. She had gotten Delphine's favorite wine and called her mother for the recipe for the chicken. She'd asked Alison for a good recipe for mashed potatoes. She just needed one fucking thing to go right.

She exhaled loudly, feeling the tears stinging her eyes. How was she going to tell Delphine. She'd gone through a million scenarios. Maybe she should try joking. No...who fucking jokes about cancer? Maybe she should write something. God she had no idea how she was going to do this.

Did she even have the right to lay this on the blonde? She couldn't bear the thought of seeing that look of pity in her eyes. She didn't want to force the blonde to stay just because she was sick.

God she was being so cliché.

So she had cancer. So what. People survived cancer these days. She could just lay all the cards on the table for the blonde, give her her options, release her from any relationship obligations, and just...see where everything stood in the end. Honesty. She just needed to be honest. If Delphine chose to leave, she wouldn't stand in her way. The skater didn't sign up for this.

Just the thought put a pain in Cosima's chest that had nothing to do with being ill. Just the thought of a life without the French woman...God it hurt worse than the idea of dying from cancer. New tears surfaced and she fought to keep them back. The last thing she needed was for Delphine to walk in and to see she'd been crying.

And as was her luck, she heard the apartment door open and close again.

"Cosima? Is something burning?" Delphine came into the kitchen and stopped. She took one look at Cosima and was on the floor beside her in less than two second. "Cosima...what's going on?" She reached out and wiped away a tear.

Cosima couldn't stop herself. No matter how strong she thought she was, one look at the blonde and the dam broke. "I burnt the chicken." It was ridiculous but it was the only thing that came to her as she was gathered in the long arms, pulled against the familiar warmth.

"The chicken?" Delphine's brows furrowed as she brushed her lips against the woman's temple. "It's ok, mon amour. We can just order something." From the shaking body in her arms, she wondered what could be going on. It took more than burnt chicken to bring her lover to tears.

After a long agonizing moment, Cosima pulled out of Delphine's arms, angrily removed her glasses and wiping away the tears. "Fuck." She cursed when she saw the smear of eyeliner on her hand. "This is a fucking disaster." She shook her head, sliding her glasses back on and looking at Delphine who had a confused yet sympathetic look on her face. "I'm sorry. This isn't exactly chalking up to be one of the best welcome homes."

"Don't be silly, Cosima. You're here. That's all I need." Delphine caressed the brunette's cheek. "Are you going to tell me what's really going on?" She reached up and pushed one of the dark dreads over the woman's shoulder.

Cosima shook her head. God she didn't want to. Those hazel eyes were looking at her with such love and worry and she couldn't bear the thought of breaking her heart. But she had to. "I um..." She sniffled, looking down while trying to control the shaking of her lip as she got through it. "I went to the doctor this week." She felt the woman's body freeze and didn't dare look up. She didn't dare to see those eyes filled with fear like she knew they would be. "They did a few tests and um..." She couldn't give the words voice, instead she pulled her knees to her chest. "There's a mass and...I um...I have to go in for more tests before they can give me a definitive answer...a biopsy."

That word, and Delphine reached out, gently taking Cosima's face in her hands. "Cosima." Her thumbs wiped away the falling tears, pulling her forward for a soft kiss. "Je t'aime, Cosima." She peppered kisses over the woman's cheeks, kissing away another tear that fell. "We can get through this."

We. Cosima broke again on that word. She threw her arms around the blonde, feeling all strength she had collapsing as she sobbed into the woman's neck. Each tear shed seemed to carry with it a bit of her energy, leaving her weak and exhausted. It seemed like forever that they sat there together on the floor, until her eyes burned and her head hurt. She was still sniffing, listening to the soft murmurs Delphine whispered as she rocked her gently. She still hadn't given it the words she feared so much. Did she need to? Did the blonde understand the severity of what could be going on? "I..." She sat back, clearing her throat as she wiped at her face, all too aware of the mess her crying had made of Delphine's shirt. "I can't expect you to deal with this. It's not your drama." She looked away, not wanting to see any confirmation if there was any. "I mean...you didn't really sign up for dealing with..." She swallowed. "You didn't sign up for cancer."

"Cosima." Delphine grabbed her chin with probably more force than she expected, forcing Cosima to look at her. "I'm not leaving you." The look on her face was almost one of anger. "Don't think for one second that this makes me love you any less." She shook her head. "You are everything to me, Cosima." Tears rimmed her own eyes as she pulled the snowboarder back to her, pressing her forehead against Cosima's. "Do you know what I was doing while on the plane home, trying not to think of that other flight?" She laughed through her tears. "I was thinking about what we would name our children."

There was a moment of silence before Cosima laughed at the ridiculousness of it. "You were?" When the blonde nodded, she smiled, sniffing softly. "What did you come up with?"

Delphine sat back, smiling as the brunette curled against her. "Well, that would depend on if it's a boy or a girl I suppose." She smiled. "Also we would have to decide if it would be French or English."

"It could be both." Cosima smiled. "Like give them a French first name, and an English middle name, or vice versa."

Delphine nodded. "True, but then it would be a very long name." Her voice wavered just slightly, her own emotions peaking through. "One of my favorites, if you like it, would be Angelique Elizabeth Niehaus-Cormier." When dark hazel eyes turned to look at her she smiled. "I mean...I know your sister meant a lot to you..."

Cosima nodded, unable to say anything. It was such a weird conversation to be having. A minute ago they were talking about the possibility of her having cancer, and now they were talking about figurative babies being named after her long-dead sister. "That's a good name. I like it." She sighed heavily. Maybe they'd get the chance. She intertwined her fingers with Delphine's, feeling the hand squeeze her own.

They could totally kick cancer's ass.

## Chapter 21

### Chapter Notes

Hey everyone. So...y'all probably hate me by now, especially with all the stress of season 3 going on and here I am giving you angsty stuff. Sorry. I also know I keep hopping back and forth between POV, but I think it's important during these events to get the state of mind of both Cosima and Delphine so don't hate me too much. Thank you guys for continuing to read.

Delphine ran fingertips over the soft skin of Cosima's ribs. Laying on her side, she had been watching the woman sleep for over an hour now, exhaustion finally having won out over desire. The brunette had been having trouble sleeping through the nights and they often took afternoon naps together when Delphine was home. She traced over the bruise that marred the snowboarder's side, the center of it revealing an already healing cut. It was small enough that if it left a scar, it would be minimal. They had done the biopsy over a week ago and she sighed softly, fitting her arm around the torso and curling around her.

There were no words to describe how terrified she was. As many years as she'd lived without the shorter woman in her life, to continue on without her seemed unthinkable. Cosima was frustrating beyond words at times, but she was also the very air Delphine needed to breathe. She was ever-present in Delphine's dreams and the reason she woke up in the morning. She would do anything to see that signature smile that not even her siblings shared. As similar as she was to her three sisters, as similar as their faces and features were, none could replicate that smile. None could replicate the joy and passion she often saw in Cosima's eyes when she talked about science or snowboarding...or Delphine herself.

Delphine placed a kiss on the woman's jaw. "Je t'aime, Cosima." She whispered, feeling her throat tightening against the emotion. Tears welled in her eyes easily these days, but she refused to cry when Cosima could see it. That was the last thing the brunette needed. Instead she saved her tears for moments like this, when she was offered the liberty of studying the body that was attacking itself. These were the moments that she could drop the facade of strength that she didn't feel within herself. Internally, she felt like her world was crumbling, not just because of the possibility of losing Cosima, but because Cosima herself was going through a lot, emotionally and physically. On more than one occasion she'd seen the woman brought to tears in a coughing fit, taking more than a moment to regain her smile and laugh it off as she normally did. Those moments were enough to crush Delphine's spirit.

Why was this happening to the American? She wasn't a religious person, despite her upbringing, but she found herself praying during these moments, begging whoever was listening to not take this beautiful creature from the world. She didn't know if there was a god or not, but she was willing to try anything. The oncologist had tried to instill a sense of hope in them, but she had heard both sides of it.

*"So...it's cancer after all." Cosima was leaning back in her chair, her fingers picking at the armrest. "That sucks."*

*"Yeah. That does suck." The oncologist had a half-smile on his face. "But it's not like you're dying."*

*Cosima snorted at that. "Well, we're all dying, Doc...in an existential way." She tilted her head back and forth before pushing herself up. "Alright, Doc. What are we talking about here...in English?"*

*"It's a non-small-cell cancer called adenocarcinoma." He slid over a few pamphlets which Cosima ignored. "It's a tumor, essentially, that's common with non-smokers."*

*Delphine took the pamphlets instead, looking them over as he continued to explain it.*

*"From what we've seen in the scans, the tumor is only 1.5 cm in size and has not metastasized. Your lymph nodes look clear. We're going to have to run a bone scan to make sure it has not spread to the surrounding skeletal structure." He pulled out another stack of papers that he handed directly to Delphine. "If it hasn't spread to your ribs, we can operate and remove the tumor."*

*"You make that sound so simple." Cosima reached over and picked up a small model of lungs, holding it up in-front of her face. "So you're just gonna shave the tumor off or something? Do I have to do chemotherapy or whatever?" Her brow furrowed. "Am I going to lose my hair?"*

*He leaned back in his own chair, his fingers laced together. "No. Chemotherapy has little effect on this sort of cancer. Surgery is usually the best course of action. Considering the location of the tumor and the fact that your career has left you in fantastic shape health-wise, I believe a lobectomy would be the wisest course of action." He cleared his throat as he pointed to one of the posters on his wall. "So each lung is made up of lobes, three on the right, two on the left. There are three types of surgeries involving tumor removal. One is a pneumonectomy, or a lung transplant, which is only needed for later stages. One is called a segmental resection. We normally save that one for people who's chances of surviving a lobectomy are low. With that surgery we just remove the tumor and as little of the surrounding tissue as possible. With that surgery, chances of reoccurrences are significantly higher. Your tumor is in the right upper lobe. With a lobectomy, we remove the entire lobe to drastically decrease the chance of the tumor reappearing."*

*Delphine's brow furrowed at that. This didn't seem like a simple surgery and as she flipped through the papers in her hand, it was like an information overload. "What is the procedure for that? I would imagine it would be quite extensive."*

*The oncologist nodded. "It can be. We won't know until we get in there. I'm around 85% sure that we can use what's called V.A.T.S. in which we are able to preform this surgery with only three small incisions, using a tiny camera. However, there is a chance that we won't be able to do that so we will have to do it the old fashion way which is to spread the ribs and remove it manually. There is a larger incision and recovery time is longer with that method, but it is still the best option for you." He cleared his throat again. "Of course, you can always get a second opinion, most patients do."*

*Cosima sighed heavily. "What's the recovery time on this? Like would it be stuck in bed all winter?"*

*Of course the brunette would be thinking about snowboarding. Delphine shook her head in disbelief. How could she be thinking of snowboarding when they were talking about cancer?*

*"Including the surgery, time in the hospital...usually you should be able to breathe without trouble after 2 months, but I don't recommend any sort of overly physical activity for several months after that, which include snowboarding." He gave her a pointed look.*

*"But several months. I mean, I could probably catch the tail-end of snow season, right?"*

*"Cosima..." Delphine sighed.*

*"I'm just curious. I mean...it kinda sucks you know." Cosima frowned, resting her elbows on her knees.*

*The doctor nodded. "I'm not going to say you'll be fine by the end of winter, Cosima." He leaned forward conspiringly. "But I also won't tell you it's impossible."*

*"Please don't encourage her. She will go out to the slopes with a tube hanging out of her if I don't stop her." Delphine pinched the bridge of her nose, hearing a soft chuckling coming from Cosima. "Alright, talk to us about this bone scan and when we can get this all started so her majesty can get on the slopes as soon as possible."*

Delphine pressed another kiss to Cosima's jaw, smiling as the brunette turned, meeting her lips in a sleepy kiss. The surgery was common and according to the paperwork, had a low mortality rate of 5%. Delphine's mind still read that as 1 in 20. Those numbers were too large for her. Also there was around a 30% chance that she would have a reoccurrence of the tumor after the surgery. 1 in 3. The numbers were supposed to be comforting, the chance of survival and living a full life much greater than the opposite, but all she could see were the possibilities of losing the love of her life. As a hand ran through her hair, pulling her closer, it was everything she had in her to stop the tears she felt stinging her eyes. She couldn't lose this.

## Chapter 22

"Hey Darwin." Cosima smiled as she sat on the large rock, a pad of prickly pear cactus freshly cleaned and chopped in her hand. She tossed one sliver to the tortoise that was about the size of a snare drum...a very disgruntled snare drum. "I'm sorry I haven't been around in forever." The tortoise grunted as it snapped at the green chunks, juice dribbling down his face. "Yeah you don't care, do you?" She tossed him another sliver, watching him push forward with his scaly legs to reach it. "You're just happy to be here in your fenced in yard, eating your grass, occasionally munching on treats." She felt tears stinging her eyes and sniffled softly. "You don't have to worry about things like cancer and tubes being shoved in your chest."

She'd had the bone scan not that long ago and her oncologist had gone ahead and scheduled the surgery. She had another CT scan scheduled for the morning, having already had several heart and lung tests already done to make sure she was strong enough for the surgery. She'd even donated some of her own blood at her doctor's suggestion in case she needed it during the surgery. Now it was just a waiting game for her surgery date and explaining what was going on with her family. Tossing Darwin another piece, she hugged her knees to her chest, resting her chin on one knee. "No you're gonna live till you're a hundred. I might not make it to 26." She could feel the sorrow taking over when she heard the sliding door open, she quickly wiping away her tears. She released a relieved sigh when she saw it was Delphine, smiling weakly. "Have I told you today how gorgeous you are?"

Delphine frowned, tilting the brunette's chin up. "Are you ok?"

Pulling her face away, Cosima sniffled. "I'm fine." She tossed the last piece of cactus to the tortoise, wiping her hand on her jeans. She was silent for a while, neither saying anything for minutes until Cosima broke the silence. "I don't know if I can tell them."

Kneeling down in front of her, Delphine rested her hand on Cosima's arm, giving her an empathetic look. "You know I'm here for you, right?"

Cosima nodded, watching as Darwin blissfully munched on the remaining pieces. Of course she knew Delphine was there for her. The woman had been the one solid thing in the rough sea of this whole cancer deal. "I'm scared, Delphine."

Delphine did the only thing she could. She pulled the woman to her in a hug. "I know, mon amour. I know."

With a shuddering breath, Cosima swallowed the urge to cough, instead leaning back, quickly wiping away her tears again. "Ugh. This shit is dumb." She dusted her jeans off as she stood up, offering a hand to Delphine and pulling her up.

Delphine wrinkled her nose. "Your hand is sticky." She lifted their joined hands, seeing them slightly sticking together as she pulled them apart. "We need to wash our hands."

Cosima chuckled, pulling her towards the door. "Guess that means you're 'stuck' with me." She joked. They stepped into the whirlwind of activity that always happened when everyone was together.

"Cosima, there you are. Have you been crying?" Her mother stopped, looking at her closely. She looked up at Delphine. "Are you guys fighting or something?"

"Non." Delphine gave the woman a tight-lipped smile, patting Cosima on the arm. "I'm going to

go wash my hands."

"I'm fine, mom" Cosima gave her a smile. "Is dinner almost ready?"

Looking as though she wanted to say more, Cosima's mother shook her head. The older woman gave her a nervous look, rubbing her arm. "Perhaps in about 10 minutes. Go wash your hands if you were playing with that tortoise."

Cosima nodded, heading to the upstairs bathroom to hopefully get some privacy for a minute. She made quick work of washing her hands, noting the redness of her eyes. "Come on, Cos. Get your shit together. It's just cancer." She removed her glasses and splashed water on her face, patting her face dry to not smear her eyeliner. "Stop crying. You're going to freak them out." It was no use. She barely could prevent herself from panicking on a daily basis, how could she help her family? They would have so many questions and she didn't really feel up to dealing with them. With a soft sigh, she slipped her glasses back on and opened the bathroom door, nearly screaming at the tall form in front of her. "Holy shit, Delphine!" She slapped the woman on the shoulder, still trying to calm her rapidly beating heart. "You scared the shit out of me. What are you doing?"

Delphine rose an eyebrow. "I saw you come up here."

"I'm not dying today, Delphine. You don't have to keep checking up on me." She spoke before she thought about it. On the blonde's hurt expression, she quickly pulled her into a hug. "I'm sorry. I'm a little on edge"

"That's not why I followed you." Delphine spoke, her expression turning to a grin as she pulled Cosima towards her childhood bedroom. "I wanted to show you something."

Cosima's brow furrowed as they entered, the blonde closing the door was closed behind her. "What are we..." She was cut off with a kiss, being pressed against the door suddenly. She chuckled against soft lips, tangling her fingers in blonde curls as hands slipped under her shirt, caressing her sides and sending shivers through her body. She groaned softly as the blonde's lips moved down her throat, gently nibbling their way down as hands moved down and fingers undid the button-fly of her jeans. "Shit...are you really going to..." She whimpered as fingers slipped into her panties.

"Shhhh." Delphine whispered into an ear, capturing the lobe between her teeth. "If you're not quiet, someone's going to come up here... other than you." She chuckled.

"Shut up and kiss me." Cosima growled as she crushed her lips against Delphine's, fingers moving against her as her body reacted quickly to the delicious touch. There was none of the gentle teasing she was used to from the blonde and she found her body eager to milk every ounce of pleasure that it could from the fingers. "Shit" She gasped as she broke off the kiss, her hands clenching around the material of Delphine's shirt. "Faster." She groaned.

Delphine complied, her fingers getting no resistance. "Tu es très jolie." She mumbled against soft lips, trying to muffle the soft whimpers that were coming from Cosima's throat with a kiss.

Cosima was seeing stars as her body began trembling, feeling the weakness in her knees. Wrapping her arms around Delphine's neck, she groaned, her body shuddering as a wave of pleasure crashed over her. Sooner than she wished, it was over and she was melting into Delphine's embrace, her knees shaky. "Ok...call me speedy cause that was way faster than normal..." She laughed, humming softly in pleasure. "Mmmm..you are so delicious."

With a smile, Delphine slipped her fingers from Cosima's pants. "No, you are." Her fingers just inches from her lips, she found her wrist captured

"You are not going to sit at the dinner table smelling like sex." Cosima kept her fingers around the blonde's wrist, moving it out of the way as she nipped her lips. "You should go wash your hand, you filthy heathen." She nuzzled the woman's neck, nipping the soft skin. "Thank you."

"My pleasure." Delphine whispered before pulling away, slipping out of the bedroom.

"Oh it will be later." Cosima commented to the empty room, biting her bottom lip as she redid the buttons of her jeans. She took a minute to look over her appearance in the full-body mirror, nearly laughing at her flushed cheeks. "Yeah you don't look like you just got fingered by your girlfriend when your parents are downstairs." With a shake of her head, she pulled the bedroom door open again, nearly screaming when her path was blocked by Sarah. "Goddamn it! Why the hell are you lurking?"

Sarah had a smirk on her face, leaning against the door frame. "What were you doing?" She laughed at Cosima's blush. "Yeah figured as much when I saw blondie sneaking out and off to the bathroom." Still blocking Cosima's exit, her smirk turned into a pensive look. "What's going on, Cos? You've been sulking all night and you haven't talked to any of us in weeks."

Cosima shook her head. "I... There is something going on, but I'd rather tell you all together."

Giving her a worried look, Sarah put a hand on her shoulder. "You alright?"

Not sure what to do, Cosima shrugged. She didn't want to have to explain everything more than once. She wanted to wait until everyone was together... but this was Sarah. If she was closest to any of her sister's, it was Sarah who always knew when she was in trouble. "I...I'm not going to make it to our annual trip to Tahoe." She commented, pulling Sarah into the room and closing the door.

"What?" Sarah's brow furrowed in confusion. "What's going on?"

Cosima crossed her arms over her chest, trying to find the best way to blurt it out. "Next month I'm having surgery." She pursed her lips, gathering her thoughts. "They're removing a part of my lung..." She let her voice trail off, not able to say the words again. Why did she have such a hard time saying the word cancer?

"What?" Sarah's confused look didn't go away. "What the shite? Why is anyone taking a part of your lung?"

Swallowing, Cosima looked away, trying to bite back her tears. "When we were in Disneyland a while back, I passed out, I was up at night coughing. Delphine made me see a doctor." She took a deep breath, trying to calm herself. "The doctor found a tumor... I guess it's cancer or whatever. There's some stupid long name that I can't remember, but the doctor says if they remove the part of my lung that it's in, there's a chance it won't come back."

Sarah swallowed, not sure what to say.

"I mean...it's a 2 in 3 chance I'll be completely fine after the surgery. That's better odds than the lottery. Better than playing the outside on roulette." Cosima laughed humorlessly before looking at her sister who was still standing there, not saying anything. "Hey. Don't freak out. I'm not dying right now."

"Well shite, Cos." Sarah sat on the edge of the bed, resting her elbows on her knees. "There must be some mistake. I mean you only smoke weed. That doesn't give you cancer, right?"

Cosima shrugged, sitting beside her on the bed. "Well there's no real substantial evidence either

way, but the kind of cancer I have is most common to people who don't smoke." She wrinkled her nose. "I never really thought I'd get cancer, man. I mean, I thought if anything, I'd die on the slopes falling off a cliff or running into a tree...maybe an avalanche."

"Hey." Sarah wrapped her arm around her sister's shoulders, always the pillar of strength out of all the sisters. "You might still. I mean, 2 in 3 chances are pretty good. You've gone against worse odds than that. Christ you've got three Olympic medals." She leaned her head against Cosima's. "You're a winner, Cos. You always were."

Cosima sighed softly. "Everyone's going to freak. I... Just thinking about having to tell anyone is killing me." She shook her head. "Seeing that look on everyone's faces...it's worse than actually having cancer."

Sarah turned and pulled Cosima into a full hug, feeling the shaking in her frame. "You're gonna be fine, Cos. You have to be. I can't go through life without you." Her own voice broke on the last sentence, fighting back her own tears.

Sniffing, Cosima returned the hug. Sarah was just the first in a number of people she would have to tell. Considering that Sarah was the strongest of the group, she was terrified to think of how the others would take it.

Just then, the door opened and a blonde head stuck in. Delphine's brows scrunched in confusion as she took in the sight, tilting her head in question.

Cosima pulled out of the hug, wiping away a tear with a laugh. "I was just telling Sarah about...you know."

"Oh." Delphine looked confused but she nodded. "Did you want me to go away?"

"Naw, Frenchie." Sarah stood up, her hand resting on Cosima's shoulder. "I came up to tell you dinner was done. Mum's probably wondering what's taking so long." She offered her hand to Cosima and pulled her up. "We should get going, unless you guys needed a few more minutes for another shag."

"Sarah!" Cosima felt her cheeks getting redder as they all exited. "You two go down. I'll follow. I have to use the bathroom."

Sarah snickered. "Good. You smell like sex." She commented, descending the stairs with a laugh.

Cosima sighed, turning to Delphine and giving her a look.

Delphine gathered the brunette in her arms, placing a soft kiss on her nose. "I think you smell... delicious." She whispered with a smirk, laughing at the woman's growl.

## Chapter 23

Cosima sat in the chair, shifting uncomfortably as she looked at the man behind the desk, a serious look on her face. There was always that moment of silence after she delivered the news, the teetering between sympathy and uncertainty if it was a joke. Was she really the type to joke about terminal illnesses? She wasn't really the practical joker type of person, but she also wasn't the lung cancer type of person. Well she didn't used to be anyway...

"You're shitting me." Art laughed, shaking his head. "This is a pretty messed up joke Cosima, even for you." He flipped through the folder on his desk. When only silence was his response, he looked up to see Cosima looking down, her hands folded together on her lap. "You're not joking."

Why did they always think she was joking? Cosima shook her head, trying not to let herself become emotional. She didn't cry in public. Well...this wasn't in public, but she didn't cry in front of Art. Art had been her manager for half her life, but he'd become more like a bigger brother to her over the years, not afraid to tell her to stop being a dumb ass on more than one occasion. Sure he made money off of her, but that wasn't all it was was it? She could see he cared.

Art was quiet as he closed the file, leaning back in his seat. "Shit, Cosima. I'm sorry."

With a shrug, Cosima picked at the hem of her skirt. "It is what it is, I guess." She laughed mirthlessly. "You're probably going to have to call all the big dogs. Even if I'm not dead in a month, I'm more than likely not hitting the slopes this season."

"Forget about the endorsements, kid. How serious is it?"

Cosima wrinkled her nose, straightening her glasses. "It's not bad I guess. Stage 1." She said sarcastically, shifting her position again. "They have to cut out part of my lung, so even if the cancer doesn't come back it's going to take a while to heal or whatever." She was uncomfortable talking about it. Even with someone she'd known for over a decade, it was everything she could do not to cry. People always asked a million questions and she didn't like it when people pried, even her family.

*The table was quiet, all eyes focused on Cosima. She crossed her ankles beneath her chair, uncomfortable in the shocked silence, feeling Delphine squeeze her hand in support. No one spoke. No one even knew what to say. She was starting to get nervous and it made her laugh. "Come on guys. It's only cancer. You're acting like I'm dying."*

*"Don't say that!" It was Alison who spoke first. She was wringing her napkin in her hand, her body stiff and un-moving. "Please don't say that."*

*"Ok...sorry." Cosima swallowed, her thumb rubbing across the blonde's knuckles. She hated this. Being in the spotlight because you excelled at something you trained at, that was worth it. This was something happening to her. This was the bad luck of the draw and everyone knowing how shitty her luck was. But when the hand in her own squeezed hers again, she realized she wasn't unlucky at all. This was just another fall on the slopes, another obstacle in the course. Even if she died, she got to experience love and all that cheesy shit they made romcoms about. Fuck she didn't want to die.*

*"Are you going to die?" Helena's voice was meek as she looked up from behind a curtain of bleached blonde hair, her eyes brimmed with tears. None of them remembered the last time they saw her cry.*

*"No way man." Cosima was quick to answer, laughing nervously. "I've got to have surgery, but I'll be right as rain after." She didn't bother with medical jargon. She knew her sister wouldn't understand. She looked at her parents who had yet to say anything but as she watched, a tear slipped down her mother's cheek. "Hey...come on. I'm gonna be fine." She got up and moved around the table to where her mother was, wrapping her arms around the older woman. "Don't cry, Mom. Please don't cry." This is what sickness was. It was comforting others when you yourself could barely deal. It was saying you were fine when you wanted to escape into oblivion. At that moment she was thankful for Delphine's strength, but saddened by it. Delphine never showed weakness, but Cosima had caught her crying once or twice, always in the middle of the night, always when she thought Cosima was asleep.*

*The older woman shook her head, turning to pull Cosima into a full hug. "My baby girl." She breathed in a shuddering breath, trying to control her emotions. "I love you, Cosima." She shook her head before slapping the woman on the shoulder. "How long have you known and you didn't tell us anything?"*

*"I didn't want to worry you guys until I was sure." Cosima laughed as she rubbed her arm as she went back to her seat. "I guess it's been a few weeks...since Disneyland." She sat down and found her hand instantly captured again. This was Delphine's weakness. Since she found out she'd barely left Cosima alone when she was home. She was clinging, as if every moment would be their last memory, as if every kiss would be the final meeting of their lips, and when they stumbled into bed together, fingers brushing against hated flesh, it was as if her body would be the last she'd touch.*

*"You're quiet, Sarah. Usually I'd expect some snarky comment." Alison eyed the quiet sister who was currently chewing on a dinner roll.*

*"Me?" Sarah laughed. "Naw I already knew." When everyone turned to look at her she nearly choked on the bread. "Don't look at me like that. She just told me upstairs after I teased her about her and Delphine shagging while dinner was cooking."*

*"Fuck off Sarah." Cosima reached for a roll, forgetting for a moment about the bruise on her ribs and gasping at the sudden pain. She hissed, waving off Delphine. "I'm fine, I'm fine." She gestured to Delphine for the roll.*

*With a roll of her eyes at the ridiculousness of the situation, Delphine retrieved the bread and handed it to Cosima.*

*Cosima promptly chucked it at Sarah who easily ducked out of the way. "You're lucky, asshole. I just had a really long needle shoved into my lungs, but don't think I won't send my girlfriend to kick your ass."*

*"Sure hide behind her skirts." Sarah laughed. "Or in them...whatever."*

*"Oh my god, Delphine hand me another roll."*

*"What about your project?" Art cleared his throat as he pulled out another file. "We've gotten a couple more nibbles for backing. I mean you didn't get to do the interview after that whole plane fiasco, but apparently the word is out. We've gotten two major commitments that you can look over. That is if you want to still do this."*

*Cosima sighed heavily. She still hadn't told Delphine. At least now she could play the sympathy card. You can't get angry at someone who has cancer can you?*

*"You know...not to be the shallow dipshit in the room... but you could totally spin this cancer*

thing to get support. We could reschedule that interview..."

Raising her eyebrows, Cosima leaned back with a nonplussed look. "Wow...that is a pretty dipshit thing to do." She grinned. "Roll with it. I guess you can get with Delphine's manager for a date...hmm actually let me get back to you on the whole interview thing. Surgery sucks." She wrinkled her nose in thought. "Can you also get me in contact with Jaime and Kaitlin from the team, try and arrange for us to do lunch or something soon, preferably before someone hacks into my chest. I'm thinking of bringing one of them in...maybe both if they have the time" She blew out a long breath of air. "Have we heard back from the UK yet?"

Art nodded. "Yeah, the contractor got in contact with the main suppliers. They're still negotiating." He offered her a thick folder. "More crap for you to go through." He paused. "You know you're going to have to start consulting with someone who's a little more business savvy in things other than booking appointments."

Cosima flipped through the folder. "No worries, I've got all that covered." She commented absentmindedly. "You're just one in a huge stack of people I've been dealing with lately. My lawyer... money manager...my doctor." She sighed heavily. "This is a good decision right?"

"Well..." Art leaned back in his seat, giving her a serious look. "This is big, Cosima." He tapped his fingers on the chair. "I think it's a great idea, but there will be a lot of stress. This isn't going to be just an excuse to go snowboarding all the time. There's a lot of paperwork." Leaning forward, he intertwined his fingers. "I think you're going to have to find a partner...not just corporate backers but a good solid business partner. I mean...I didn't even know you had this much money." He paused, tilting his head to the side. "Does Delphine know?"

With a grimace, Cosima shook her head. "We don't really talk about money. It's never been a problem. I mean neither of us really look at price tags. All of her living expenses are covered by her endorsements. It didn't even come up when we talked about flying to France." She shrugged. "I mean I didn't even think of that money as real anyway. I just gave it to a dude that worked for some company my lawyer suggested. He started investing and I get a statement monthly." She gave Art a meek look. "I just told him...to cash some shit out."

"Shit, Cosima. You're...I don't even understand you." Art shook his head. He blew out a long breath. "You need to stop dicking around and have a discussion with Delphine because this...this is a big decision, especially if you're going to be out of commission for a while."

Thinking about that, Cosima nodded. "I know. I'm going to tell her. She's out of country right now. She's trying to get all her endorsement and training shit expedited and taken care of so she can take a month off while I'm recovering." She gathered the files and slipped them into her bag. "See about getting that lunch with the girls for me. I've got another stop to make." She paused before pulling an envelope out, handing it to Art. "This is an invitation I guess. My stupid sister is planning a '*Hope you Don't Die*' party slash BBQ at my parents' house the weekend before the surgery. You should come by...don't bring any gifts, it's not a damn birthday party, but bring Angie, maybe some of that potato salad she makes?"

Pulling out the invitation, Art laughed. It really was titled '*Hope Cosima Doesn't Die Party*'. "I'd love to come, but I can't guarantee Angie. She's about ready to pop any day soon." He chuckled.

Cosima smiled at that. She could only hope that she'd be able to meet the kid.

## Chapter 24

### Chapter Notes

I know you guys have been wondering what the project is, and it kinda blew up with everyone's expectations, so I'm hoping the actual answer isn't one that disappoints you.

Cosima blew out a long breath of air, shuffling the folders on the table and tapping nervously on the polished surface. She restlessly moved back to the kitchen, getting the bottle of wine she had opened, pouring herself a glass and taking a long sip. Nervous was a word that did not seem to cover the immensity of what she felt, not sure how the blonde would take the mountain of surprises she was going to spring on her. Maybe she should do it naked. Delphine liked her naked. It could be like a symbolic bare all type of thing, right? She was toying with the buckle of her belt when the front door opened, letting in the tall French woman. "Hey!" She let her eyes trail over the woman's hoodie and jeans, allowing herself a brief moment to appreciate the simple elegance that came forth even in such casual attire.

Delphine stopped two steps in, looking at the brunette and then to the table and then to the kitchen. "Hey." She gave the woman a suspicious look as she stepped up to her. "What's going on?"

Pushing herself up to her toes, Cosima placed a quick kiss on her lips. "I.. we need to have a talk but it's nothing that is like an emergency or whatever so... did you need to take a shower or something?"

Shaking her head, Delphine set her workout bag down. "I took a shower at the rink." She accepted the glass of wine she was given and eyed the stacks of folders on the table. "So..."

"Ok." Cosima rung her hands together, pacing slightly. "So I got some Italian, but I know you're not going to be able to eat now that you know there's something we need to talk about." She laughed nervously, grabbing her own drink again and taking a sip. "Please. There's a lot to talk about, if you let me get through it all, but it's kind of tiered so each level of discussion depends on your responses." She pulled out the chair for the blonde. "Sit."

Delphine bit her bottom lip before sitting down, her face showing her amused confusion. "Am I going to be upset?"

"Uh..." Cosima laughed again, taking her own seat. "Well. First I want to say that I have never lied to you or like made out with anyone or anything like that so it's nothing like that."

Raising an eyebrow, Delphine tilted her head to the side. "I would hope not." It was obvious by the look on her face that she knew Cosima was avoiding the question.

Another laugh and Cosima lifted one of the folders. "Ok. First things first I guess. It's kind of a big one." She swallowed. "I might not have told you about a project I've been working on, not because I don't want you to know cause I love you so much and what you think of me matters so much and I didn't want to disappoint you if I failed and I was planning on telling you about it before the interview but there was the whole plane thing and..."

"Whoa." Delphine cut her off with a raised hand. "You're rambling, ma cherie." She held her hand out for the folder. "Just tell me so I can get the yelling over with and get to the other things."

Her lips pursed, she handed over the folder. "Don't freak out. It's kind of big." She watched as Delphine flipped through the paperwork, half of a bottom lip trapped between perfect teeth as her brows furrowed. "I know it's a lot." Cosima was worrying a thumbnail between her own teeth as the woman continued to flip, pausing every now and then to look over a particular form before continuing. "You're not saying anything."

"This is..." Delphine paused on one page, separating it from the pile before looking up at the brunette. "I have two questions...but first I want you to explain this to me in the simplest form possible because this is a very large folder and I'm not going to read through all of that."

"Ok." Cosima nodded, taking a deep breath. "So I've been trying to think of something to do now that I'm like retired and stuff and I know a lot of Olympians end up training people or teaching. So I know I could do that while going to school, but then I started thinking about bigger than that, because I'm totally not like the capitalist type of person. Growing up like I know I made things hard for my parents with all the coaches and training and it's kind of expensive. So I was thinking of like some sort of charity to offer training for underprivileged kids, cause kids are where it's at, you know."

Delphine nodded, taking a sip of her wine.

Sensing the woman wasn't going to flip her lid, Cosima continued. "Ok so I got with a business manager and like a lawyer that specializes in charities and developing them. So one problem is well, snow season is only a few months a year, and like investors won't fly for that so enter in the actual business side of things." She took a sip of her wine, coughing slightly as she swallowed. "So, in the UK they have this stuff that's called snowflex. It's kind of like the snow equivalent of fake grass." She wiggled her eyebrows as her hands flew through the air explaining the concept. "So like, picture this. Year round indoor snow complex that has like artificial slopes and a half-pipe. We're going to have like a charity-driven training for kids on weekends, and a charity summer program for kids too but there will be other stuff we can do too. So like the place will be open all the time, well you know business hours, people pay admissions and can rent equipment and we'll set times for the charity stuff so it's both giving to the community and the investors get their money back."

Delphine took a sip of her wine.

Cosima waited patiently, uneasy about the fact that the blonde's face was so stoic. "So... did you need me to explain anything else or did you want to ask a question?"

"Why were you keeping this from me?" The question was simple and emotionless, the blonde obviously keeping a lid on her own reaction.

Swallowing loudly, Cosima began to fidget. "I just... I mean I've never done something like this before and I just..." She shrugged, not really sure how to explain the feelings she had in her gut. "I didn't want to fail in front of you. I was afraid I'd look like a dumb ass." She realized how childish that sounded. It was a lame excuse and she wished she could take it back, to go back months ago and just share it with the blonde when she'd first thought of the idea and now she was so far into it, there was no pulling out.

Delphine cleared her throat, setting down her wine glass. "Well... I think it's a good idea. I mean I skimmed your notes and while I would have loved to know about this earlier, I'm not upset." She removed the sheet from the folder and slid it over the table to Cosima. "Please explain this though."

Cosima didn't need to pick the sheet up to know what it was. The breakdown of investors, with herself contributing a substantial start-up capital. "Let's forget about this page for now." When the blonde was about to object she rose her hand. "Just for now. This is actually another thing I need to talk to you about so we're going to table that particular issue for now. Ok, so do you, as the love of my life, my partner, and my super hot foreign girlfriend, have any objections about me doing this? Would you like to do this with me? I mean your involvement is up to you if you do want to. I know you don't ski or snowboard or whatever."

Delphine smiled for the first time since sitting down. "Well, with the money thing aside. I have no objections. I don't know how much I can contribute, as you said I don't ski or snowboard, but I'll be happy to contribute what I can. It sounds amazing."

"Yesss." Cosima stood up from her chair and captured the woman's lips with a kiss, feeling the blonde laughing against her lips as she cradled the woman's face in her hands.

"Okay okay." Delphine pushed the brunette away, tapping the stack of folders. "We still have other things to discuss."

"Just one sec." Cosima commented before capturing the blonde's lips again, enjoying a soft exploration as the woman's lips parted, allowing her tongue access. She found herself pulled onto the woman's lap and she laughed into the kiss. "I love kissing you." She whispered, nudging Delphine's nose with her own. With a smile, she reached for the next folder on the top of the stack. "Ok, so next on the agenda of things to discuss with you."

Delphine opened the cover of the folder with the arm that wasn't wrapped around the snowboarder's waist, her smile slipping as she read the form. "This is... Cosima..."

Cosima placed a kiss to Delphine's forehead. "I was thinking about this surgery and I wanted to make sure you had a voice." She caressed the woman's cheek, seeing a worried look in hazel eyes. "I trust you, Delphine. I want to know that in the event of something happening while I'm in the hospital, you'll be able to make decisions for me."

"Cosima..." Delphine lifted the Power of Attorney paperwork, taking a shuddered breath. "I... I don't know if I would be in a capable state of mind..." She leaned into the woman's touch on her cheek.

Placing another kiss against her forehead, Cosima sighed softly. "I don't want you excluded from decisions just because you're my girlfriend and not my wife. Unless you don't want to?"

"Non, that's not it." Delphine set the form down, wrapping her arms around the woman's body fully. "I... merde. I just don't want to think about losing you."

"You're not going to." Cosima smiled. "This... is just a precaution, so don't think too much about it. You don't have to make up your mind right now, it would just be a huge weight off my shoulders."

"Ok." Delphine nodded.

"So you'll think about it?" Cosima asked carefully.

Delphine shook her head. "Ok I'll sign it."

Unable to stop herself, Cosima pulled the woman into another kiss before hugging her close. "God I love you so much." She placed a trail of kisses up the woman's neck, breathing in the scent of her shampoo and perfume.

"Je t'aime, Cosima." Delphine placed her own kiss on the woman's cheek before pulling away. "Now are there any more surprises or can we talk about this money thing?"

"Erm." Cosima brushed a thumb over the blonde's bottom lip, smiling. "There is one more thing before we get to the money thing." She slipped off the woman's lap and took her own seat again but slid closer to the blonde, her hand covering the last folder, about two inches thick with papers. "So, before you panic after seeing this, I want you to know that you are the best thing that's ever happened to me." She cleared her throat. "So like, I guess this would be for like, after the surgery or whatever, cause you know..."

"Well... I don't know." Delphine pointed out.

"Oh...yeah." Laughing nervously, Cosima pushed the folder over slowly, swallowing audibly. The nervousness she'd been feeling all day settled in her gut, making her stomach turn.

With an uncertain look, Delphine lifted the cover of the folder, stopping when she saw its contents. "What..."

"So um... possible death aside and all that..." Cosima began to explain. "I've been taking a look at my life and what's really important and... well.. you kind of complete me. So..."

Delphine swallowed as she took in the stack of papers, or rather the square cut out of the center of the papers and the light reflecting off of the ring sitting on a robin-egg blue pillow in the center of it. Her hand was shaking as she lifted it out of the small hole cut into the paper that was repeating the phrase 'I love you' over and over again. The ring was an elegantly simple design, a round diamond set in the rounded platinum band that was cool between her fingers. "Cosima..."

"So like... I know it hasn't even been a year and we just moved in together not that long ago, but Sarah said something to me back when we were talking about me moving in and like it really made me think." Cosima covered the blonde's knee with her hand. "Whether it's 6 months from now or a year from now. I don't see myself loving you any less than I do right at this moment because like...every second that goes by, I love you even more." She could see tears in the blonde's eyes and could only hope they were happy tears. "I know that I'm an asshole and I know I kind of just dropped a bunch of stuff on you and we're dealing with the whole cancer nonsense but it would probably be the most awesome thing in the world if you agreed to marry me cause I'm pretty pathetic without you." When the blonde didn't say anything she felt the need to fill the silence. "I mean I'm not saying I would expect us to get married right away or anything cause like if something happens with the surgery, I don't want you to be saddled with that and..."

"Yes." Delphine cut her off as she looked up from the ring, a tear slipping down her cheek.

Cosima swallowed loudly. "Yes as in you'll marry me or like yes you don't want to be saddled..." She was cut off by soft lips pressing against her own, a hand cupping her cheek. The moment was pure bliss as she felt the dampness on her own cheek from the blonde's tears as she returned the kiss, their tongues meeting in a familiar caress. The moment seemed to go on forever, but she was completely fine with that, tangling her fingers in blonde hair as teeth nipped at her lips. Finally she grinned as she pulled away. "Ok so just to be clear..."

Looking at the ring, Delphine wiped away a tear, laughing. "Well..." A mischievous grin slipped over her face. "Sounds... plausible." She bit her bottom lip at the brunette's raised eyebrow, setting the ring aside for the moment as she intertwined her fingers with Cosima's, pulling her closer. "I... might need some incentive."

A smile spread across Cosima's face as she allowed herself to be pulled up, tilting the blonde's head up to pepper soft kisses over her face. "I can do that." She gently leaned back, the woman's

cheeks still cupped in her hands as the blonde gave into the pressure and stood. "I... can totally give you all the incentive you want." She spoke between kisses, her hands dropping to unzip the blonde's hoodie.

"Wait..." Delphine pulled back, a concerned look on her face. "Are we going to talk about the fact that you're investing over a million dollars into this business?"

Cosima laughed, pulling the blonde back down for a kiss. "Don't worry about that." She pushed the hoodie off tall shoulders, her fingers working on the woman's belt.

"But..." Delphine growled as she was cut off with another kiss.

Sensing the blonde wasn't going to drop it, Cosima reached for the folder she'd had closest to her with a sigh. "I said don't worry about it, but since we're not getting anywhere towards the whole sexy state I want to be at..." She showed the blonde her portfolio and bank statement. "It's not even a tenth of my assets. I mean I'm not like super rich but even if this falls through we're not going to starve."

"Cosima!" Delphine's brows furrowed. "How did you..." She couldn't even explain the feelings she was having, flipping through the paperwork. "This is..."

Cosima shrugged. "I mean, I've been getting endorsement deals even before my first Olympics and I've only spent it on training. My parents wouldn't accept any money from me so it's just been sitting, circulating. I've got this guy that started investing a portion of it a couple years back and that kind of took off." She laughed. "Dude, I have like a small bit of these weed stocks, like less than a thousand, that I bought against his advice that are completely losing money but they make me laugh just owning them."

"This is..." Delphine set the folder down with a sigh, looking at the brunette. "There are no more big secrets after this, right? I don't think I can handle any more."

Shaking her head, Cosima picked up the ring from where the blonde had dropped it, taking the blonde's left hand and slipping the ring on before she could get a protest, a small part in the back of her mind relieved that it fit correctly. "Ok, so now that you know I'm super charitable, I trust you completely, and I'm kind of a millionaire, will you please marry me?"

Delphine looked at the ring. "Cosima... you don't have to bribe me with millions of dollars or a ring that's... merde this ring." She looked at it closer. She wasn't a jewelry expert, but given the size of the diamond and the platinum, she knew it wasn't cheap.

"I kind of have shiny object syndrome." Cosima shrugged. "And this was a case of it being super literal. Like Alison went with me and kept going on comparing it to how much cars cost and her mortgage payments or whatever but seriously all I could think of was it on your finger... and then I got to thinking about your fingers and well...then I started associating the ring to sex and... then it was a proportional relationship and suddenly my mind associated size of the ring to the amount of sex and... yeah." She grinned. "Speaking of which, about that incentive..."

"You are insufferable." Delphine said as she pulled the woman forward for a kiss, wrapping one arm around the woman's waist to pull her closer. "An insufferable but beautiful asshole."

Leaning her forehead against Delphine's, Cosima caressed the pale skin of Delphine's cheek once more, gently wiping away the remnants of her tears, a soft smile on her face. "Tell me you'll marry me." It was a whisper, barely even heard over the sound of her own heartbeat pounding in her ear.

Delphine returned the smile, bumping her nose against Cosima's playfully. "Yes, Cosima. I will

marry you."

Closing her eyes as the words washed over her, Cosima couldn't spare a single thought for charities or investments or even cancer. All she could think of was the perfect moment with the blonde in her arms and finally feeling complete.

## Chapter 25

*Sorry, this is mostly dialogue.*

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"Have I told you today, how beautiful you are?" Cosima grinned as she ran her hand down the front of the white button down shirt Delphine was wearing, the black jacket outlining her toned form perfectly. She resisted capturing the soft lips in a kiss, despite the pull of the sweet perfume tempting her senses.

"Oui." Delphine nodded, feeling the slight nervous lump that had taken residence in her throat. "I cannot believe you are wearing jeans." Her fingers were hooked into the woman's belt under the lace Victorian shirt the woman wore. "Even if you are beautiful in them." Her thumb stroked the soft flesh of the woman's stomach, feeling the surface tighten under her caress.

Cosima laughed, her tongue peeking out between her teeth. "Hey, come on. I've got cancer. I can wear what I want." She had used that excuse more than once and she really should feel bad for it, but she needed to laugh at the situation. She couldn't bear having to be serious about it, having to think about the possibilities they didn't talk about.

Delphine rolled her eyes. "You can't keep using that as an excuse to get your way, Cosima."

"No...but if I can use it for sexual favors and being able to wear what I want..." She laughed again. "I know, I know. I'm sorry. I'd kiss you and make it up to you, but I'm 100% sure that the makeup people would kill me." She reached up and tugged on one perfectly placed blonde curl. "You look nervous...deliciously and irresistibly nervous. Don't be nervous. She's asking me most of the questions and we've both done a bazillion interviews..."

"I know. I know." Delphine straightened the woman's top, smoothing the material. "It's just... this is the first time I've been in front of an audience like this."

Cosima nodded. "I get that. Don't worry. You're amazing at this. Just remember, plug the charity, don't mention the cancer." She could feel the woman's rigid stance, truly wishing they weren't both wearing make up and she could freely pull the woman to her in a kiss.

"Hey guys, it'll be about 10 seconds and then you'll be introduced." A man with a headset and clip board directed them where to stand as they waited for their queue.

"Next up we have two Olympians who met in Socchi this year. Not only did they find love, but they both walked away with gold medals and now we've got them both here. We have the gold medalist for snowboarding half-pipe, Cosima Niehaus from team USA and the gold medalist for ladies single figure skating, Delphine Cormier from team France."

There was a loud applause as they both came out, their fingers loosely intertwined, Cosima significantly more relaxed as she led the way to the couch waiting for them, shaking hands with the hostess before gesturing for Delphine to sit first before taking her seat closest to the woman who greeted them with a smile.

"Thanks for coming. Well, nice to see you made it in this time." The woman smiled before addressing the crowd. "What you guys don't know is that this is actually not the first time we've tried to get Cosima and Delphine on the show, but Delphine you were on that plane that had the

emergency landing in Denver?"

Delphine nodded. "Yes, I was coming back from Europe to come here when the plane was struck with lightning." There was a gasp from the crowd and she gave them a smile. "Well obviously I survived." Everyone in the crowd laughed.

"Well definitely glad you guys made it in one piece." The woman smiled. "So you two met in Socchi right? How did that happen?"

Cosima grinned at that. "Well, some people would call it fate and some would just call it luck but Delphine actually got put in the wrong Olympic village. Like all the skaters and those more delicate sports..." She winked at Delphine who gave her an outraged look. "...they get put in a really comfy village that has these glorious rooms and amenities. Then they shove all us ruffian snowboarders and skiers in a separate village where they just feed us crackers and water." When the crowd laughed, Cosima continued with a chuckle. "No I'm kidding, both villages were amazing, despite the constant construction and occasional hole in the floor, but we met on the running track her first morning there. I'd been at the village for a few days already and I just thought the chivalrous thing would be to offer a tour."

Delphine had to laugh at that. "Chivalrous." She commented, her fingers coming up to make quotation marks in the air.

Everyone laughed at that. "Well, Cosima I did want to say that we all were very proud to see you bringing home two medals this year."

There was a cheer of the crowd and Cosima grinned, a blush coloring her cheeks. "Thank you. I just wanted to make everyone proud." She always found it so weird, the constant patriotism she had to maintain. It's not that she wasn't proud to be American, it just didn't define who she was.

"This was your third Olympics and your first gold medal right?"

Cosima nodded. "Yeah. I got the silver last Olympics and this year I got one silver and my first gold, which was such a relief considering this was my last Olympics."

"Oh, I bet, and you did it injured too." On the screen behind them there was a clip of Cosima on the half-pipe. "You actually were injured at Socchi, right? That must have been pretty horrifying."

"Yeah." Cosima gave her an exaggerated grimace. She could feel the blonde getting tense beside her. With nightmares still not a thing of the past, it was still a sensitive subject for her. "Really I was super embarrassed. There I was trying to impress the most beautiful woman I'd ever met in my life, and I ended up eating snow and passing out."

There was a collective "awwww" from the audience. "Wow. That must not have been easy to watch for you Delphine."

Delphine shook her head. "It was awful. We were friends since day one, but we had actually just..." She bit her bottom lip, looking for the words. "...started dating, I suppose..."

Cosima made quotation marks in the air and mouthed "started dating" which got a laugh.

Delphine gave her a nudge with her shoulder. "It was very terrifying and we were in Russia so of course I was not allowed in the hospital room so it was essentially me in my room texting Cosima's sister the entire time."

"But I'm pretty resilient." Cosima laughed, trying to lighten the mood. "And I got tons of sympathy points for knocking my own lights out and still managing to medal."

"I bet you did." The woman laughed. "So you both managed to medal and Delphine, I hear you've since moved to the states, I'm guessing on a work visa?"

Delphine nodded. "Yes, well after our relationship became public, I lost one of my major sponsors, which ended up being a good thing because I was picked up by Nike who agreed to sponsor me to train in San Francisco." She looked over at Cosima who gave her a small nod. "And with Nike being a global sponsor, it will make it easier when I move permanently."

The woman rose her eyebrows. "You're moving permanently?" She looked down at Delphine's hand and realization dawned on her. "Wait... am I sensing a congratulations is in order?"

Cosima chuckled. "I think it was...last week? I asked her to marry me and she totally said yes."

There was a cheer from the crowd. "Wow! That is so great! Congratulations!"

"Merci." Delphine smiled at Cosima, unable to stop herself. "Well, we haven't really told anyone yet so... you guys are the first to know!" Cosima directed towards the audience which got a laugh and applause.

"Wow, so your probably going to be in some trouble when you get home, huh? Will you look at that ring, do you mind if we..."

Delphine shook her head as the cameraman came up and got a closeup. "Well my parents live in Paris so not a big chance of them catching the show, but Cosima has a large family so, we might get yelled at."

"No we're pretty safe. They won't yell until after the surgery." Cosima commented nonchalantly, not realizing what she'd said until she felt her hand squeezed.

"You're having surgery?" The woman looked between them.

Delphine bit her bottom lip as she looked at Cosima who had a deer in headlights look on her face.

## Chapter 26

*Thank you so much for continuing to read this. There are only a few chapters left in this story and I appreciate all the comments and support I've gotten for it.*

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*"It's stage 1 lung cancer. It was a freak coincidence that they found it." Cosima cleared her throat, feeling the eyes and the silence like a weight bearing down on her shoulders. It was a disturbing feeling.*

*"So what exactly does the surgery entail?"*

*Cosima grimaced. "Well, they're removing a portion of the lung that's infected and hopefully it will..."*

"Fuck." Cosima turned the TV off with a growl and laid back, her hand pressed to her forehead. She hadn't meant to blurt it out like that, it had just slipped out, but once it came out, there was no taking it back. There was no changing things. It was out there. Everyone knew. Everyone knew she was sick and there was no avoiding it. Because of her big mouth, the whole world knew that she had cancer and was going to be missing parts of herself in a week.

"Calm down, mon amour." Delphine knelt in front of the couch the brunette was laying on, taking the remote and setting it on the coffee table. "Are you alright?" She held out the bottle of water and the two pills, watching as the woman sat up with a grunt. "Are you feeling any better?"

Cosima groaned with a pout, washing down the Tylenol. "No. I can't believe you let me tell the world I have cancer." She pouted, tangling her fingers with Delphine's, her finger automatically tracing the ring there.

Delphine rolled her eyes, leaning forward to brush her lips against Cosima's forehead. "Don't worry so much about it, Cosima." She tugged on a dread, leaning forward to brush against lips this time. "You should get dressed. Maybe if you get some real food into you, this headache will go away."

"I don't want real food." Cosima grumbled, standing up and stumbling her way to the bedroom, stripping off her clothes along the way, kicking off her pajama pants. "I don't want to see everyone." She continued to grumble, pulling her shirt over her head and letting it drop on the floor. "I want to stay home!" She yelled with back to the door.

"Don't shout, ma chérie." Delphine spoke, closer than she thought, causing the brunette to jump in surprise.

"Holy shit!" Cosima gave the blonde a glare, until an arm wrapped around her waist, pulling her closer, effectively wiping the glare off her face and replacing it with a grin. "You scared the crap out of me."

"Sorry." Delphine leaned down, pressing her lips against the brunette's for the briefest moment before pulling away. "Come on, this party is for you." She tossed the brunette's clothes in the laundry, having picked them up along the way.

Still in just her underwear, Cosima bit her bottom lip, hooking her fingers into the waist of Delphine's jeans. "Want to take a shower with me?" Pulling the blonde back over to her, she pushed herself up to the tips of her toes, meeting soft lips again. Maybe it was just the fact that she

loved the blonde completely, or maybe the impending surgery that would limit her physical activities for what could possibly be months, but she was feeling so addicted to the woman, taking every moment she could find to press herself against the warm body, longing to feel flesh against flesh. "I hear the rush of oxytocin from an orgasm helps eliminate pain like... oh... say a headache." She whispered between kisses, her fingers already undoing the button of the offending denim.

Delphine laughed. "I thought women used headaches to get out of sex, not the opposite."

Cosima gave her own laugh as she moved down, sliding the soft jeans over irresistible hips. "Naw, only straight girls do that cause guys don't know any better." Having pulled the woman's legs from the discarded clothes, she rose, brushing a kiss against the pale flesh of a belly as she stood.

Delphine allowed her shirt to be pulled off, wrapping her arms around the brunette to unlatch her bra. "You know we already took a shower..." She whispered, nuzzling the brunette's ear, nibbling on the soft lobe she found there.

Pulling away just long enough to start the shower, Cosima grinned, setting her glasses on the counter. "Are you saying you don't want to take a shower with me?" Pressing her lips against a soft shoulder, she unhooked the blonde's bra, letting it slide to the ground.

Pushing the brunette's panties down as she ran her hands along the woman's thighs, Delphine chuckled. "I did not say that, mon amour." She pushed the woman into the stream of the shower and up against the tile wall, claiming her lips.

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"You guys are so effing late." Sarah had a beer in her hand as she let Cosima and Delphine in, music coming into the house from the back yard. "Delphine, you're supposed to be rubbing off on her, not the other way around."

"Oh we do our fair amount of rubbing against each other."

"Cosima!" Delphine pinched the brunette who was laughing with her sister. "You two..." She huffed in frustration at the two who started laughing harder.

"I thought I heard cackling." Alison cleared her throat, her hands twisting together. "Cosima, Delphine, I'm happy to see you could make it."

Cosima and Sarah only ended up laughing harder.

"I presume there are drinks outside, non?" Delphine turned her back on the sisters, exiting out to the back yard where there was a good collection of people that had congregated, getting several greetings and hand waves. Having grown quite accustomed to the way the Niehauses had parties, she moved over to the barrel of water and ice and cringed as she plunged her hand in, grabbing a water for herself and a bottle of beer for Cosima, wrinkling her nose as she opened the bottle with the opener attached to the side of the barrel. She saw Cosima and Sarah exiting the house still chuckling and walked over. When Cosima reached for the bottle she shook her head. "Ah ah. No more sex jokes with your family."

Giving her an appalled look, Cosima reached for the bottle again only to get it pulled away again.

"No more."

"Fine." Cosima grabbed the bottle only to have the blonde refuse to let go.

"And a kiss."

A sultry grin slipping over her face, Cosima moved closer, wrapping her arm around the woman's neck, pulling her down until their lips met. She felt the tongue brush against her lips, tempting her to press closer, urging her on. As a fire began to burn in her gut, she let her lips part and felt the kiss deepen.

"Well, look who it is." Felix interrupted them, his voice thick with amusement.

Cosima groaned as Delphine pulled away, chasing her lips for a second before huffing. "I love you." She whispered before turning to Felix. "Hey Fe!"

"Give us a hug." Felix held his arms out until Cosima slipped into them. "You would think you two would get enough sack time at home and not in front of your friends?"

With a laugh, Cosima stepped back, slipping her hand into Delphine's. "Come on, look at this goddess. There's never enough time."

"Merde."

Felix rolled his eyes before holding his hand out to Delphine. "Let me see this ring I had to find out about by seeing it on the bleedin' tv." When he got Delphine's hand his eyes doubled in size. "Holy shite, Cos, is this Tiffany's." He lifted the pale hand higher, taking a closer look. "2.5 carats set in platinum? Fuck, Cos, I'd marry you for that ring."

"And this is why we don't let the drug dealers look too closely at the jewelry." Cosima eased Delphine's hand out of Felix's. She pat him on the cheek. "Come on Delphine, I think my mother wants to yell at us."

Delphine just went with the flow. They had planned on telling Cosima's family about the engagement before the show but everything had happened at once and now they were left sweeping up the pieces and accepting their chastigation. Throughout the afternoon, she had received more hugs and had been thoroughly chastised by all the members of the brunette's family and friends. As the sun began to set, Delphine smiled, straddling the bench, the picnic table littered with beer bottles and dirty plates, her arms wrapped around Cosima's stomach as the brunette leaned back against her. As Cosima laughed at a joke Sarah was telling, she couldn't stop herself from pressing a kiss to the woman's neck, breathing in the scent that had ingrained itself into her life so completely. "Je t'aime." Delphine whispered, so softly she wasn't sure the brunette had heard her. That was until she felt fingers intertwine with her own and the woman turned to look at her, exchanging a kiss that was feather soft, just the barest of grazes but enough to send a fire through her. Looking into dark hazel eyes, she saw nothing but love and adoration there and she knew that if anything happened to her, she would never survive.

## Chapter 27

*I was planning on splitting this into two chapters, but I decided to just combine it so I don't have to deal with posting two separate chapters. This also means there is only one more part after this. Thank you so much for reading.*

---

The sheets were cool beneath Delphine's back as the shorter form straddled her hips. She ran her hands up the bare thighs, sitting up to meet soft lips in a kiss. She bumped her nose against Cosima's, a grin pulling at the corner of her mouth. "You are so beautiful, ma cherie." Her fingers slipped over the bumps of the woman's ribs, caressing the softness of her skin.

Cosima hummed softly, running her own fingers up Delphine's biceps, up her neck, and cupping her cheeks. "You are the most important part of my life." Leaning forward, she captured the woman's lips in a gentle kiss, the barest of pressure sending a thrill through her entire body. "I love you, Delphine."

Delphine smiled against the kiss, her hands slipping up to cup breasts. "Je t'aime, Cosima." They had arrived at the hotel room not long ago and she gave in to the brunette's insistence on spending the entire night naked.

Covering the blonde's hands with her own, Cosima pressed closer, deepening the kiss with a groan, teeth raking over her bottom lip. "This was such a good idea."

With a chuckle, Delphine kissed her way down the woman's neck. "Thank you." She went with the hands that pushed her backwards, grinning as the hips settled between her thighs, lips beginning to move down her body. "I agree. It was a very good idea."

*"Marry me." Delphine whispered against Cosima's bare shoulder, knowing the woman was still awake.*

*Cosima looked over her shoulder, turning to face the blonde. She had been just on the edge of sleep before the soft voice nudged her back into consciousness. "We're already engaged, Delphine." She ran her hand through blonde curls, pushing the locks back and away from the woman's face.*

*"I know." Delphine toyed with one of the dreads, feeling it between her fingertips. "Marry me now." She looked over the woman's shoulder, noticing it was after midnight. "Well, today. We could be in Vegas in eight hours if we drive. 2 if we fly."*

*Raising her eyebrows, Cosima wrapped her arm around the woman's waist, pulling her closer. "What about the whole big wedding thing?"*

*With a chuckle, Delphine pressed her forehead against Cosima's. "All I need is you." She bit the corner of her lip, thinking about her argument. "I know you wanted to wait until after the surgery, but I don't." Pressing her lips against Cosima's, she smiled. "You wanted some sort of insurance, the power of attorney, just in case, and I signed it, but that's not what I want." Covering the shorter body with her own, Delphine smiled, peppering kisses across heated cheeks. "Marry me, Cosima. I don't want to wait until after the surgery. I want to be your wife."*

*Cosima grinned, feeling the blonde's hips settling between her thighs. This close, there was no way she could say no. "Ok." She flattened her palms, sliding them up the taut stomach. "You're going to have to tell my family though."*

Delphine's back arched as the brunette's tongue moved against her, arms wrapped around her thighs, holding her hips in place. Looking down, her gaze was locked with dark hazel eyes watching her closely and she groaned. She felt one arm release her thigh and then fingers slipping into her, moving against her in time with the tongue, leaving her breathless. All thoughts escaped her mind, thoughts of cancer and recovery time and possible death. The thought of losing Cosima was that much more distant with the brunette pressed against her, using months of practice and experimentation to wring every possible ounce of pleasure from her body. "Merde." Her voice came out in a high whimper, her hands tangled in dreads, pulling Cosima closer, begging for more.

Cosima would have laughed if her mouth weren't busy, driving her tongue hungrily against the slick flesh, flicking against the swollen bundle of nerves. She could feel the muscles clenching around her fingers, the blonde's thighs trembling on either side of her head a clear sign of the woman's impending release. With a mental smirk, she slipped her fingers deeper, curling and reaching, caressing the inner curve. The reaction was instant, a sudden gasp coming from above her, pulling her even closer, apparently attempting to strangle her. It was just a few seconds before she barely held the woman's hips down, the thrust of a pelvis threatening to break her nose if she hadn't been expecting it. She continued to move her tongue against the woman until the pale form collapsed back on the bed, her spent body still trembling as Cosima made a few more broad strokes with her tongue, humming at the addictive taste she clung to her lips even as she let her fingers slip out, wiping the slick wetness from her chin with the back of her arm before kissing her way up the woman's torso. The woman still twitched beneath her as she rested her head between the woman's breasts, listening to the quickly beating heart. "I'm going to miss this." Cosima whined, brushing kisses against the woman's chest. "It's going to be a long two months."

Delphine groaned, intertwining her fingers with Cosima's, pressing her lips against the ring that adorned Cosima's finger.

*"Your mother is going to kill me, Cosima." Delphine commented as they checked into the chapel, a science fiction themed wedding just seeming like the best way to make this as memorable as possible.*

*"No she won't. She'll kill me. She loves you and thinks the sun rises and sets out of your ass." Cosima played with the ring box in her hand, opening it and snapping it shut. They had stopped to pick up the rings that matched Delphine's engagement ring, Cosima completely objecting to the idea of brass rings the chapels offered.*

*"You're going to drop those." Delphine gave the brunette a side eye.*

*"No I'm not. I got this." Cosima grinned, pulling the blonde to her for a kiss.*

Easing Cosima onto her back, Delphine was keen to take her time, her lips lingering against a mouth that tasted like sex as her hand spread against her abdomen, getting a chuckle from the brunette. "You know, Cosima." She whispered, placing kisses down the woman's neck, her tongue peeking out to taste the saltiness of the thin layer of sweat on her skin. "I never thought I would meet the woman of my dreams in Russia."

Cosima laughed at that, her fingers tangling in blonde curls. "Well I'm sure you never thought you'd want to marry a woman."

Delphine smiled against her shoulder, gently nibbling the soft skin. "That is very true, and yet there you were, practically falling over yourself to get to know me."

"I was!" Cosima laughed again, the memory of herself tripping on the running track still as fresh

as the kisses moving down her chest, as the lips wrapping around her nipple. "Mmmm, on the other hand..." She bit her bottom lip, her back arching just slightly into the tongue that flicked across her breast. "I knew you were the woman of my dreams the moment I laid eyes on you." She looked down to see light hazel eyes staring up at her and a second later lips were covering her own again.

*"Light is the left hand of darkness  
and darkness is the right hand of light."*

*The priestess wrapped their joined hands with a silver cord, rings already placed on fingers.*

*"Two are one, life and death, lying  
together like lovers in kemmer, "*

*She placed her hand on their joined hands, smiling from the brunette to the blonde.*

*"like hands joined together,  
like the end and the way."*

*She raised both hands, placing it on each woman's shoulder. "May you Cosima, and you Delphine, go forth into the night as one, until the end of your days. You may now greet each other for the first time as one."*

*Cosima grinned as she pulled Delphine forward, her free hand cupping the blonde's cheek before meeting her lips softly, grinning as the arm slipped around her waist, pulling her closer.*

Delphine could feel the tears stinging her own eyes and she barely contained them, enjoying the gentle play of lips and tongue, her hand slowly sliding down the toned stomach and between Cosima's legs, her fingers greeted by liquid heat that brought a moan from her own throat. She felt one hand fisted in her hair, the other digging short nails into her bicep as she circled the swollen clit. After a minute, she broke off the kiss, taking a moment to enjoy the brunette's flushed face, lips parted just slightly, her eyes squeezed shut. With a soft hum, she brushed her lips against a heated cheek, sliding her fingers lower, pushing deep into the brunette's core.

Cosima whimpered, her hips moving against the thrusting fingers.

"Je veux passer ma vie avec toi." Delphine whispered into the woman's ear, capturing the lobe between her teeth. "Je t'aime, ma femme." The heel of her palm brushed against the woman's clit with each thrust. "My wife." She whispered in English before capturing Cosima's lips once more, trembling lips responding easily. As she felt the trembles spread from lips down the woman's body, muffled whimpers coming from her throat, Delphine pulled back, watching as the brunette arched into her touch, rolling hips freezing in place as nails dug deeper into her bicep, no doubt leaving marks that would remain in the morning. And as the smaller form unfurled, dropping in a heap of immobile limbs, Delphine pressed a kiss to her temple, snuggling against her side. "Don't ever leave me, please."

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Delphine sat in the chair, completely uncomfortable, a cup of bitter coffee in her hand. She wasn't really thirsty, but it was warming her hands. Normally she was a patient person. Years of training had taught her how to deal with waiting and pressure, how to cut the world off and just wait. All the training in the world didn't help. Her hands were shaking as she lifted the cup to her lips, taking a small sip.

Cosima had told her to go do something, not to linger around in the hospital waiting room when there was nothing she could really do, but she didn't want to leave, not for a minute. She wanted

to see her, as soon as was possible, as soon as Cosima came out of surgery. She didn't want to risk being away for even a minute.

*Delphine was humming softly as she ran her hand through Cosima's dreads, organizing them, trying to do anything to fill the time. She knew they would end up getting covered by a hair cap later, but she found it comforting. "So I was thinking that maybe we could go someplace warm for our honeymoon. Maybe someplace tropical?" She toyed with the additional ring that was on her finger, the nurse having threatened to take it from Cosima, saying she needed to remove all jewelry.*

*Cosima chuckled, trying to remain calm despite the fact that she was laying on a gurney in a hospital gown, an IV in her arm and metal bars dropped to allow Delphine to lean closer with ease. "Tropical like Hawai'i? Or Tropical like the Bahamas?"*

*Delphine wrinkled her nose. "You and I have already been to Hawai'i, maybe not together but..." She hummed softly, trailing a fingertip down the brunette's jaw, brushing a thumb over chapped lips. "How about... Grand Cayman? Or we could go to St. John's."*

*Cosima pressed a kiss against the wandering thumb. "I'll have you know that sex on a beach is pretty..." She wrinkled her nose and shuddered. "Just imagine... sand... everywhere."*

*Delphine winced. They both watched as the nurse injected something into the IV line. "Well, we can talk about it later."*

*"Whoa." Cosima spoke suddenly. "Aren't they supposed to do the whole count down from a hundred thing?" She laughed, her eyelids suddenly getting heavier, her tongue peeking out to lick her lips. "Delphine?"*

*Delphine intertwined her fingers with Cosima's, bringing the knuckles up to her lips as she brushed a kiss against them. "Yes mon amour?"*

*"Nothing. I just like the sound of your name." Cosima grinned, each blink taking longer as every second passed.*

*Seeing the brunette's eyes begin to dilate, Delphine leaned down, brushing her lips against Cosima's. "Je t'aime, Cosima." She bumped her nose against the woman's.*

*"I love you, Delphine. I'll see you later, ok?" The ok trailed off as Cosima's eyes dropped shut.*

Delphine pushed herself out of the seat, dropping the cup into the trash as she began to pace back and forth. It had been over two hours since the brunette had gone in and she was feeling nervous, more-so than when she'd been at the Olympics, more than when an entire nation was depending on her to bring home victory. Crossing her arms over her chest, she continued to pace until a presence blocked her path.

"How about we step outside for some air, love?" Siobhan put a comforting hand on her shoulder, having come with the rest of the family.

"Non, I want to be here..."

Siobhan put her arm around the blonde's shoulder. "You can spare a minute, chicken. You look like you're about to pass out. Some air would do you better than this pacing."

Biting her bottom lip nervously, Delphine allowed herself to be ushered outside, casting one look behind her, feeling an odd sensation in her gut. The feeling of dread.

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There was a steady beep of the heart monitor, the near silent whooshing of the ventilator pushing air into the unconscious woman. The soft sound of classic rock poured from one of the radios as the nurses moved around the operating room, one doctor studying a screen as his hands moved with practiced ease. Things had been going smoothly, just three small incisions in the patient's side allowing a camera, and the two tools for cutting away the lobe to move around the body with ease. He had already tied off the airway that went into the lobe as well as the blood vessels, allowing him to begin cutting away the infected portion.

"Doctor? The patient's blood pressure has dropped another 5 points." One of the nurses spoke, looking at the monitor.

Almost at the same time, the surgeon turned the camera to see blood coating the area. "Shit." He sighed as he turned the camera just slightly again, seeing more blood than would be normal. "Ok everyone, looks like we're not going to be able to do this the easy way." He was quick to remove the tools, setting them aside as a nurse handed him a scalpel. This wasn't the first time he'd had to do this. VATS was always the first choice, but sometimes it wasn't the best option. "Looks like Miss Niehaus is going to make it difficult for us. Open thoracotomy it is." As he made a quick slice along the length of the bone, he handed the scalpel off and accepted the surgical scissors, making fast work of cutting through the muscles. "Rib spreader." He asked just seconds before the tool was placed in his hand. As he cranked the handle, spreading the ribs, he cursed at the amount of blood he found beginning to fill the area. "Suction!" He demanded, the gauze in his hand getting soaked red. "Where the hell is she bleeding from?" He spoke softly as the blood seemed to pool just as quickly as it was being removed.

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Cosima blinked, opening her eyes to a darkness that seemed vast and unending. She noticed her face was free of glasses but she could see clearly, even if there was so little to see. Taking a deep breath, she noticed two things. One was that she smelt nothing. There was no sweetness or saltiness or anything of the sort, just the same void on her senses. The second thing she noticed was that the itching urge to cough was gone. She didn't know why that was significant, no memory of having the feeling, but for some reason she was relieved she didn't feel it.

The sound of lapping got her attention, soft at first, then growing louder, echoing just slightly. Looking down, it was the first time she noticed she was in a boat, a small rowboat. Dark water bumped against the wooden siding in tiny waves but the boat remained as still as a rock. Only when she began to ponder on the strangeness of the situation did the boat begin to rock gently, as if the boat and water realized how odd it was to remain stagnant.

"Hello?" Cosima winced as her voice echoed off the darkness, as if she was in a small room but it was too dark to see the walls. With a sigh, she looked around the area, trying to find any way to figure out what was going on. Looking down, she noticed she was in a hospital gown and suddenly she felt very cold, hugging her knees.

What was she doing there? She tried to remember the last thing she did, why she was in a boat in the middle of nowhere, but nothing came to her. How could there be nothing but darkness around her, pressing down on her, chilling her to the bone and consuming her? Her chin resting against her knees, she looked down at her feet, feeling cut off from everything and everyone. No one was there for her. No one was there with her. Why did she feel so alone? She felt as if she was missing something...someone. Who was she missing?

Suddenly, there was a pin light, shining down on her toes. Her brow scrunching in confusion and she watched as the light slowly began to expand, a small circle beginning to fill the bottom of the boat, encircling her. With a wince, she looked up into the blinding light above her, raising her hand up to block it, trying to see past the blaring center of it. There was a warmth in the light,

something she'd never felt before, not that she could remember. It wrapped around her, embracing her, tempting her.

*"Cosima."*

Finally a voice came from the darkness, not from the light. Looking forward, she noticed she wasn't alone anymore. "Delphine." The name came to her easily and she knew instantly. This was who she was waiting for. She watched as the blonde stood easily, as if they weren't in a boat, as if there was no danger of tipping over. The blonde knelt before her, somehow illuminated with her own light. "Where are we?" Warm hands cupped her cheek and, looking into hazel eyes, it was like she saw all the secrets of the universe. "I don't know what's going on. I can't remember anything before this, just that I was aware of how alone I was."

"I will never leave you." Delphine whispered, leaning forward to brush her lips against the brunette's.

Cosima felt warmth spreading not just around her, but through her, a warmth she was intimately aware of. Closing her eyes, she was surprised to see the light getting brighter instead, blinding her again but in a way she felt no need to block out. Instead she let it consume her, let it become a part of her, pulling her in all directions. Where it was taking her, she didn't know, but she went willingly.

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**\*note: The first half of the wedding vows were taken from *The Left Hand of Darkness* by Ursula K. Le Guin. The ending sequence Cosima goes through is actually a personal experience I had, slightly modified for Cophine.**

## Chapter 28

*As a heads up... As a present to tatarrific for her birthday a little bit back, I allowed her to decide if Cosima lived or died so any curses or appreciation can be sent to her...Thank you so much for taking this journey with me. This is the last chapter of this version of Cophine. Thank you for all the reviews and support you've given me and for putting up with me.*

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"Hello Delphine." Alison smiled softly as the blonde slipped into the van after piling her suitcase into the trunk.

"Bonsoir, Alison." Delphine gave the brunette a thin smile, buckling her seat belt as the soccer mom pulled out of the airport and began navigating through traffic. She sighed softly, looking out the window. "Thank you for picking me up."

"Oh, it's no problem at all." Alison risked a quick glance at the woman, the incessant need to exchange pleasantries nagging at her. "So, did you have a good flight?"

Delphine nodded, but didn't turn to the woman. "It was pleasant enough, but there was a baby four rows back that did not enjoy the flight so much." She closed her eyes. Having been staring out onto the buildings and cars passing by, nothing seemed as vibrant as it once was. There were shades of grey and muted pastels, and she'd rather not look at all, not when the memory of things were so much brighter. She felt as if she'd lost part of herself... as if she didn't exist in the same space she had before. She'd been gone for almost a month. Almost a month since she'd felt the hole form in her heart. It had been almost a month, since the funeral.

Had it really been almost a month? That explained the weight she knew she'd lost. Her mother had tried to comfort her, tried to keep her fed and motivated, but it barely kept her mobile. She was plagued by so many memories, so many missed chances because of times spent overseas. She sighed softly. After the month away, it was so odd to be back in San Francisco and she felt an anxiety building inside of her. She was restless or scared or maybe a mixture of both.

Alison remained quiet, very aware that the blonde did not want to talk. She didn't blame her so instead she just kept her eyes on the road, following the GPS as it told her to exit. She hadn't been to the building more than a few times so she had yet to memorize the route. "The kids are really excited to see you. They've missed you."

Delphine nodded, taking a deep breath. "I've missed everyone. I brought back a few things for everyone, but they're somewhere near the bottom of my bag." She barely remembered what she had bought. She'd been on autopilot mostly, buying silly knick-knacks that she knew the Americans would love. She watched as familiar streets led them to a large building, the parking lot vacated this late at night.

"I have to pick something up inside."

Delphine looked up at the building, sighing softly before entering. She looked around, her brow furrowing. It was so quiet. A month ago, things had been so lively, so colorful, and now she was afraid the sorrow and loss had tainted even this place that had meant so much to her. She set her bags down, stripping off her coat and biting her bottom lip as she moved through the backroom.

"You're back."

Delphine looked up to see the brunette standing in the bathroom doorway and it was as if the color went back into the world as her arms were suddenly filled with the smaller form. Her shoulders felt a hundred pounds lighter even as she lifted the woman up, enjoying the feeling of their bodies pressed together. "I missed you so much, mon amour." She whispered, breathing in the familiar scent of the woman's perfume.

"God I missed you so much." Cosima groaned as she was hugged tightly. Lips captured her own and she could feel the desperation in them. She wrapped her arm around the woman's shoulder as a tongue teased her lips, groaning softly before pulling back, wiping a tear away from the pale cheek. "I talked to your mom this morning and she's super worried about you. I had to promise to make sure you ate something when you got home."

Delphine nodded, pressing her forehead against Cosima's. "I just... every time I would look into the kitchen, I remembered being a little kid... watching my father baking... and it was too much." She brushed her lips against the brunette's once more. "I don't want to talk about my father tonight." Bumping her nose against the brunette's, she hummed softly. "It's so quiet."

"Yeah, everyone's already gone." Cosima looked over Delphine's shoulder at her sister who was standing askwardly, picking at one of the shelves. "Hey Alison."

Alison gave her a tight lipped smile and an expectant look.

"Oh! Yeah sorry, come on." Cosima slipped her hand into Delphine's, pulling her towards the main office.

Delphine let her eyes linger over the walls that had become so familiar to her. Three years ago, after Cosima's surgery, she had made the decision to pull out from the Olympics and instead dedicated her time to living her life with the brunette. While in France, she had seen all the hype about the winter games that were in Korea in less than 6 month, but it didn't matter. She wasn't going. There was no going back now. Even if she wanted to, even if she spent every day training, there was no way she could hold out against girls ten years younger than herself, so instead she filled the time she'd previously dedicated to practicing by throwing herself into work...into the vision that had come to life just two years ago.

Art had helped so much with the business aspect, coordinating with lawyers and builders when neither Cosima or she herself had any real eye for the business part of it. Everyone had helped, even Alison had worked with the advertisement company and had even chosen the color scheme. Helena had actually helped with the painting, finding great joy in slapping coats of paint eagerly and sporadically against the walls, followed of course by Sarah tidying up the detailed work, cleaning up the spilled buckets of paint. Even Felix had come in to help, painting a beautiful mural on one wall. They had all stepped up to help while Cosima recovered, determined to make this dream a reality. City Slopes, as it had been named, was incredibly popular. Open from the beginning of Spring to the end of Fall, it was always busy, always packed with not just paying customers, but with the charity program as well. They had brought in some of the best snowboarders and skiers to help, some of them willing to hold classes for the charity program without expecting any payment.

There was a disgruntled noise coming from the office as they got near and Cosima laughed as they entered, leaning down into the small travel playpen to scoop up the one year old, pressing her lips to the infant's forehead. "Sorry, Bump. Look who's home."

"Mamamamama." The baby immediately reached for Delphine.

Delphine hummed as she accepted the baby, placing a kiss to the fine blonde hair that covered the

girl's head. "Look at you, Elizabeth. I haven't seen you in two weeks and already you're so much bigger." She closed her eyes, breathing in the scent of the baby that always calmed her. Cosima and the baby had been with her in Paris for most of the time, but business had called the brunette back to the states. It had been better for everyone for her to take the baby with her where she had a family that could help.

Cosima watched as the blonde whispered soft words to the baby, rocking back and forth. It had been almost four years since they met and she couldn't believe how strange her life had been. Meeting in Russia. Getting married. Cancer. Her operation. Getting surprised with a ring at their second wedding that had included all of their friends and family. City Slopes opening. The birth of their daughter. And yet she couldn't help feeling a bit guilty, for everything the blonde had given up. If she herself felt bad about not competing this year, how did the blonde feel. "So, Alison has agreed to help us out for the night and is going to happily deal with our exuberantly calm and cheerful baby."

Looking up in surprise, Delphine could see the familiar look in her wife's eyes and barely held back a grin. "Ah, thank you Alison." She brushed her lips against the baby's head before handing her to her other mother.

Cosima hugged the small form and placed one more kiss on the baby's forehead before handing her over to Alison. "Aunty Alison is going to take good care of you tonight and we'll see you in the morning, Bump."

"If that nickname sticks with her, I'm going to kill you, Cosima." Delphine commented, waving as Alison made her way out of the building, the door closing behind her.

Cosima grinned. "Kill is kind of an aggressive word, you know. How about punish? I'm pretty sure I'd be up for some punishment. I have been a very, very bad girl." Cosima laughed as the blonde moved up to her. She hummed softly, her fingers pulling the blonde's tank top from her jeans. "I figured you'd like a night with just me and you." Tossing the tank top to the side, she gasped, noting ribs being more defined than they were before. "Oh, honey. We need to get some food into you." She shook her head, making quick work of undressing the rest of her, feeling her own clothes being shucked off. She led the blonde over to the couch that was already well acquainted to their bodies.

"I just want you." Delphine whispered, pressing the woman into the soft surface. "I've missed you so much." She brushed her lips down the woman's neck. She'd missed her wife desperately and she was glad to finally be home. As she brushed her lips down the woman's chest, she paid extra attention to the thin scar along the length of her ribs, trying not to think too much about almost losing her.

Cosima swallowed audibly, pulling Delphine up to capture soft lips again, her hands coming up to cup soft cheeks as she pressed her entire body along the blonde's. "Do you regret pulling out of the Olympics?"

Giving her an incredulous look, Delphine captured her lips in another kiss, her hips settling between Cosima's thighs, her tongue teasing the brunette's lips for a second before pulling away. "Cosima... you are the most important thing in my life and I don't regret a single moment I've spent with you. I don't need anymore medals. I've got you, and Elizabeth and all her silly aunts and I couldn't be happier."

Looking up at the blonde, Cosima's eyes narrowed. "You're not just saying this because I'm adding that skating rink are you?" Her suspicious look only lasted a minute before a full grin replaced it.

"Yes. I am only still with you for the skating rink..." Delphine rolled her eyes before pressing a kiss to the brunette's ear. "And of course... ta chatte goût incroyable." She whispered softly.

Cosima groaned as hips pressed into her center.

Her lips brushing against soft cheeks, Delphine smiled happily, unable to even imagine what her life would have been like if things hadn't gone the way they did.

*"Cosima." Delphine held the woman's hand in her own, brushing a kiss against the knuckles. They had expected the woman to wake up from the anesthesia over an hour ago, but for some reason she was still unconscious. The doctor hadn't seemed too alarmed, but Delphine was beyond worried. It was hard enough seeing the tube going through on nostril and into her lung, preventing liquid from collecting. There was also a tube hidden under the woman's gown, a chest tube also draining fluids.*

*They had said it was a success. They had eventually had to go in the hard way and she knew that increased recovery time, but for the time being she was just happy the woman was breathing and the steady beat of the monitor was a soothing balm on her heart, but she was still worried. She leaned over the railing, pressing a kiss to the woman's forehead. "Wake up, Cosima." She whispered, nuzzling the soft skin of her ear. "I'm going to stay right here until you wake up." Another kiss and she could feel the tears stinging her eyes. "I will never leave you." When she leaned back, she was surprised to see the dark hazel eyes moving erratically under her eyelids. "Cosima?" A long few seconds passed and suddenly the dark hazel eyes opened just a bit, as if trying to focus. "Hold on." Delphine quickly grabbed the woman's glasses, slipping them on. "Don't try to talk, there's a tube."*

*Cosima's face scrunched up in displeasure as she moved her jaw, her tongue moving against the tube going down the back of her throat. Her eyes drifted up to Delphine and her expression changed to a familiar smile if a little loopy one.*

*Delphine breathed a sigh of relief, leaning down to press another kiss to the side of Cosima's mouth, caressing her face. "Welcome back, mon amour, let me call the doctor." She stopped when a hand grabbed her own and she turned to see the brunette taking her hand and pressing it to the center of her chest, watching as dark hazel eyes began to fill with tears. She felt her own eyes start to mist over and she moved back to the side of the bed, pressing her lips to the woman's cheek, letting herself be filled with the absolute relief, releasing the tension and worry that had been taking over her complete being the entire day. "Je t'aime, Cosima." She whispered, beyond relieved that it wouldn't be the last time.*

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