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## Cosanova

by [otp324B21](#)

### Summary

Cosima is the sexual deviant of Venice known as Cosanova. Delphine is a French girl betrothed to another. What happens when their paths cross?

## The Scent of Sin

*Ok, so this story was inspired when I was watching Casanova, the Heath Ledger version. You'll notice similarities between that movie and the first chapter, but that should be it. It doesn't really follow the storyline of the movie, but it does keep the same cavalier, non-historically-accurate feel to it. This is meant to be a super raunchy comedy I guess. I'm so so sorry. This is the first story I've ever had beta'd and I'd like to thank [jaybear1701](#) for being the main beta, as well as [trylonandperisphere](#) (who unofficially became my second beta and was very unforgiving in the ways of punctuation), and the other members of [obfrankenfic](#) who provided hilarious commentary while being continuously supportive along the way of this story being written. This is my gift to all of Clone Club for continuing to read and write fanfic when times in the fandom were a bit troublesome.*

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"Praise the lord." The woman laid in her bed, or rather across it, her legs spread licentiously. Her dark tunic and underskirts were lifted unapologetically, her undergarments stripped away to provide access for her lover's mouth, latched onto her holiest of places. One hand tangled in long black locks, the other gripped at the metal bed frame, squeaking loudly as the thrashing woman jerked at it, accompanying the sound of lustful moans. "Yes...Sweet Mother Mary, yes."

The head between her legs belonged to a form smaller than most, delicate and soft fingers plunging into heated depths as a tongue moved hungrily against the writhing woman's core, the swollen bundle of nerves sending shocks and jolts of pure pleasure through her exposed body. Arousal pooled beneath gyrating hips, soaking through thin underskirts trapped beneath her quivering thighs. "Keep moving, m'lady, and we'll never get this done." A scratchy voice growled into the dark curls covering a soaking mound.

"Apologies, M'lord. Oh merciful God, please don't stop."

The hand tangled in hair moved to a shoulder, the bite of nails felt even through the billowy white swordsman shirt. There was something about being addressed by a title reserved for those of power that caused fingers and tongue to attack the woman's sex with renewed vigor, diving where no man had ever gone. There was no guilt for a deflowering performed months ago, not with the sweet vulgarities that fell from full lips. Not with the memory of those lips bringing pleasure of their own not more than a fortnight ago. If this was a sin, it was one worthy of spending an eternity in damnation, just for a taste of these sweet forbidden wells, from the depths of this fountain of youth.

A knock on the door sounded, echoing off the stone walls of the small cell.

"No no no." The woman in bed cried out, her fingers clenching around the soft white material of the shirt. "Please."

The door creaked open, a woman peeking in but keeping eyes averted, as if such sights were painful to see by eyes filled with envy. "The Mother Superior approaches, Sister Mary Catherine."

The fully clothed form sat up, wiping a rolled sleeve across feminine features, a devilish smirk appearing. "That's my cue, m'lady."

"No. Don't leave me like this." The woman cried, unrepentant as she pulled the small hand

between her legs, rocking against the fingers.

With a roll of dark hazel eyes, the woman captured the whimpering lips in a searing kiss, prying her hand away. "Do not dwell on it, m'lady. If I'm discovered, you'll find salvation through your own hand alone. Save your pleasure for when I next return. I shall show you more delight than you've yet to witness," she promised, placing a kiss on knuckles as she pulled away. As she moved to the door, the woman standing there, dressed in tunic and veil, the habit of a holy servant of the church, captured her face, applying a hungry kiss to her lips.

"You will remember me as well when you return, won't you Cosanova?" The woman asked even as the small form was pulling away, struggling to slip her boots on.

"Of course, of course. I could never forget such a beauty as you, Sister Mary..."

"Elizabeth!" The nun called to her retreating form.

With a laugh Cosanova was struggling to fasten the belt holding her breeches up, her boots hitting the ground before her feet in the irritating way they did when the laces weren't fastened.

"Cosanova!" The women called as she ran by their small cell bedrooms. She waved, trying not to dismiss any of the women that had been the recipient of her attentions in the many months she'd been visiting the convent. She made sure her scarf was in place, disguising her features, lest they discover the wolf in their chicken house was actually a fox. Running down the hall she rounded a corner and ran right into the Monsignor, a man old enough to be her grandfather and powerful enough to have her lashed in the square. Quick on her feet, she laughed, keeping her voice low. "Forgive me Monsignor, I was just leaving." She said as she backed away, seeing the look on his face morph from confusion to understanding and then to anger.

"You there. Stop where you stand." A voice sounded behind her, this one more feminine but just as ancient.

Cos turned to see the Mother Superior coming down the hallway quickly, her tunic in hand so as not to trip. "Well," Cos laughed, looking around for an exit, her eyes landing on the window, "I'd love to stay and chat about the current state of religious affairs, but I'm afraid I have a prior engagement."

There was no fear in her as she hopped out the window, her boots hitting the clay shingles of the roof but finding no purchase. She was sliding down the slanted surface, towards the edge and no doubt a very long drop. Luckily, as many of the women housed in the building were quite aware, she was blessed with the gift of strong hands and her fingers managed to grasp the edge of the building as her body continued over and off the roof, her hands holding her small form easily.

"Damn." She glanced down, the ground looking dangerously far away. "Well, this was not how I intended this day to go."

Dangling from the edge, her fingers were starting to cramp as she gathered her options, eyes searching for a way to climb down without risking her neck.

"Smooth, Cos. Smooth," she mumbled, glancing around. To her unbelievable luck, a cart was passing on the street beneath her. Seeing an opportunity, she said a quick prayer before releasing her hold, falling for an eternity.

Maybe it was her gift of bringing religion to so many women, having heard them exclaim their prayers to the lord with exhausting exuberance, but for some reason the Good Father blessed her with landing safely in the cart full of hay, not a single injury to her, save the lack of one boot

which was possibly still on the roof, or perhaps on the street where it had fallen. Her chest heaving as she gasped for air, laughter erupted from her throat as she took stock of her body. She had managed to grab most of her clothes before she'd been rudely interrupted but her waistcoat was no doubt still hanging from the bed frame of one Sister Mary Marguerite...or was it Celeste. Whichever it was, she would retrieve it eventually, on some other night where she could feast on the sweet nectar of arousal.

"Caught again, Cosima? Or dare I say *Cosanova*?"

The voice brought a grin to Cosima's face as she pulled down her scarf and flipped over in the hay, crawling over the large mound to fall onto the wooden seat beside the driver. "Scott! Did you know I'd be in need of a savior or are you just a victim of happenstance?"

The man, no more than a boy really, laughed nervously, pushing his spectacles further up his nose. "I checked with your brother and he said you went into town for confession." He gave her a knowing look. "Saw you dangling like a circus performer from the roof and thought you might need some assistance. I take it by the state of your undress and the scent of sin on your breath that confession went well."

"Oh, confess I did." Cosima leaned back in the seat, her arms stretching out along the back of the bench. "To God and his servants did I confess all my sins, old and new, and it was glorious." She smirked.

"You're going to get yourself in trouble with the law, if you're not more careful." Scott shook his head, snapping the reins at the horses to continue moving down the path. "You'll face life in prison or possibly the guillotine... banishment at the least if you continue this debauchery."

"You're starting to sound like my father, God rest his filthy soul." Cosima rolled her eyes, straightening out the sleeves that she had rolled up earlier that day, lest they soak up the very juices she desired during her ministrations. "Where are we headed anyway, Scotty boy? I'm due back for supper not long from now."

Scott gave her a look, shaking his head. "Perhaps you might consider a stroll, by foot, back to your manor if time is short. This load is due at Monsieur Gallant's by sundown."

Pursing her lips, Cosima looked down at her one foot that lacked a boot, wrinkling her nose in displeasure. "Well, I could use a nap before dinner anyway." She chuckled as she shifted her position, crossing her arms over her chest to get comfortable. "My brother will just have to suffer a meal alone."

## Children of Satan

*Thank you all for the comments so far. I'm glad y'all are enjoying this quirky story.*

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"Just breathe." Nimble fingers tracing the bones of the corset she was strapped into, Delphine glanced out upon the city of Venice, her eyes taking in sights and colors of the so-called City of Romance. It was a far different creature than Paris, having been born and raised in the city of Love. She would soon step upon the shores of the port city to meet the man she was intended to marry. Man... boy... what was he really? She'd never once laid her eyes upon him, and yet she was forced to take his hand in marriage, to lay with him in a loveless bond, and carry his children as though she were a breeding sow.

She had been raised knowing she was beautiful, knowing that her light eyes and golden hair made her a much desired acquisition for men from coast to coast and beyond. Of course she despised it. She loathed it. She hated the very idea of a man claiming her like a prize to be had. She was no man's prize, be he a lord or a lowly cobbler. She was not a girl with a simple mind, knowing only the ways of the kitchen and the thimble, begging her husband to fill her womb with a creation of their nightly courtships. She was beyond the patronizing pats on the head of a man that would no doubt claim her virginity as a token of his masculinity before infecting her with his seed of fruition. The very thought of being filled by his Venetian manhood made her nauseous and short of breath, replacing her once delicate complexion with a pallor closer to the pea soup the ship's cook was so fond of.

"Delphine! Come away from the railing before you fall." The voice of Madame Cormier called to her like a woman would to a child, as if she hadn't seen her seventeenth Summer months ago, celebrated in Paris before they left, her heart heavy with the knowledge that she would not celebrate her eighteenth in the city of her birth.

"Maman, the railing is higher than this dreadful prison you've encased my body in for the sake of enhancing my bosoms." Complaints fell easily from her lips these days with no father figure to chastise her. Her maman dared not strike her, for risk of damaging the merchandise. Marriage, however, Madame Cormier was not willing to budge on. No, she'd sold her daughter off to some young lord in this City of Sin. She dared not think about what her life here would be like, where the air smelled like piss instead of fresh bread.

"Colin. Talk some sense into your sister." She heard her maman command and a smile touched her face.

Delphine dared her brother to attempt such a thing. He was small and slight, shorter than herself in stature, even in his heeled shoes. She could sense his presence beside her as he leaned against the railing and she waited patiently for him to comment, to regurgitate the warning and cautions of her possible venture overboard with the ship moving slower than a slug on a cold autumn morning. As if she would be so lucky. She would welcome death over the prospect of her future life, a death she'd deliver unto herself if not for the threat of suffering damnation to purgatory.

"Delphine... for the love of God... stop behaving like an infant." His voice was as whiny as a child. If it weren't for sharing a womb with him, she'd suspect he was still a boy bordering on the transition into manhood.

Raising an eyebrow and her lips curling in a smirk, Delphine looked at her brother, his spectacles

doing little to enhance his looks. He wasn't too unattractive. They were sired by the same man, after all, emerging from the same loins just barely hours apart. No fault laid upon his shoulders for his lack of height and strength. She feared he himself would never find love. She could only pray that he would find it before their maman forced him into an equally unhappy relationship as she herself was doomed to.

"Is a boy not much older than an infant himself accusing his dearest of sisters of behaving as an infant would?" Delphine turned and leaned back, resting her elbows behind her on the railing, her eyes casting upwards at the sky devoid of any clouds. The most brilliant of blues expanded from East to West, a sight that was rare indeed for the Parisian. "We find ourselves now living in a den of sin, dear brother." Her head lolled to the side, taking in his fair features observing the activities on the nearing dock. "Maybe you'll find yourself fitting in more so than you did in Paris. Hopefully the woman you fall in love with won't be riddled with the infection of her privates, for I'm sure you won't find a single virgin within these walls." She mocked, knowing the expectations their maman had put upon his slouching shoulders.

Colin paled, his complexion compensating for the absent clouds, staring upon his sister in shock. "You are quite vulgar this morning." He sniffled, pushing the metal frames higher on his nose.

"Yes well you're not the one having to spread yourself naked and open to some beast of a man in the name of the *sanctity of marriage*..." With as wicked a grin as the fallen angel Lucifer would bear, she leaned closer to him, her lips stopping but a hair's distance from his ear, "...despite your craving for such delights." She watched in amusement as his cheeks colored a shade no lighter than the blood of Christ in the papal chalice. "I'm sure you long to be spread beneath the weight of such a creature, his naked manhood disappearing between your lips and down your throat, or perhaps thrusting into your nether regions, his seed spilling into you with futility, in search of a womb it would never find."

"Delphine!" Colin hissed, turning away in such anger that she felt the slightest sliver of guilt at his embarrassment.

Delphine chuckled, her arm slipping around his frail shoulders to pull him into a hug despite his tense form. "Come now, brother. Surely in this den of sin we might find you love. If maman pushes for a wife, we shall find you one who craves for naught of your skinny ass and will allow you to browse the catacombs for the love of a good man." She pressed a kiss to his temple, moving to where their mother awaited.

"What secrets are you keeping again, children of Satan?" Madame Cormier glared at her offspring, aggravation obvious in her stance.

"But we're your children, Maman." The mocking innocence was obvious in Delphine's barb as she gathered the woman in a crushing embrace.

"If only you would behave as so." The older woman huffed, pushing her daughter away.

The three were startled suddenly as the ship bumped into the dock, activity bustling as the crew scurried about, pulling ropes and tying knots and whatever else men of the sea did when not huffing and groaning into each other while hidden behind crates of rum and turnips. Delphine herself had stumbled upon a scene only four days into their travels, not surprised to find hair as blonde as her own and hands, small and pale, clenched around the burlap of a sack of oranges. The sounds of her brothers whimpered laugh echoed off the ship's cargo hold and mingled with the grunts of none other than the first mate. As the scaffolding was fastened to the dock, she watched as the same burly man hopped onto the wooden surface, gathering a slender woman in his arms with a laugh, a small boy with a similar nose and smile clinging to her skirts.

She dared a glance at her brother, an unreadable expression on his face as he took in the scene before him. "Come on Colin." Her arm settled around his shoulders again, shaking sense into him. "My future defiler awaits!"

## The Heated Depths of Her... Heart?

*Thank you so much for continuing to read this quirky story. I'm really enjoying writing it and seeing your guys' responses keeps me writing. Thank you so much for that and thanks to jaybear1701 who continues to point out all the flaws I never see ;)*

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"Hello, dear brother." Cosima's voice echoed off the high ceilings of the estate, double doors closed silently behind her, the air thick with discord. There was mischief in her voice as she pulled the scarf from her neck, fully aware and finding much joy in the irate look upon her brother's sharply planed face.

"Where on Earth have you been?" The man descended the stairs with a disgruntled huff, his hair neatly swept to the side, his body encased in a dark blue and gold brocade dress coat. "You realize we have guests arriving for dinner in less than half an hour, and what are you wearing?" His lip curled in disgust, not unlike one their father had given her when he'd walked in on her and the governess he'd hired, herself at a ripe age of fifteen, barely old enough to enjoy the tongue between her thighs and the hands cupping her still growing breasts.

Cosima grinned, no more afraid of her brother as she was her dead father. He was but a year older than herself, yet oddly more reserved. Despite coming of age three years past, she'd yet to see him bat an eye towards a feminine form, preferring instead to throw himself into his work maintaining the stables. For as many years, she'd suspected he was as much a delinquent as she was in preference for sexual partners, more than sure she'd heard him in the stables being tended to by none other than one of the many stable boys, yet here he was about to meet his bride. Then again, it was an arranged marriage, a business proposal of sorts for the Lord of the house, hoping to continue the family line with a son...or whatever.

"Ah, your dinner. It must have slipped my mind. I haven't a clue how I could have forgotten such an important event." As Cosima ascended the stairs, she intentionally bumped into his slender shoulder, nearly spinning him in place, pausing to take a deep breath. "Hmm, Brother, perhaps a little less rose water in your bath next time. You smell pretty enough for me to almost find you attractive."

"And you smell like a brothel." His barb was as sharp as his eyebrows, carefully manicured like a common prostitute. "Really I don't know why I put up with you. I've had many offers from gentlemen seeking your hand in marriage." He spoke with the tongue of a snake, his lips turning in a smirk of his own as she spun away from him. "Go wash the filth off before our guests arrive. And dress appropriately before I turn you over to the blacksmith, a perfect match for his heathen tastes. Rumor has it his last wife choked to death on his cock and he continued on with his attempt to impregnate her corpse." He called out as she walked away.

"You wouldn't dare." Cosima responded with a laugh as her bedroom doors closed behind her. There was no worry in her for her brother was all talk. On her bed there laid a dress matching her brother's coat and looking very much like a cage to imprison her.

"I've heated your bath, M'lady." The chambermaid emerged from the bathing room, bones creaking with age as she moved to assist her with undressing.

Cosima sighed softly as she allowed her clothes to be removed by the woman who was older than God himself. Her brother, the insolent bastard that he was and keenly aware of her indiscretions, had humored himself by removing any females younger than fifty years of age from the staff,



filling the vacant positions with decrepit old hags more likely to give her nightmares than dreams of lust. As she sunk into the steaming waters of the bath, she closed her eyes, imagining perhaps a voluptuous maid no older than herself was scrubbing her back.

"M'lady was away at confession for the better part of the day. I take it your soul has been thoroughly redeemed." The woman was a fool no more than the lord of the house, but she was keenly aware of her role to play in discretion.

"Quite," Cosima smirked before dunking her head in the water, resurfacing with a sputter. By the time she was bathed and dried, she was sure her brother was gnawing at the bit, nervousness never suiting him well. She could just imagine him pacing in the foyer, sweaty palms being wiped down his white breeches like a boy about to lose his innocence to his first whore. Her amusement was torn from her as laces were pulled taut. "Good Lord." Her hands were clenched around the bedpost as her chamber maid tugged her corset, forcing her body to contort unnaturally, breasts near spilling over the top. If there was one thing she loathed more than all above, it was that of the ribs of a bodice digging into her torso. "Must this damned garment crush my body along with my spirit? There will be no men to impress nor have I even the desire to impress any man with such confines." A smile tugged at her features with each tug of the laces.

"It is not proper for m'lady to wander about in men's garb." The older woman spoke as she settled the gown around the shorter woman, experienced fingers quickly fastening the clothing in place. "The Good Lord has blessed one with such beautiful features, if only m'lady would use such to perhaps catch the attention of a handsome gentleman?"

"I'd rather spend the rest of my nights among the holy nuns of the convent than deal with a man's serpent thrusting into me." A grimace was quick to find Cosima's face as the old woman pulled her hair up into a knot, curls spilling out from the top. She hated her curls and often braided her hair back and out of the way, but for formal dinners, her brother would skin her alive if she attempted such a style. Makeup was applied to her lips and cheeks, not unlike the prostitutes that adorned every corner, luring in men to spend a few coins for the chance to thrust into their depths already filled with the seed of a hundred men before returning home to their wives. She had no need for money, nor had she ever had the reason to spend coin on such a thing freely given by sources far more cleanly. The very women that spoke of such perversions while in social circles, the wives abandoned by these men and even maidens who've yet to know the weight of a man pressing into them, were the first to lift their petticoats to the first tongue pointed their way.

A bell chimed loudly through the halls of the estate and Cosima sighed heavily. "Well, that would be the summoning for the play to begin." Arranging her skirts into their place, she heard the sound of voices speaking, an older woman speaking with a French accent. Why her brother was marrying into a French family, or rather marrying a French family into their own, she could not fathom.

Her brother was speaking in a voice deeper than norm, obviously attempting to give the impression of masculinity where it was desperately lacking. "Ah, and here is my sister, fashionably late as always." He spoke with authority, mocking her as if she were a child. "Come, Cosima."

The older French woman nodded before stepping aside to allow her daughter to step forward. "My Lord, might I present my daughter Delphine to you. Delphine, this is your husband-to-be Feliciano Salvatore."

He nodded politely to Delphine, accepting her hand and placing a chaste kiss upon her knuckles. "My Lady, the messengers have done you a grave injustice. Their descriptions of your beauty were sorely lacking."

Delphine gave him a small smile. "The pleasure is mine, Monsieur Salvatore." Her smile was too perfect, as if practiced many times before a mirror.

"Please. If we are to wed, call me Felix." He gave her a beaming smile and with a flourish of his hand, summoned Cosima forward. "This is my sister, Cosima."

Cosima froze in place. Time itself held no meaning as her gaze fell upon hazel eyes, the sun radiating from the orbs as they would an angel. Cosima swallowed audibly, willing her heart to stop its attempt to rip itself from her bosom as she took in the red lips and pale skin of such a beauty.

"Cosima." Her brother gave her an impatient look. "Delphine is to be your sister. You could at least say hello."

As if frozen herself, Delphine shook her golden curls and cleared her throat, offering a small curtsy. "Enchantée, Cosima."

Her mind still reeling, Cosima returned the curtsy with a clumsy one of her own, unused to such formalities. "Enchantée."

## Dainty Tongues and Sinful Lips

*Sorry I meant to post this on Sunday but I threw myself into "both Hands" and forgot to post this.*

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"Will we not be missed?" Delphine dared ask Cosima as they left Colin and her maman to discuss terms of their arrangement with Monsieur Salvatore.

Dinner had been a formal event, dull discussions of European events that did little to keep her attention. It seemed her intended was very focused on his business which revolved around horses and stables and nonsense she cared little about. Strangely enough, Colin seemed to grow an unusual interest in equine affairs, one that wouldn't normally be peculiar for a man if he hadn't spent his childhood terrified of the steed they had owned before moving to the city. Perhaps, his intentions lay not in tending to horses, but in saddling the master of the house instead. She could only be so lucky. She would rather her husband quench his lust with her obviously willing brother, than she herself. While her mother seemed oblivious to this, she had spied her soon to be sister smiling into her wine more than once at Colin's antics. Was it obvious to her husband-to-be as well? He seemed willing and excited to answer any questions Colin could toss his way, his smile lingering on words like 'benefits' and 'stallion.'

Delphine had been relieved when Cosima offered a tour, to better acquaint her with the manor that would soon become her home. Her curiosity was piqued in regards to the woman that seemed to openly mock her brother when given the chance. She seemed educated, but very unconcerned with consequences. Were such things similar in all of Venice? She had been raised with the understanding that a woman's place was to obey the men of the household and to serve her husband. Was Monsieur Salvatore as weak-willed as her own brother, unable to stand up for himself in the presence of a strong-minded woman? For the first time since learning of the arrangement, she felt a small seed of hope breaking through the soil of her despair.

As they reached the top floor of the home, a demon whispered sweet temptations into Cosima's ear, her will just strong enough to resist, avoiding the doors that would lead to her chambers and a night of exploration and sin for her soon-to-be sister. She had observed the fair swan from across the table, noting the look of boredom during Felix's tedious droning on to impress the only other cock at the table. The fair-haired man was small and tender as a little girl, his slouched shoulders and passive tone speaking of his insecurity and uncertainty. Monsieur Cormier may be the only male in the family, but as Cosima raked her eyes over his taller sister, she had no doubt of who was in charge.

"You will soon come to discover my brother has the attention of a dead fish." Cosima teased, being rewarded with a small slice of heaven in the form of a smile tugging at such a perfect face. Together they traveled the halls adorned with tapestries and paintings, embellishments that did little to compete with the beauty of the angel that walked beside her. "I imagine his attention will draw to your brother, to discuss what men do when alone together." She could not prevent the smile that pulled at her own mouth as if the devil himself had taken control of her lips.

Delphine rose her eyebrows, daring a curious glance at the shorter woman. Words fell from Cosima's smirking lips as though she were given freedoms unknown to her in her own life. Although small in stature, the woman moved with a boldness grander than she'd seen in men twice her size. Dark hazel eyes held the mischief of a school boy, and the wisdom of an old maid.

"What do you do to pass the time? I've not been to Venice before."

Licking her lips, Cosima dared not respond with truths, lest the blonde build a barrier between them, one she'd gladly spend a thousand sunsets climbing if it meant being close to such perfection. "Oh, there are many things one could do to... tarry away the hours. Might I ask m'lady what brings her *pleasure* when the hours are long?" The strength she depended upon to resist her overwhelming desire dwindled just slightly, allowing her voice to thicken as molasses would, suggestion knit into each word that slipped from her tongue.

What fires of hell dared lick at her cheeks, Delphine wondered, heat blossoming across her pale skin at the small woman's words. "Pleasure is a strong word, non?"

"I find the strongest words are the most suitable, at times." Cosima led the way down a hallway, caring not for their destination but wishing their discussion never to end. "My brother would no doubt wish for me to explain the intricacies of what he would imagine a wife might do. Perhaps some sort of needlework, a bit of music or dancing to fill the waking hours."

Delphine was not able to hold back the contempt at such a thought. She, a well educated woman, lingering about the manor, stitching dresses or breeches for whatever spawn her husband spilled into her belly. The very thought was abhorrent.

Sensing the woman's sudden change of mood, Cosima bit her bottom lip. "However, I have found that what my brother lacks in spine, he has equal the tolerance for... diversion from expectations." Hazel pools of sunshine turned her way in question. "What desires call to you? Truly."

There was no malice in the brunette's gaze and Delphine felt honesty would pay more than deception, but she was still hesitant to confess. "Would your brother object to a wife who is not simple of mind?" When eyes turned her way, they held a silent amusement that reached into her, exposing her insecurities for the world to see.

"Despite reeking of false bravado, my brother has learned to accept a world in which his demands against women hold little or no water." Cosima commented wryly. "Perhaps tomorrow, after the sun has cleared the horizon of course, you might join me in touring the rest of our property so that I might answer any other questions you have regarding time and how to *fill* it." The demon had returned, or hadn't left at all, but sin was on her lips and she used it to great effect, leaning closer than a sister should, her voice heavy with suggestion as she placed a hand on Delphine's arm.

The night was oddly warm, or perhaps Delphine's body was heating up. Surely it must be the dress, but she could feel the close proximity of the woman and her arm hummed curiously where the palm was pressed against her skin. "That sounds lovely." She wondered if she might have to request permission, but she doubted a lack of approval would keep her from joining the smaller woman in the morning. It was refreshing to be in the presence of such carefree disregard of social normality.

If Delphine could sense the gauntlet of emotions Cosima was dealing with, she did little to show it. Lust was no stranger to the brunette. She had countless options in which she might expend her overflowing desires and cravings. This was different. While her loins still quaked with desire, she longed equally to hear the thick accent pouring over her like a lullaby. While the prospect of such a dainty tongue slipping between her thighs was appealing beyond words, she also wished to have that tongue speaking of anything and everything, spilling a thousand secrets in an intimacy that went beyond friendship and sisterhood. She longed to lay for hours, listening to the harmony of heaven and hell, beauty and intelligence, innocence and defiance. How she resisted pressing her lips to the taller woman's was a mystery that taunted her mercilessly. She was elated to have the chance to spend a lifetime with the blonde even if she were the wife of her brother, and she was terrified of spending a lifetime with the blonde being the wife of her brother. It was a cruel twist of

fate and she wondered if maybe her compounded sins had finally caught up with her.

## Hot Summer Nights

Cosima lay awake in her chambers, her mind overrun with visions of golden hair and eyes that belonged to heaven itself. Delphine. The name of an angel, no less, there to whisper the secrets of a desire stronger than any she'd felt before, the fires of hell tempting her to covet that which a cruel fate had placed within her grasps under the guise of a sisterly bond. Even she who had bedded many women who still declared virginity in the name of God, despite her own fingers having claimed such a prize, surely would not commit such a sin. In less than thirty days, the gentle beauty would become her sibling, and undoubtedly that would cast her into damnation.

Oh, but continuing to exist while in the presence of such glorious splendour with nought the feel of supple flesh within her grasp, damnation it already was. The way those lips turned up in mischief, cheeks touched with crimson and eyes sparkling as the stars above, Cosima felt her arousal pooling between her thighs. Her knees bent and legs spread wide, her fingers became Delphine's, slipping down the front of her nightgown, hitching the soft material up to her waist. Would she be an angel, softly caressing heated flesh, carefully and gently probing the flushed skin. Would her fingers dance the steps of reverence, circling, rubbing such sweet friction that set Cosima's soul ablaze, free to wrap around the golden haired saviour that was undoubtedly there to rescue her.

Or, Cosima wondered, would such an innocent facade mask the true temptress, pumping fingers deep into the depths of her desire? Would digits press mercilessly into her wanton need, not unlike the maidens pumping their plungers into fresh cream, churning and thrusting. Would that tongue, that spoke her name so dauntingly, slip past the boundaries of her protected sanctuary?

Cosima bit her lip, lest she be victim to the temptation to cry out that name. Delphine, whose fingers so knowingly caressed the bundle of nerves, the rose in her garden threatening to bud too soon. Delphine whose hunger for carnal delights was beyond even Cosima's, insatiable and demanding, or tender and loving. Needy and insistent, or sweet and curious.

Her body quaking and hips thrusting, Delphine's fingers continuing to milk such desires from her, Cosima had barely the time to cover her own mouth, her teeth biting into the flesh of her forearm as she crested, waves crashing against the sands of her tarnished and undoubtedly damned soul.

Finally, as Delphine's fingers returned to her own, gently stroking the last of her desires from her loins, her legs spread wide and the sheets undoubtedly slick with the evidence of her fantasy, her emotions swallowed her whole. For the first time in years, since perhaps the day her mother became a figure walking away on the horizon, she felt the sting of tears in her eyes as her head sorted and realization came to her. Delphine who belonged to her brother. Delphine who would soon warm his bedsheets, milking the seed from his elongated gourd to no doubt gift him with such beautiful children that should be hers. Children that should call both she and Delphine mother and maman, instead of the forsaken mother and father that they would be burdened with.

Drops of regret fell from her eyes, staining her resolve with their unbreakable inevitability, tormenting her heart with their cruel reminder that never would the fingers between her thighs belong to such a maiden so glorious, so intelligent, so incomparable to any other creature that walked the streets of Venice, Paris, or any other city in existence. Tears continued to surface, even as she slipped into a fitful slumber, tormented with the visions of soft lips kissing her skin and blonde curls bobbing between her thighs.

Across the city, Delphine found sleep just beyond her grasp. Her soon to be husband had been polite, never interrupting her when she spoke, interested in her opinion, but it had seemed forced. He had seemed withdrawn just slightly, as a child forced to sit through mass when all that lingered

in their mind was sweet rolls and toys.

Cosima, on the other hand, seemed glued to every word, offering her own opinions and commentary. It was strange indeed. Those dark eyes had rarely left hers, a smoldering gaze that made her heart beat uncontrollably. More than once, the girl's tone had bordered on seductive, a witty comment falling from her lips before sipping from her glass, her tongue stained red from the drink.

Delphine wasn't simple minded. She was from Paris after all, and she had more than once heard of women who preferred the company of other women. Her own brother led the life of sexual perversion and he was no less a person to her.

But she herself had never felt the pull of attraction for feminine wiles. No, she'd had her fair share of longing and pining as a child did for school boys and farm hands. She'd felt the pull of arousal while watching her school time obsession, Luc, fence against men twice his size, or when the gardener Jean had removed his shirt to ring out the water that had accidentally spilt upon him.

Never had she looked upon a woman and felt the tightening in her loins as she had when dark hazel eyes burned into her own, a sparkle of mischief in their depths. More than once she'd felt a blush color her cheeks, as if Cosima and not Felix had been courting her. His attention, after all, had lingered on Colin more than once, and only then had she seen a spark of life, a flame of desires not towards her, but towards her brother. Desire for she herself rested not in her betrothed's eyes when they fell upon her, but those of his sister. And what a flame it started in her.

And when the simplest of touches fell on her arm, heat erupted through her core as if Satan himself had pressed his lips to her most private of places, his demons whispering sinful suggestions of perversion and desires. Even now her mind was torn between the wife she was expected to be, who should love a man she barely knew, who undoubtedly would rather her own brother share his wedding bed than herself, and the quivering of her thighs from just the thought of Cosima hours later.

And now, with the Venetian moon high in the sky, sleep continued to evade her, keeping her on the cusp of slumber but never allowing her to fully rest, thoughts of soft lips and gentle hands invading her semi-consciousness. It had been on a night like this, at a festival no more than two years past, when her closest friend, Angelique, had spoken of a touch performed onto her by a suitor that kept her innocence, one of fingers and tongue that brought a cascade of pleasure without the invasion into her holy depths. This was the memory that came unto her now, the softest of hands belonging to her future sister pushing her nightgown up, tracing her swollen sex with inquisitive finger. She could feel Cosima's breath against her thighs, a slick tongue caressing her as no other person dared attempt, circling, thrusting, lapping.

Whether it was sin or not, Delphine was free of worry or care. There was no room for such emotions when pleasure and lust dared consume her completely. Daunting eyes haunted her mind, pools of dark hazel luring her in and consuming her whole. "*Delphine.*" The girl's Italian accent whispered her name seductively, strange as it was as her lips were preoccupied with more important tasks. However, with her body so unused to such stimuli, it was enough to push her over, to send her spiraling into the depths of madness, or was it just desire, need, agonizing conflict?

Now fully awake, Delphine wiped her fingers on the inside of her gown, hiding the evidence of the carnal thoughts that corrupted her resolve, smoothing the material down with a sigh. She had come to Venice, a future as bleak as a winter's night before her, fated to be used as a chamber pot for her husband to relieve himself into. Now, however, the dread she felt at such a prospect shifted, a far worse problem piling onto the insurmountable compost heap. She wanted her sister, and not in the way one wanted a friend to whittle away the hours with, but in the way that was

expected for her to feel for her husband. She wanted to lose her purity in the most impure ways, at the hands of another woman. Nay, not just another woman, but the hands of her sister.



## Thrust and Pivot

*Thank you very much for your continued support and comments. I appreciate it significantly. I do have to apologize that there will not be an update for the next chapter next Sunday because I will be in San Diego for comic-con.*

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"Maman, I cannot breathe." Delphine's fingers found purchase around the banister of the bed, the night constellations dancing in her vision despite the golden rays of sun that poured through the stone windows. Her maman released a grunt but the air rushed from Delphine's own throat instead, bony fingers of strangulation closing around her ribs.

"There is enough time to breathe after you are married and there is a babe in your belly." Madame Cormier tied off the laces of the bodice.

"This is not exactly the garb for touring property." As the final confines of the dress settled over her like a noose ready for the hanging, Delphine took a breath, testing the limitations of her prison. She had woken an hour later than she planned, her meeting with her soon to be sister delayed by dreams of the same mischievous creature sliding between her thighs in a fantasy that still brought a flush to her cheeks. She gave no weight to the concept of angels and demons dictating human constitution, but surely there must be a hint of truth to the mythology, for it would certainly excuse the sudden lust she felt for a member of the fair sex unlike any she'd felt in the past. Even now, just the faintest of memory of her dream, of Cosima's fingers taking her to new heights, was enough to awaken her in a way none other had before, one night of desire and self-exploration transforming her into a woman, no longer the girl who'd pulled into the docks the day before.

"Delphine!"

"Yes, maman?" Delphine's voice was strained, both distracted by memories and lungs fighting for breath. In truth she had no recollection of any question or comment her maman had thrown her way.

"Seriously Delphine. Monsieur Salvatore will soon grow weary of the vast emptiness within your head." Madame Cormier huffed. "As I was saying, apparently to no one at all, Colin will join you, to prevent your insolence and ensure your tongue wreaks no havoc on matters I have spent a year arranging. "

The unexpected news cast a shadow on her mood, Delphine turning to give her mother a look that was no doubt fueled by the combined rage and aggravation from the depths of hell. "And what would my frail brother do whilst Cosima and I speak of matters pertaining to women alone?" The corner of her smile turned up in a wicked grin. "Of course, I do suppose he would fit right in. Perhaps he might don one of my other dresses, Maman, and he might know the bite of a corset pushing up his bosoms to spill over the top. I'm sure he no doubt longs to impress his future brother."

The older woman's eyes narrowed to slits. "Speak again of such perversions and I shall not hesitate to turn you over my knee like a sniveling child." Her nostrils flared not unlike an angered bull. "Colin will chaperone, for you cannot be trusted."

And that was how Delphine found herself at the door of the manor, her brother standing stiffly beside her with his own nervous look. The door opened by the servant who had done so the night

before and he bowed, allowing them inside.

"If you'll follow me. I believe Miss Cosima has forgotten the time once again." The older man spoke as if it were a usual occurrence, leading the way through the bottom floor of the manor and to a set of double doors. "It would be wise to not rush through the doors."

A question died on Delphine's lips as the doors were opened inward just as a body went flying into their pathway, the sound of a sword skittering across the polished stone. Concern tugged at her until the man pushed himself up, scrambling for his weapon just in time to block a strike that descended upon him, the sound of metal on metal ringing through the manor as a smaller form stood over him. Black leather pants hugged feminine curves that would otherwise be hidden under the billowy white shirt and the black waistcoat, a gloved hand wrapped around the hilt of a thin double-bladed sword. "Yield!" A low growl rumbled from smirking lips, dark hazel eyes smoldering like the flames that licked at Delphine's loins, the blonde's knees shaking as she took in the scene before her.

Arms shook as the man on the ground quivered like a frightened child. "I Yield!" His voice was high with worry, a sigh of relief slipping past his lips when the woman pulled away.

With a laugh, Cosima offered him a hand, gripping forearms to best assist him in standing. "You've lasted much longer than usual, Scott."

"Ahem."

In shock, Cosima jumped, accidentally releasing the man who fell to the ground with a grunt, her attention having been too focused on the sparring to notice the visitors. "Delphine!" Her voice came out a squeak, no longer the bold and brazen swordsman bearing down on a man twice her size, but now a shy field mouse, her cheeks coloring with embarrassment.

In with the positive, out with the... there was no negative, Delphine decided, her eyes lingering on the smaller woman, a light sheen of sweat adding a heavenly glow that had the power to stop her heart, or perhaps increase its normally steady beat, a mystery carved into the air between them. Surely the organ had skipped a beat yet was fighting for life, threatening to burst through laces and bone and the brocade stitching that had taken over a month to create. Sweet merciful lord in Heaven, this was nothing she'd ever felt before, for surely, had she been victim to such longing and need, she would no longer be pure. As she took in the smaller woman who was sheathing her sword, assisting her friend in standing once more, she bit her own lip, thoughts that were far from pure dancing through her mind, under her skin, and certainly under the layers of her dress.

"Forgive my state of dress." Cosima was breathless, or was she breathtaking? "Well, perhaps now is as good a time as any to reveal truths before nuptials are exchanged. It would be a lie to proclaim this garb is rare for myself." She laughed, and it was the sound of a sweet rain falling from a cloudless sky, baptising the world in light.

Definitely both breathless and breathtaking. Delphine's eyes fell to the heaving chest, her own breath frozen when eyes locked with her own.

Cosima rose her eyebrows, a touch of impurity on her lips. "Are you unwell, m'lady?" Sin impregnated every word, planting the seed of desire.

Delphine shook her head quickly. "Non. My apologies. My maman has sent my brother along so that he might enjoy the tour as well... or perhaps..." She cast an unapologetically innocent look at her brother. "...perhaps he might have words with your brother? Surely the words of men are more... appetizing for his ears than the babbling of two women." She noticed her brother stiffening at the insinuation but as she cast her eyes upon Cosima once more, she saw an almost devilish

understanding. Perhaps she hadn't been the only one to notice the lustful glances her brother had cast upon the Master of the house. Were such attentions welcomed? Thinking back on the dinner, he had seemed more interested whenever Colin had spoken than when she herself had dared comment on things. It had not seemed chauvinistic in nature, but just boredom.

"What say you Monsieur Cormier? Shall I have my man take you to the stables?" Cosima spoke as if her tongue were made of silk, such smoothness that wrapped around Delphine's ears. "Surely the nature of business calls to you more so than hair braiding and embroidery."

Colin cleared his throat, looking between the two women. It was a strange thing to observe his sister in such an odd mood. Of course he was used to her crassness, often pushing too far and then some when she thought herself humorous, but this was different. He'd not seen such a look in her eyes before, as if the same force that caused fruit to fall from trees did cause her eyes to fall on the smaller woman. And what an odd woman she was, wearing the ghastly and drab attire of a peasant as if she were but a simpleton. It was true, he would rather join the lord of the house in discussing anything except what his sister was insinuating, but something about the intention behind her gaze left him hesitant to leave the women alone together.

"Cosima, have you..." Felix appeared suddenly from the side doors of the house, stopping when he saw the visitors. "Oh...right I forgot we would have company today."

Cosima watched in amusement as her brother straightened his posture, no doubt from the stick he had lodged far up his rear. "Felix! Perfect timing as always. I was just mentioning to Monsieur Cormier what an honor it would be for him to allow you to explain the concepts and practices of our business and what we do."

His eyes narrowing, Felix let his gaze fall on his sister and the unconvincing look of innocence on her face. Still unaware of what was occurring, he let his eyes move to Delphine whose pale features were touched with a kiss of blush matching that of her brother's. Colin seemed to be overflowing with nervousness, his finger coming up to straighten his spectacles. "Of course. If Monsieur Cormier is inclined to learn such things, I could no doubt deal with company that won't try to impale me with a sword." He cast a disapproving look at his sister.

"Well then, Monsieur Salvatore, you would indeed be in safe hands for my brother knows nothing of thrusting swords, I'm sure."

Her eyes sliding to the side, Cosima nearly laughed aloud at the look of complete innocence on the blonde girl's face despite the implied innuendo.

Clearing his throat, as if intending to ignore such a statement, Felix cast a disgusted look upon his sister. "Must you trod around in such attire, Cosima. It is quite distasteful and insulting to our guests."

"Non, Monsieur. I do not mind." Delphine smiled bashfully, feeling the pull of longing. While the vision of Cosima in a dress that seemed to elevate certain attributes had haunted her very dreams, there was no doubt that the dreams she would have in future nights would be of this woman, comfortable and cocky, gallant and mischievous. If her strength were enough to take down a man much larger than herself, what else could those hands do?

"Very well then." Felix commented in exasperation. "Monsieur Cormier? Let us leave the women to their mindless prattle." He turned on his heeled boots, expecting to be followed.

Colin cast a glance of warning at his sister as he passed.

Delphine could not stop herself from sticking her tongue out at him, realizing too late what she'd

done only when she heard a barely muffled laugh from Cosima. Surely the last thing she would want the brunette to believe is that she had the temperament of a child. "Oh. Apologies, mademoiselle."

"Please, call me Cosima. There is no need of formalities, we're soon to be family." Cosima removed her gloves, tucking them into her belt. "Might I introduce a dear friend of mine. Scott has been my right-hand man since childhood."

Scott laughed uncomfortably. "Hello."

With a roll of her eyes, Cosima patted him on the shoulder. "Unfortunately Scott has many duties he must attend to as his father normally keeps him on a tight schedule." She gave the man a purposeful look. "I'll see you in the morn, dear friend."

"Oh." Scott nodded, making sure he had his sword. "I'll... I'll see you tomorrow. It was a pleasure m'lady." He bowed nervously before leaving quickly.

Finally left alone with the blonde, Cosima let her eyes rake over the woman slowly, noticing the extravagant stitching of her gown, the oppressed struggle for breath due to the bodice, and the woman's heated cheeks. The property was expansive and she doubted the woman would be able to make the entire walk with such little room to breathe. "Hmm, if m'lady would prefer, I could assist her in removing the confines of her dress for the day."

Delphine froze, her mouth dropping open in shock for the barest of moments before speaking. "Pardon?"

## The Touch of God

*Ok guys, I'm back from comiccon and it was amazing I got to meet so many wonderful clone clubbers. So, here's good news and bad new. Good news is I was going to wait till Sunday to post this but decided to post it early since it was technically supposed to be post on Sunday. The bad news is... this is the last chapter I have written ahead of time so now the posting schedule is going to get super jacked up as I write and get it beta'd and all that noise. Hopefully I don't take too long between updates. :)*

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Cosima cast her eyes away, the demons inside her daring her to look, to run her lips over the pale skin that was peppered with freckles no different than the night sky she would spend hours gazing upon as a child, but she had dealt with such whispers before, very aware of the limits of her own resistance. Just assisting the woman with the lacing of her bodice had scorched the tips of her fingers with temptation, whispered suggestions from the fallen angel in her garden, luring her to consume the forbidden fruit.

"Cosima, I do not know about this."

Turning, the air was robbed from Cosima's chest for what must have been the tenth time that day, the demons of temptation wrestling with the angelic presence of the French woman. Delphine's hair had been pulled back into a loose knot, her body adorned with a large white shirt and a pair of leather trousers. They were her brother's more casual clothes as her own were just a sliver too short for the long frame. Delphine's eyes, rays of sun caressing a Spring meadow, held an uncertainty that stoked the embers of emotion that surpassed arousal and lust.

"Is it that horrid?" Delphine's brows furrowed, looking down her body.

Cosima's eyes settled on the smallest pout that formed on the woman's face, the bottom lip luring her forward, tempting, taunting, and she imagined it would be nothing less than soft as a summer's breeze. There was an inappropriate amount of silence from her and she cleared her throat, realizing reassurances were in order. But how could she reassure the woman without letting her own sin-driven tongue get her in trouble. It was everything in her to tear her eyes away, to notice the disheveled state of the woman's shirt that needed to be tended to. "Far from it." Cosima spoke, the corner of her mouth lifting as she stepped closer, perhaps closer than was wise for soon-to-be-sisters. "Do you mind..."

Swallowing audibly, Delphine shook her head, her cheeks brightening in shy embarrassment.

Cosima smiled reassuringly, lifting the edge of the shirt. "You have to tuck this in." She could no more control the tone of her voice than she could control the sun as it rose or set. Try as she could to stop, the slight thickening of the timbre of her voice spilled into the air, meant to intoxicate and insinuate, and it wasn't difficult to notice the heavy blink of the blonde's eyes. This close, she was but a small distance away from perfect lips and the sleek form, her hands arranging the tails of the shirt expertly before tucking them into the waist of the woman's pants. She dared not dwell on the sudden inhale coming from the blonde as her fingers slipped just past the edge of the pants, unable to prevent innocent touches from becoming lingering caresses, her hands slipping further into the waist under the guise of straightening out the bunched material. The sound of a shuddered breath coming from the woman brought Cosima back to reality and she cleared her throat, putting distance between their bodies as she picked up the waistcoat. "This should be the final touch."

Delphine was quiet, disturbingly so. As the waistcoat was buttoned, she moved not an inch, eyes closed, her body a porcelain statue of beauty and patience. Her stillness was only broken by the tip of a pink tongue that emerged, wetting her lips in a quick move that was charged by the erotic pull of their proximity.

Eyes falling on the blonde's lips, Cosima barely stopped herself from leaning forward to capture the soft mouth in a kiss. How freeing it would be, feeling such a kiss upon her own lips, upon the flesh of her body, down her chest, between her thighs. Delphine was Michelangelo and Cosima was the Sistine Chapel. The French woman's lips were no doubt the brush that could paint her own unworthy flesh with the portrait of God himself, reaching toward mankind in a touch that would never meet even centuries later. The stirring in her loins begged her to reach as Adam did, daring her to complete the connection of her mortal skin against divine flesh, but with all the force of her will, she abstained. Such an action would yield consequences she had no interest in suffering through. Instead she took another step back, gesturing at the mirror, attempting nonchalance. "There we go, my lady."

Delphine turned to the mirror, a gasp slipping from her lips, her reflection barely recognizable. Her hands traveled down the front of the waistcoat, fingers caressing the toggles and stitching as if not believing she was dressed in such clothing. There was an uncertainty in her eyes, but she took a deep breath and seemed relieved, no doubt glad to be free of such restraints of a bodice. "Merci, Cosima. This is very comfortable." As if unable to stop herself, she turned and pulled Cosima into a hug of appreciation.

If Death had a touch, it would not be the chilled grasp of skinless bones, but instead the warm embrace of a beautiful French woman. Death smelt nothing of rotting corpses or decades of war, but instead of sweetness and desire. It was long arms holding her close, and the soft whisper of a breath against her cheek as they pulled apart. In that moment, Cosima felt her own cheeks redden in embarrassment. How awful it was that someone as cavalier as herself would feel as a schoolgirl standing before a crush, bashful and overcome with such childish longing instead of bold and brazen. Arms still around each other, her eyes fell to the woman's lips, watching as the corner of her bottom lip was pulled between neat teeth, the red flesh turned pale white from the pressure, a physical representation of the woman's contemplation and restraint.

Cosima had once read a book called Principia, from an Englishman named Newton, and in it was referenced laws of nature, how objects in motion would continue in motion until stopped. Was it this force that had pulled them to this moment, an unstoppable law of nature drawing their bodies together, an unavoidable course of movement continuing until inevitable collision? Looking up, searching hazel eyes, she noticed they weren't looking into her own eyes, but at her lips, perhaps watching and wanting as she did. Arms tightened and moments became an eternity, their bodies coming together once again. She knew, deep down, that the lips were meant to graze her cheek in a guise of sisterly affection, but why then did she allow temptation to take over, her own head turning until lips met her own, an unavoidable impact that brought their bodies crashing together.

God and man.

Heaven and hell.

Cosima expected to be pushed away as though she were a drunk begging for the wanton affection of a beautiful woman, but instead a warm hand caressed her cheek, lips pressing closer, insinuating possibilities that did not exist, not in their current situation. That was why it was she that pulled away, despite the lure of hips against hips and the pulsing between her thighs. In all her desires for temptation that could not be sated, she knew the reality of such sins and wished not to inflict them upon such an innocent beauty that would be her sister. Pulling her lips away was as agonizing as removing her heart from her own chest and she whimpered from the loss, the sound

of angels expelled from heaven. It was necessary, but the regret instantly filled her as light hazel eyes doubled in size, surprise evident on the blonde's face.

"Merde." Horror filled Delphine's heart as she stepped back, her hand coming up to her mouth, as if she could shield herself from the sin that had already been committed. What had she done? If she focused not on the fact that Cosima was to be her sister, it would have been easier for her to enjoy such a taste of heaven. The brunette's lips had been soft to the touch, the light brush of heavenly wings grazing her own blasphemous lips. For the few seconds they had shared in silent exploration, she had known the face of God and it had been glorious and devastating. Their joined lips had told her one thing: she was no child swooning over the gardener, longing for a glimpse of flesh to satiate her curiosity. She had grown into a woman and just the sight of succulent curves was not enough, for she craved to run her fingertips through dark tresses, to drink the everlasting ambrosia from succulent lips. She wanted what only fitful dreams had revealed possible, awakening desires she knew not existed. This was no adolescent musing. "Mon dieu..."

"Delphine." Cosima licked her lips, a look on her face that Delphine could only read as disdain. Had she been given a glimpse into the depths of the brunette's mind, she would see not discontent, but confused self-admonishment. Cosima had seen the look on the blonde's face many times before, for it was one that most women adorned upon first exploration into such perversions, but on more times than not Cosima was able to soothe ruffled feathers, to push for curiosity to reign over pious tendencies. She had become a master of such conversions, able to ease the transition with a calm word and a tender touch, but now as she looked into eyes that shook with regret, she felt the normal bravado that directed her every action seep out of her. It was as though her tongue were crucified for its trespasses, stripped bare and unable to defend the brunette for her actions, unable to exclaim her repentance.

Doubt and horror blossomed into mortified humiliation that permeated through Delphine's resolve and she turned to flee, needing to escape the piercing hazel eyes and feather soft lips. "Je suis vraiment désolée." The apology spilled from her lips one stuttered syllable at a time, each a fallen angel populating the depths of hell, lost souls lingering in the depths of purgatory.

The panic was a siren, jostling Cosima from her prison of shock. "Delphine, stop." She moved as a thief would in the night, fitting herself between the blonde and the door even before Delphine noticed her compact form moving.

Unfortunately, Delphine had not expected the woman to enter her space, her shock registering a heartbeat too late, two ships unable to alter course before colliding in an impact of inevitability.

A puff of air escaped Cosima's body and for the first time since the woman walked through her front doors the night before, she had enough sense to react quickly, her arm slipping around a slim waist before the blonde could run away again. "Delphine..."

"Non!" Delphine's head shook, eyes refusing to meet Cosima's, not wanting to focus on the possibility of shameful persecution and chastising herself for allowing such desires to overrun her common sense. The burn of salt and emotion scorched her retinas and she cursed herself for such weaknesses. Tears had not fallen from her eyes since she'd been a small child, having fallen from a tree while reaching for an apple just out of range, and here she was again, reaching, falling, crying, an unavoidable cycle of want, loss, and despair. "My apologies, Mademoiselle Salvatore." Distance was the only answer and formality was her safety.

"Come now, Delphine." Cosima swallowed before taking a leap, her hand coming up to tilt the woman's chin up, catching a tear with the brush of her thumb as their eyes met. "Surely you wish not to discard such a friendship as we've yet to cultivate, all for reason of a simple kiss between sisters." A smile spread across her face, an act of reassurance more for Delphine than for herself. Within, she felt a loss, a blow against her own freedom in an attempt to pacify such restrictions. "I

dare say such a kiss is not so sinful as to bring angels to weep."

A short laugh emerged from Delphine at such a suggestion. She was no angel, for her heart belonged to neither heaven nor the Lord. If she were an angel, she would be one of revelations, a harbinger of death and despair meant to ruin rather than nurture. "Surely you jest. I never imagined such blasphemy could come from so small a source" She pursued humor in an attempt to relieve her own inner turmoil. Instinct lured her to lean into the touch that still lingered upon her cheek and her resolve was weakened in her current state, yet she managed to withstand the pull.

Cosima herself was in a similar state, torn between duty and desire, wanting her fingertips, which served to comfort the weeping woman, to move slightly, to caress her lips, remembering the sweetness of the kiss. Duty prevailed and her hand fell to the woman's shoulder, feeling the slight jump of muscles beneath the shirt. "So, Sister, have you still interest in touring the property?"

Delphine nodded, afraid to speak lest she release the proclamation of love that her tongue pressed against the back of her teeth, daring her to release such words from their prison of ivory and flesh.

"Then after you m'lady." Cosima stepped aside, bringing the door with her. "If it would please you, perhaps a trip to the stables might be necessary. There are some scenes which might bring delight but they are a distance away." As the blonde exited the room first, Cosima took the barest of moments, the smile falling from her lips as she took a deep breath to steady herself, attempting to feign contentment when her heart knew anything but. With another deep breath, she breathed in a resigning dread, and exhaled any hope that remained.



## The Coming of the Lord

*Ok, so I want to thank everyone who reads this. I also want to thank [jaybear1701](#) for beta'ing this as well as [tatarrific](#) and [ladyzephyr](#) . I... I feel like I should apologize in advance. There is a lot of m/m in this but I felt it was necessary at the time. It will go back to cophine after this.*

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"And this is Periwinkle." Felix clicked his tongue at the horse who loyally stepped up to the gate, the speckled light gray creature accepting the chunk of apple with a demanding snap, his temperament almost expectant, as if apples were payment for its time. "Named of course for the color of his coat." He wrinkled his nose, a learned action he shared with his sister, and wiped his hand on his breeches.

Despite the irregular pattern of different tones of grays, the beast was of great size, unlike some of the smaller creatures he had seen in his homeland, yet smaller than most of the horses in the Salvatore stables. "He's gorgeous." Uninterested in such matters, Colin leaned his back to the fence, his eyes instead traveling the length of the slim man before him, plotting the expanse of such exquisitely new terrain.

Not noticing the eyes on him, Felix shook his head in disgust. "He is unfortunately the result of a passionate encounter with a wild stallion that had hopped one of the fences. I would have sold him a year ago had it not been for Cosima and her asinine habit to choose the most inappropriate of bonds."

A smirk fastened on Colin's lips, his mind having clung to the words that spoke to him, words from a demon taunting his loins. "Passionate encounter you say?" As dark eyes slid his way, the look he received was as familiar as his weekly communion, for it was the same look the cardinal had given him every Sunday when he delivered first the body of Christ unto Colin's tongue, then his own holy staff less than an hour after service within an unused room of the rectory. Colin had never felt so close to the lord as he did on his hands and knees before the cross, the Cardinal whispering guttural prayers with each thrust.

It was no secret to Delphine that he had no craving to caress soft feminine curves, nor had he the urge to slide the length of his passion into a woman's unrelenting snare of death. Unlike his sister, who was often colder than a seal's teat in winter, he had known love on more occasions than once, and often it left him bruised and aching, the smell of sweat and passion in the air as he was laid over a table, or a barrel, or whatever surface could be found that would allow his lovers' opportunity to forget about their wives and children. He needed naught the sweet attentions of a woman to quiver and quake beneath him as he forced his seed into her toxic womb, but rather the feel of strong hands gripping his hair, jerking his head back as he was mercilessly pumped into, no different than he was sure the wild stallion had done to Felix's prize mare.

Stepping sideways, toward an empty stall, Felix quirked an eyebrow at the blond. "You are...quite curious, Monsieur Cormier." Colin stepped forward, intent in his eyes and Felix allowed the man to push them into the dark corner, away from prying eyes that might mistake such actions as forbidden and perverted.

Colin was always cautious in his proposition, having been wrong before, but he could see the ill-contained need burning within the depths of his soon-to-be brother's eyes. "Curious indeed." Sinking to his knees, the hay crunching beneath him, he reached up for the closure of Felix's

breeches, fearing retaliation, but getting none, the tightness of the young Lord's pants evidence of his own arousal. He ran his hand over the obvious protrusion, temptation-cursed fingertips tracing the sinful shape that seemed to tighten at his touch. He licked his lips, temptation drying the depths of his throat, leaving him with wanton need.

"No, my brother has no say in what I do with my own horse, however I would have no care even if he did protest." The voice was familiar, not obviously so, but the words themselves spoke to the identity of the footsteps that neared.

Felix was quick to push Colin away as he stepped around the kneeling blonde with a huff, pulling at his breeches in an attempt to hide his arousal. "What was it you were saying, dear sister, of what you were doing with whose horse?"

Cosima and Delphine stopped in their tracks, shock evident on both faces.

Taking in the garb of his intended, Felix sneered. "Good God, has the corruption of my sister tainted you so quickly?"

Dark hazel eyes belonging to his not-so-innocent sister raked over his form, the smile which could only be described as wicked spreading across her face. "I believe such attire is rather fetching for my new sister, don't you?" She tilted her head in silent daring.

*Damn her.* As bold as he was in private with her, he would never dare be so in public. Felix let the snarl fall from his lips, having been witness to the consequences of upsetting his sister before. "Of course, for the rose is beautiful no matter the vase it's placed into." He cleared his throat when his compliment seemed to go unanswered, both women seeming a tad uncomfortable. "Where is it you are off to that requires a horse and such... fashionable clothing?"

Feigning innocence, Cosima shrugged. "Just around the town, for this will be her home going forward." Her eyes dropped down before returning to meet his. "Let me show your bride the area, for I know how taxing your days are, Brother." She leaned forward, before he could respond and move away. "Perhaps once we've left, Colin might assist you in lacing up your breeches properly." She pat him on the shoulder as one would a child before turning to Delphine who, for all her beauty and grace, looked quite uncertain. Cosima was quick to her side, moving with reassurance as she opened the gate, ushering the blonde in.

Colin felt terror in the situation. What had he been thinking with such brazen actions? Felix was to be his brother, the husband of his twin sister, the dearest part of his heart that had shared a womb with him. How could he betray her in such a manner as this? Even now, he could hear her, speaking with Felix's sister, such a peculiar girl.

"He is beautiful. Will he be strong enough to carry us both?"

A soft laughter followed, Cosima double-checking the straps of the saddle before looping the reigns around her hand. "Surely you jest, m'lady. Periwinkle has but the strength to carry twenty of you... nay thirty!"

Laughter came easily, and Delphine tried in vain to hide the blush. "Cosima..."

"Never have I felt more blessed with my name than the first time it fell from the lips of such an angel." Cosima's voice grew softer as they moved away from the stall.

Again there was laughter, a giddiness which Colin had not heard in over a year, since before the marriage had been arranged. His brows came together in confusion. Such words shared between women were an oddity, for their nature seemed rooted in unsubtle flirtation. Surely his sisters, old

and new, were not in the act of unknown courtship for one another. Such a thing would be an unusual case indeed. His eyes floated upwards as a shadow cast over him, Felix with arms crossed over his chest.

"Well then. Count on my sister to ruin the mood."

Surprised filled Colin, a hand thrust in his direction, an offer of kindness in which he was unused to.

"Come on. Let's have a drink."

Felix's office was small, a desk littered with sheets of papers and leather bound books, two smaller chairs opposite the desk. Along one wall was an elegant chaise, a series of shelves built into the wall above it, covered in trinkets and bottles. A glass was placed into his hand, an amber liquid that reeked of a slow death. Watching Felix empty the glass with expert precision, he felt the stirring again, as though his own arousal was aware of the loosening of tongues that resulted from such a drink. When Felix's eyes fell on him, he was quick to drink from his own glass, the burn catching him off-guard and bringing a cough from his lungs.

"That's a good lad." Felix set his drink on the desk and moved to the chaise, sitting in the center. "I believe we should have a talk, Colin."

In an attempt to maintain his composure, Colin set his own glass down. "Are you sure talking is what you would like to do?" His fingers working at his britches, he exposed himself, knowing that while his body was smaller than most men's, same could not be said for all of his endowments. As hungry eyes traveled the length of his Parisian pride, he turned from Felix, looking over his shoulder as he was leaning against the desk, taking a position that was no less than submissive. "Surely there is something here you would rather attend to?"

Clearing his throat, Felix adjusted his position, his breeches suddenly uncomfortable as space was made a problem due to his own arousal. "Come here." He was standing, waiting for the blond who held his pants up, obeying the command he was given.

"What does Monsieur Salvatore wish of me?" Colin chose his words carefully. He'd been with men of high class before and he knew of their desires, the need for acknowledgement of their ranking and power. "If it is his will, I might sink to my knees before him to say my prayers, taking the heavenly body into my mouth, to drink from such a body as only the followers of the Lord have."

Rolling his eyes, Felix reached up, running his fingers through blond hair in a comforting gesture. "Sweet brother, I fear you've misunderstood my intentions." Unexpectedly, he pulled Colin forward for a kiss, not hungry or demanding, but tender, slow, and exploring. He took his time, secure in the knowledge that he had bolted the door, that no one would interrupt this gentle claiming he had been imagining since the night before. He had never been one to be cruel for he had been on the receiving end of such injustices, having been thrust into as if he were but an animal, a stray sheep with no choice but to take the pain and roughness. As his teeth raked gently over the blonde's bottom lip, he wondered what crimes had been done against this boy, this man who was too frail for his own good and had come to expect such treatment.

The kiss breaking off, Colin blinked. Never in all the years of his existence had a touch so soft breeze across his lips. He was tempted to bring his hand up to his mouth, to verify his wakefulness and existence, but the presence of hands at the edge of his breeches caught his attention. As the material was pushed down, falling to his knees, he expected to be leaned over, maybe made to brace himself on the back of the couch, prepared and aroused at such possibilities, but instead he was guided to sit down, not expecting the noble lord to kneel before him, working at the laces of

his boots as though he were a simple peasant. "Monsieur?"

"Please stop behaving as though you are my servant." Felix set the boots aside, finishing the removal of the breeches with expert ease. Maneuvering himself between the blond's knees, he pressed himself up, capturing lips in another kiss. While his brother had been taken many times before, Felix intended on being perhaps the first who would treat such a hidden Adonis with care and tenderness.

Colin groaned against the lips that pressed closer, feeling his body being pushed back to the soft surface of the chaise and the strong body covering his own. He was reaching down between them, his fingers working at laces that kept him from the pleasure he craved. The fire within him had been stoked to the point of meltdown, a heat that rivaled the flames of damnation yet promised all the delights of salvation.

Felix laughed, sitting back on his haunches, looking down at the obvious arousal. "Patience, m'lord." He joked as he pulled a bottle from the shelf. "Now, no more of this servant nonsense, Brother. Going forward you are just as much a Lord as I am and let us begin to treat you as so." Reaching for the pillow behind him, a smile spread across his lips, the tip of his tongue moistening the surface. "All Lords must have pillows to sit upon." And within seconds he had the pillow in place under Colin's hips, an acceptable angle for his nefarious intentions.

"What is that?" Colin's curiosity got the best of him as he watched Felix uncap a glass bottle, a yellow liquid moving around sluggishly.

"Olive oil." Felix smirked as he let the oil drip over Colin's erected post, sliding down the length, pouring enough to slip down the dark crevice. "Have you never...?" At Colin's confusion, he gave a delightful laugh, pushing his own breeches down just far enough to reveal himself and coating the length of his own excited flesh, a slick snake ready to slip into the dark safe-haven of devilish desire. "You poor boy." As if his point needed proving, he circled Colin's shaft, his hand running up and down the length, spreading the oil.

A groan of pleasure slipped from Colin's lips, the lack of resistance not like anything he'd ever felt before.

Feeling as though the blonde was well warmed up, Felix covered the slim body with his own, his lips just an inch from Colin's. "Heaven is just within your grasp...or mine really." He whispered before capturing lips in a deep kiss, sliding his slick arousal slowly into the well-oiled entrance, pressing in carefully to allow adjustment.

Colin had been expecting pain, as there always was at first whenever he had been taken from behind, burly men demanding possession of his body roughly and mercilessly. There was none, just the gentle claiming of his body in as many ways as possible, tongue and lips exploring his mouth, the hand that circled his arousal, sliding up and down, and the slick invasion of Felix's manhood ebbing and flowing in a delicate rhythm of their bodies moving together.

It was pleasure that Colin never imagined existed, and he certainly never expected for it to be delivered onto him on behalf of his new brother.

Delphine was going to be furious with him.

## Blessed Virgin of the Angel

*Thank you all for the continued support of this fic. It's probably been the savior of my sanity since the finale.*

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The weather was quite beautiful, this time of year leaving the fields speckled with wildflowers, and Periwinkle was as calm as always, ignorant to the storm brewing upon his back. Stuck in her own turbulent cyclone of doubt and despair, Cosima shifted in the saddle just a bit, enough to feel every inch of the form pressed against her back, an ever-present representation of the burdens she carried. The strong thighs pressing against her hips were the chains that kept her bound to familial duty, but as the hand pressed flat against her abdomen pulled her closer, she shuddered. Perhaps this had not been the wisest of decisions, or perhaps it was.

Cosima had tried not to dwell on the knowledge of what she had pulled Delphine from in the stables. She had spent many hours in that structure, caring for Periwinkle as if he had been her child, and she knew full well that her brother, the arrogant bastard that he was, kept the stall on either side of him empty, to isolate him from the purebred treasures of her brother's stable. So when Felix emerged from the dark corner of the empty stall, arousal fully obvious to anyone daring to look, it didn't take her long to realize that Colin was nowhere to be seen.

Felix and Colin. Well, it was only a matter of time, yet she was surprised such an event would occur so hastily. Obviously her brother had far less respect for his marital obligations than she suspected. She had thought perhaps he would wait until after the nuptials were exchanged before pulling his ship into their new brother's vacant dock. Who would think that she, the deviant sister who secretly crept into the monastery on a regular basis to slip closer to heaven, would possess stronger morals than her brother. If he had such disregard for such things why should sh...

"Cosima?"

Jumping slightly, Cosima turned to look over her shoulder, catching a worried look set in light hazel eyes cast her way. "What was that?"

Delphine's brow furrowed. "You haven't spoken since we set out. I called your name three times and no response."

Cosima smiled, trying to appear nonchalant lest her sister suspect her dilemma. "Apologies m'lady. I seem to have overexerted myself during the earlier bout with Scott."

There was silence for a moment, until finally Delphine spoke again. "Is it..." She paused briefly, unsure of how to broach the subject. "Perhaps I cling too tightly? After...earlier, it must bother you so..."

When the hold around her waist began to loosen, Cosima covered an arm with her hand, stopping the movement. "Quite the opposite, Delphine." Her voice was a whisper, but she knew the woman could hear. Clearing her throat, she smiled, turning to look at the blonde once more. "Now, hold tight, m'lady. I would hate to lose you." It was enough to pacify Delphine, although Cosima feared she had said too much. Thankfully the ride wasn't much longer and they came to a small town, the ground turning to stone, the scent of salt that permeated the air getting stronger. "We're here."

Having been secretly glad to feel the length of the solid body pressed against her front, Delphine was reluctant to move in the slightest. She disguised the disapproving sound that accidentally slipped from her lips with a soft hum, her head lifting from where she'd rested it against Cosima's shoulder, looking around as the wind blew the loose strands of her hair about. "Mon dieu." The sight was beautiful, the long expanse of water stretching out to the side of them, the stone path leading to a tower.

A smile touched the corner of Cosima's mouth as she pulled Periwinkle up to a low wall, slipping off his back and turning to assist Delphine. "Careful."

Her knees, far more unsteady than she expected, gave out and she was thankful as arms closed around her, her own personal savior, catching her in her moment of weakness, yet supplying its own weakness. The dark eyes had turned a golden hue in the light of the sun and the hand that was pressed against her back, preventing her from crashing to the ground, only proved to be an accomplice to her falling so deep there was no help for her.

Cosima swallowed. They were statues caught in the noon sun, the breeze coming off the water mingling with the Parisian perfume that clung to pale skin. She felt completely out of control, aided by the blonde's tentative fingertip that reached up to trace her jaw, her eyes falling to the bottom lip that was caught in its ivory prison. "I..." With a smile she stepped away once making sure Delphine was safe. "Come." She slipped her hand into the blonde's, a pale concession for what she repeatedly denied herself. Tying off Periwinkle to the hitch, Cosima smiled as she pulled Delphine with her past the old building that had been aggravated for years by the sea and towards the tall tower that was farther inland.

Chastising herself internally for her brazen fingers, Delphine followed. "Is...is this safe?" Her brows furrowed in worry as she looked over the main building that had apparently, in the past, faced off against a great ogre and was defeated, or had lost a duel against the sea serpents of mythology.

Cosima's laugh echoed off the staircase, her hand tightening around the blonde's. "Don't you trust me?"

Delphine smirked, her eyes falling upon the the form in front of her, the smooth sway of hips a siren summoning her forward to crash against the rocks. "Oui." When the stairs seemed too numerous, they finally reached a room, the top of the building. The square room was small and just a bit dusty, a lamp in the middle of the room unlit, windows on each wall providing a view in each direction. "Cosima...It's beautiful." She whispered, stepping up to one of the double windows, the view overlooking the town and beaches.

'So are you.' The words rang through Cosima's mind, a lustful demon commanding her tongue to push too far, but she let the comment dissipate into nothingness. Leaning against the windowsill beside the blonde, Cosima smiled as she watched Delphine. There really was no vision more precious than the sight of the delicate wisps of hair blowing in the breeze. Realising she was staring, she cleared her throat. "The church there, which has not particularly withstood the sands of time, is dedicated to the archangel Michael and houses a statue." She pointed to the building that looked as though it would collapse when the next wave broke against the rocks. "The statue, they call The Blessed Virgin of the Angel." Her lips quirked.

Hazel eyes narrowed in her direction. "Is that perhaps a joke aimed at my own holy chastity, Cosima?" Delphine spoke, her own humor touching her lips in a mischievous smirk.

Cosima gasped in mock alarm. "I would never jest at such a thing, my pure lady." She laughed when a swift tap came to her shoulder from the blonde, a gesture that spoke of the blonde's comfort. "No, I kid, however there is deep lore relating to the statue and its origins. As legend

would have it, one day, a clear a day as today is, a number of fisherman were going about their duty, catching the meals that would fill the bellies of their small children..." She spoke dramatically, watching as Delphine's smile widened as she looked out to sea. "It was said that on that day, even with the sun bright as ever, they saw a light, not like one would from a candle or an oil lamp, but an eerie, bright light that challenged the luminescence of the sun itself!"

Delphine gave the brunette an amused look, obviously seeing through the woman's over exaggerations before returning her eyes out the window, taking in the ragged instability of the once noble chapel.

"When these fine men went to investigate, they found a statue of the Blessed Virgin with the Holy Child in her arms, wood undamaged by the sea that surrounded it, and a base of pure marble. Of course once they towed it to shore and attempted to move it further inland, the fisherman found their work-sculpted muscles were no match for such a beast, but the bishop was wise and ever enlightened and an idea came to him, possibly from the good lord himself. The bishop's idea was that due to the nature of the statue, only hands as innocent as those of children would be able to move it, and move it did!" When disbelieving eyes turned her way she laughed. "It's a true story, honestly."

"Sounds like a fisherman's tale." Delphine shook her head. "What happened to the town? Why would they abandon such a treasure?"

"Well, a few years after I was born, a flood came through the area. We are far enough inland, or perhaps the lord has an affinity for sinners and depravity, but it did not reach us. This town, Caorle, unfortunately was flooded, destroying most buildings." When sun-kissed eyes turned her way once more, she grinned. "My brother and I first visited this area when we were much younger. While Felix was appalled by the state of the land, I found this to be the source of much needed solitude. This tower had been somewhat of a sanctuary in my younger years, abandoned and forgotten, a place for my mind to linger on... other things." Cosima let her words fade, not particularly interested in sharing that part of herself just yet, fear still guiding her actions.

There was a pull and Delphine fought against it, her mind still dwelling on that kiss. "What other things?" She could hear the timbre of her voice and cursed herself for her weakness. Cosima had already pushed her away once, to insist would only prove herself a fool.

Cosima was cursing herself as well. Why had she brought the blonde here? A place that was so dear to her heart? What was she thinking? "When I was younger, my mother decided she no longer wished to have children or a husband..." She broke off their gaze and looked out the window. "So it was just my father who... cared more about his son than he did about the girl that only lingered to take food from the table."

Delphine shifted slightly, unsure about how to react to the sudden change in the mood. "That's horrible."

With a nonchalant shrug, Cosima sighed. "I am far from the daughter that any parent would want." A grimace touched her lips despite her attempts to stay calm, remembering days in which her father was less than kind, less than considerate. At those times she wondered if her mother would have been the same, or if she had known so early of her deviant children that she escaped in hopes of starting anew. "Even as a child my mind was tormented by many things I had no control over, things that no girl should have to worry or question." She looked up to find pools of hazel watching her closely. "It was an ailment that both my brother and I shared. Felix...was less than the son my father hoped for... but it is not my brother's fault. He tried, and once our father died, my brother was torn between knowing what a young lord of his position was expected to do, and what his heart wanted to do." Cosima pursed her lips, not exactly sure where she was going with this. "I just..." She shrugged.

It was a lot of information to take in. Delphine took a breath, trying to sort through it. It was as if the library of Alexandria had been dumped upon her desk and she was tasked with translating the meanings beneath encrypted comments. "The two of you seem to have found a flow, otherwise I'm sure my mother would not have moved us over." There was more snark than she intended in the comment, and Cosima's own mood seemed to break.

Tilting her head in question, Cosima chewed her bottom lip. She had not given much thought to what the woman was losing, having left her home out of responsibility to her family. How would she feel, leaving behind her life in Venice? The prospect was unimaginable. "Did you leave much behind... no... that's a silly question. Of course you did." She frowned at that. As a female, she herself feared on a very low level that one day Felix might follow through with his threat. "I'm sorry you were forced to leave your home. It must be horrible."

"Don't apologize." Delphine looked out the window, watching as waves crashed along the beach on one side of the town, the pale sand perfectly smoothed by the sea. "While you are correct in assuming I did leave behind a whole life of friends and family, it is no more your fault as it is mine. At the least you have made the past two days far more enjoyable than I thought possible given the situation."

Stepping back, Cosima laughed softly, bowing deeply at the waist. "And it has been quite a pleasure, m'lady, to have been of assistance to such a beautiful Mademoiselle as yourself." Standing back up, she saw the look in Delphine's eyes, the lip captured once more between her teeth. She had pushed Delphine away earlier out of duty to her brother, but now, was she still bound to that duty when her own brother dared not abide by his engagement himself? She stepped a bit closer, this time out of mock conspiracy, leaning forward until her lips were but an inch from the French woman's ear. "Does m'lady desire any other assistance?" She heard the soft gasp, the woman leaning back just slightly. It was difficult, trying to keep the storm within herself calmed, as if she didn't spend most of her time wooing the lovely ladies of Venice. Delphine had moved back just enough to look in her eyes and Cosima felt herself being swallowed whole, the vastness of hazel depths consuming her bravado and leaving her nervous and unsure. "Perhaps after having shared such personal stories, do you think we should once more exchange a display of ... sisterly affection?"

Delphine rose an eyebrow, unsure that she was really hearing what had come from her mouth, wondering if perhaps Lucifer might be tricking her, daring her to press for intimacies that were not hers to possess. Judging from the look in the brunette's eyes, however, and the small turn up of the corner of her mouth, she knew it was no trick. It set a confusion in her, not having expected such a turn when Cosima had pushed her away earlier, and yet here the woman was, suggesting that they share a similar experience. Perhaps... perhaps she meant a simple exchange. She could keep it platonic. This close, it was simple enough to turn, to press her lips to the corner of Cosima's mouth once more, except, this time Cosima did not step away. This time, as Delphine applied a second kiss to the opposite corner, Cosima remained calm and still, her smile widening, the tip of her tongue slipping out to dampen her lips.

Cosima decided to let the blonde lead, offering herself in an attempt to lure Delphine out. The lightest of touches was sweet torture, sending a thrill through her and settling in the pit of her stomach. Would Delphine continue this gentle exploration that she couldn't seem to resist? Would the blonde be able to surpass the teachings of her childhood and...

Delphine's eyes closed as she pressed her lips against Cosima's. As if on instinct her hands came up, cupping the soft skin of the woman's cheeks. An arm slipped around her waist and she was pulled against the shorter frame. When Cosima did not push her away, she reveled in the solidity of the hold, a gentle embrace that felt protective and addictive. She felt the gentle brush of a tongue teasing her lips and she leaned back, her eyes blinking open. She saw no horror of fear in



the brunette's eyes and, with the tip of her thumb, she traced the brunette's soft lips. "This... is not very sisterly... unless things are different in Venice."

A grin appeared and Cosima pressed a kiss against the finger briefly before capturing the curious digit between her teeth, giving it a gently bite then releasing it. "I believe you will discover that things are very different in Venice." Cosima whispered.

Unable to stop herself, Delphine pulled the woman forward once more, pressing their lips together in one more kiss.

## Blossoming From Within

*Thank you so much for all the reviews and comments you guys have left. I appreciate them all. Thank you to jaybear1701 for continuing to beta, as well as my other obfrankenfic peeps who read it and offer amusing commentary.*

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They were sitting on the dusty stone floor of the tower, a small handkerchief on the ground acting as a barrier to protect the fruit Cosima had brought along, the bottle of wine having been passed back and forth between the two of them. Delphine couldn't help but feel a slight thrill of deviance, having never had the audacity to pull drink straight from its vessel. It was a day for firsts, it would seem, as Delphine watched small hands handling the fruit with care, the sun reflecting off the small blade.

Cosima ran the knife through the soft flesh of the fig, cutting a wedge and offering it to the blonde. "The very thought that you have yet to consume a delight as pleasant as the fig is a crime against nature." She watched as Delphine inspected it carefully, her lips pursed as she held it up to eye level, distrusting hazel orbs inspecting the central pulp that was a mass of tiny curved stems and buds. "Why would you deny yourself such a delicacy when I know they have some of the most delectable figs in France?"

Delphine wrinkled her nose at the wedge, looking it over. "It does not look very appetizing." She looked at Cosima through long lashes, feeling a blush color her cheeks once more, the memory of their transgressions so close to the surface. "I don't know about this, Cosima."

With a laugh, Cosima moved closer to the woman, their shoulders touching. "Figs have been around since the birth of man, Delphine." She sliced her own wedge, showing it to the Parisian. "It was the very fruit that God himself created to feed Adam and Eve before they were cast from the Garden." Seeing the amused yet unconvinced look on the blonde's face, she leaned just a tad closer, her voice but a soft utterance. "They say the only thing sweeter than a ripe fig in Summer, is the love of a beautiful woman." Leaning back at the satisfying flames engulfing Delphine's cheeks, she winked before slipping the entire wedge into her mouth, closing her eyes at the flavor. "It is undoubtedly heavenly." She commented blissfully.

Biting her bottom lip as she watched Cosima's tongue emerge to lick her lips, Delphine felt the fire within her burning. They had shared a few kisses that had seared into her memory the feel and taste of the shorter woman, inscribing the tablets of her mind with the commandments that fueled her desires. Despite the fact that they were in a tower, away from the ears of anyone that would take even the slightest of interest, she leaned closer, her lips an inch from the woman's ear, her voice dropping to a whisper. "If figs are no sweeter than the love of a beautiful woman, then what need have I for fruit, ma chérie?" She watched as the smile on the woman's face spread wider.

Cosima turned, finding lips dauntingly close to her own. "Have you ever known the love of a woman, Delphine?" She knew the answer, or she felt she knew, but she needed confirmation. It would change nothing of her own emotions, not when her heart threatened to burst, to destroy her at every breath.

Delphine shook her head just slightly, the action causing her lips to brush lightly against Cosima's. "Non." Allowing their lips to brush once more, she smiled. "Ask me again tomorrow and I may have a different answer for you."

The foundation of Cosima's resistance was dissolving, the crashing waves of emotion and desire chipping each stone away one agonizingly soft caress at a time. She was used to the strong will of men approaching her unsolicited, or of how the women who knew of her skills begged for her attention, throwing themselves at her feet in offering. Delphine was neither of those. She was sweet persuasion, tempting her instead of begging or overpowering. No one had ever spoken to her the way the French woman did, and Cosima heard the groan come from within herself in response. She could place hope on the possibility that it was just an internal sound, but the smile Delphine gave her spoke another tale. She gulped, wondering where her bravado had gone, swallowed whole by Delphine's boldness.

Delphine smiled at the woman's stunned silence, bumping her nose against Cosima's before leaning back, breaking the intensity by taking a bite of the fig that had been forgotten in her hand. She blinked at the unexpected taste. It was sweeter than she thought it would be, stringy yet almost overly soft. The outer flesh was firmer but not by much, a density that was curious. Her eyes rose to find the brunette staring at her lips, and she swallowed hastily, tentatively letting her tongue trace her lips slowly under the guise of cleaning away the slickness that accompanied the pulp of the fruit. She was rewarded with a surprising sound that was half a whimper and half a squeak. There had been no doubt in her mind that Cosima was far from pure, such was evident in the way the Venetian woman held herself. There was a confidence in the brunette's seduction, confidence that she herself lacked in the face of such evident attraction. Where her words tripped upon the chastity of her own tongue, Cosima possessed no such obstruction, leading the way with an ever-present cockiness that she herself only felt when in the presence of her family.

Would her "sister" attempt to push her further? Would she tempt her with promises of unending delight that would last throughout the morning hours, such as had been casually thrown her way by the boys she'd taken lessons with, or would Cosima wordlessly claim her body here on the dusty floor of the tower, the very dream that had kept her awake becoming a reality? Perhaps the bigger question was... would she allow it to happen? She had been promised to Monsieur Salvatore untouched, but she had seen the looks her brother and soon-to-be husband had exchanged, a fire she recognized in Cosima's eyes when they looked upon her. In addition, now that she thought more of it, where had her brother been when she and Cosima were in the stables. She had been so relieved that he had not seen her dressed in such garb that she had eagerly escaped without a second thought of where he could be.

"What are you thinking?"

Cosima's voice pulled Delphine from her musings, a worried look in dark eyes bringing a smile to her face. "Sweet fruit and a beautiful woman."

It was so tempting, Cosima found, to capture lips she now knew were softer than pillows and far sweeter than any fig. "And what is your judgement?"

Delphine smiled, leaning her head towards the brunette. "Well, the fig was indeed sweet, more so than I would have imagined, but I cannot bid yea or nay on the comparison, for I've only experienced one and not the other." She bit her bottom lip, her inexperience warring with the desire that was driving her words. "What of your own verdict?"

Cosima swallowed, leaning a little bit away, picking up the fruit she'd dropped back on the handkerchief in the midst of softly brushing lips. Why was she so troubled by this woman that had come into her life only a day ago? The question rolled through her mind, and yet as she let her thoughts wander over the little time they had spent together, it was as if the sun had not risen until this beautiful and chaste angel had appeared. She wanted nothing more than to peel away the clothes she had urged upon the blonde, to claim lips in a kiss that was deeper than the fleeting embraces they'd shared previously. She sliced another bit of fruit to keep her mouth busy, afraid

for what confessions she might let slip. She feared that looking into Delphine's eyes would lead to a weakening of her resistance, but not looking into them was denying herself paradise. It was a physical pain within her, resisting the pull of hazel eyes that, once she gave in to the temptation, showed a growing doubt within their depths the longer she was silent.

She couldn't have that.

The fruit slipping from her hand once more, she brushed fingertips along the soft skin of Delphine's neck, noticing the doubt fading away, the gaze softening as eyes alternated between meeting her own and staring at her lips. "I doubt the Lord would bless humanity with a creation any more precious and sweet as you, Delphine." This time, when their lips met again, it was as if they were of one soul, two spirits finding each other after years of crushing loneliness. This was no gentle brush, no fleeting kiss that could easily be explained as a familial gesture. This was passion and fire, a burning need that continued to build and fill her even when she believed her cup runneth over.

Delphine's hands came up, cupping cheeks and holding her in place, afraid the woman would back away again, afraid that this delectable connection would be severed once more. She knew then as a tongue darted between her lips teasingly, kissing her in a way she had never been kissed before, that should Cosima desire to claim her virtue, she would give it freely, her body begging for touches she had never thought to crave. How could such an avalanche of passion and need even exist when she barely knew the brunette?

Cosima knew her body well, and it was at its breaking point. Somewhere in the mix, the taller frame had moved, straddling her thighs, pressing her body to Cosima's. Her fingers had found their way to the lacings on the breeches Delphine wore and her hand twitched greedily, wanting nothing more than to rip the material from the slim body, to claim every inch of the pale flesh until the woman was screaming her name and begging her for release. Matters were not helped by the rate in which Delphine adapted and learned, the blonde's tongue probing her own mouth, teeth nipping her lip. Would she be so quick to learn other talents as well? Would Delphine's tongue be so bold when traveling the course of a woman's body, exploring the depths of such hedonistic arousal?

Mustering strength she hadn't thought she had, Cosima pulled away, her chest heaving as she struggled to battle her inner demons crying for more. "We have to stop." She was gasping for air, knowing the wine had done little to soothe her rampaging need.

Delphine found her breath just as difficult to catch, looking down at their precarious position. "Mon dieu." Her fingertips came up to trace her own swollen lips, worried she had pushed too far, wondering if her own desire had blinded her, forcing her to misjudge the brunette's intentions. "D...désolée." Her tongue tripped over her sudden self-doubt as she moved to extract herself.

Cosima captured Delphine around the waist, stalling her movements, knowing an explanation was needed. "Do not apologize, Delphine, for the injustice was mine alone." She looked down, having no desire to see any regret or disdain in the blonde's eyes. "My apologies for my own boldness m'lady, for I have little restraint, it would seem, in your presence." She rested her head back against the wall of the tower, her eyes still closed, still afraid. "You have come to wed my brother and I fear I have stepped between him and any chance he might have had to win your affection."

Delphine's brows furrowed, disbelief coloring her features. "My affection is mine to give freely. It is not yours or his to win. I am no object to be sought for as a prize."

Sensing the storm, Cosima finally met the hazel stare, surprised at the anger she found there. "An object, no, but a prize you are, Delphine. Not one to be owned, but the prize is to humanity for the very gift of your existence." She reached up, pushing a wisp of blonde hair behind a pale ear,

feeling a pain she'd never known infect her heart and spreading like a plague. "Had I been born a man I would have no doubt in this matter. I would fight for the right to call myself yours, and I would beg you nightly to allow me to bask in the splendor of your beauty, to taste your body as I long to do now, but I was not." Cosima felt tears in her eyes, yet she refused to let them fall, to show weakness when she needed strength. "You have come to Venice to marry my brother, Delphine, and I know that should that marriage not occur, your mother would not hesitate to remove you from the city. I could not live with that. Even in but two days I feel you in my veins, coursing through my body, giving me life. The thought of you leaving Venice is unbearable to think." She swallowed, emotion threatening her resolve. "Yet, should you marry him, I feel it would be the death of me, knowing that he would be allowed to touch you as I never could. We would never share the wedding night you deserve, that you have been saving yourself for."

Delphine could see the torrent of emotions behind the brunette's facade, noting the tears that threatened to spill from quivering eyes and the barely disguised tremble of her lip. "Cosima." Her hand rose up to press against the soft cheek, her thumb tracing the bruised lips. "My body is mine alone to do with as I please, but you misunderstand the concept of my chastity, mon amour. It is not that I long to uphold the barbaric notion of abstaining until marriage, but rather the result of an overprotective mother and a simple lack of interest on my part." Seeing confusion, she almost laughed. "I have no wish to be claimed by any man on my wedding night, lest the seal broken would be the first of revelations, an angel of damnation sent forth to Herald the end of existence." That earned her a small laugh as her thumb captured the tear that slipped from a dark hazel orb. "Two days and already the depths of my emotions for you have surpassed any I've ever felt in the entirety of my life, so I say to hell with tradition. I need no priest to sanctify this."

Cosima closed her eyes once more, her ears hearing what the blonde was saying, yet her mind battling the carnal instinct to take what the blonde was offering. What was stopping her? Her own shallow piousness and the ingrained need to please God? Familial duty? Love?

Of course it wasn't love. Two days was not long enough for such a connection, and yet as she looked into hazel eyes, there was a well of possibility staring back at her, conspiring with smiling lips to lure her in. Again their lips met, but this time she held back, allowing for a soft caress of lips that moved agonizingly slow, tongues touching just enough to taste, enough to send a pulse of realization through both women. As Cosima broke the kiss off, she leaned her forehead to Delphine's, breathing her air. "We should head back." She whispered, even as she placed the barest of kisses along the pale jaw, both women sharing a smile that was just for the two of them.

## A Sign From God

"Dobryy vecher, lyubov' moya."

The Russian words catching her mid-sip, Cosima looked up from her mug as the petite blonde sat beside her. "Shay! What brings you to such a forsaken place?" She asked with a smile, gesturing to the near empty bar. "Won't your husband be curious as to your whereabouts?" Scott had escaped her company, choosing instead to have his needs tended to by the lovely ladies upstairs while she drowned her own desire in a mug of one of her favorite drinks, the small establishment having acquired a rare cask of idromele, the sweet fermented honey wine that was just the perfect end to the perfect day.

The Russian woman blinked, her clear blue eyes narrowing in confusion. "It is Friday, Cosanova." Like a temptress eager to snare her next victim, she moved closer, pressing her body against the brunette's side, disguising the move by reaching for the woman's drink, breathing in deeply as she got closer. "You know Grigory has gone to make his delivery tonight. I was expecting you two hours ago." She whispered into the mug.

Cosima winced at that. After a day as she'd had already, the last thing she wanted was the company of another woman, not with the scent of Delphine still on her clothes and the taste of her kiss still on her lips, but still she could feel a fire in her blood, one she knew that she would have to relieve herself of when she returned to her room. "Ah, forgive me, m'lady. It has been quite a taxing day, so much so that I seem to have forgotten my obligations. I doubt I'd have been of any use to you tonight as I'm on the verge of seeking refuge in my own bed soon." She signaled the bar wench for another mug as the blonde had yet to return her own. She risked a quick glance to the stairs that led to the upper floor, praying that the maidens might lick the cream from Scott's desire-laden cannoli a little quicker if only to save her from this unfortunate encounter.

"Are you sure I cannot convince you to stay up just a few hours more?" Shay let her fingertips brush against the brunette's bicep, her voice low and breathy. "You look so tense, Kitten. Perhaps you have need of my skilled hands to rub your... shoulders?"

The offer was... not as tempting as she thought it would be. The Russian was beautiful, yes, but not as beautiful as a certain French blonde with light hazel eyes. She cleared her throat, moving a little bit away from the woman, relieving herself of both the bold touch as well as any temptation that might arise from her already inflamed arousal. "I beg your forgiveness, m'lady, but I have barely the strength still to lift my own glass." As if summoned by God himself to be her savior, Scott appeared, bounding down the wooden steps, his gait light and cheeks flushed a dark crimson. "Scott! That took you longer than normal! Had I known it would take longer than your normal 30 seconds, I would have walked home!"

"You wound me, Cosima." Scott commented as he sat down, and grabbed her mug, draining half the contents, signalling the stable boy to hitch his cart. Noticing the tension between the two women, Scott caught the uncomfortable look in Cosima's eyes. "Lady Davydov. This is an odd place for a woman of such high standing as yourself to be."

Obviously appalled at the attention directed her way, Shay stiffened at that, drinking the rest of the mug she held before setting it down. "I was hoping to fulfill a prior engagement tonight but perhaps they were too busy to arrive," she commented, eyes darkening in disapproval cast towards Cosima before turning to leave.

Cosima watched the blonde leave, sighing softly before turning back to Scott. "Have you had your fill of thrusting into the same holes your father more than likely poured his seed into less than

an hour ago?"

"Ugh, Cosima!" Scott gave her disgusted look. "What's going on with you? It's not like you to turn your nose from such a woman, particularly when, judging from your less than cheerful attitude, your own feminine region is so obviously lacking the relief it so desperately needs."

Setting some money on the bar, Cosima finished her drink before walking out, leaving the question unanswered as she headed to where the stable boy was hooking the last hitches on the cart, hopping up onto the seat. It wasn't much longer before Scott arrived, tossing a coin to the lad as he took up the reins. They traveled down the street quietly, the silence bearing down on them.

Scott's brow furrowed as he took in the shorter woman's posture. "Did you want to talk about it?"

Cosima shook her head. The honey wine had done little to soothe the twisting in her gut and she sighed. If damnation existed on the earthly plane, it would be knowing that such a creature as Delphine existed and put her out of Cosima's reach. The blonde wanted her, and she wanted the blonde, so what was her problem really? She held no respect for her brother in any other aspect of their lives, so what then would her excuse be now? A week ago, she would have gladly accepted Shay's invitation. The short blonde was beautiful and responsive and quite eager to please, yet the sight of her did little to excite Cosima tonight. All she could think of was Delphine, as if every breath depended on the woman's name crossing her mind.

Breath in... Delphine... breath out... Delphine.

She couldn't help but wonder what her course of action should be? Should she give in to desire? Should she play the part society expected of her and respect her brother? Surely there was no way that she and Delphine could be together, and oh how she wanted that. She wanted Delphine beyond words, beyond reason, beyond anything. Surely this lust would fade over time, would it not? And yet she could not bring herself to think of it as just lust, for just the sight of the woman's smile was enough to make her heartbeat quicken.

What was she to do? Surely if she was meant to do either, the Lord would send her a sign.

As the cart continued down the road, the light of the moon was suddenly blocked and they were cast in the shadow of a building. It was a beautiful three story manor that Cosima was vaguely familiar with and had been on her mind for the past hour or so. Surely this was the sign she was waiting for, she decided as she stood up and hopped from the cart. "Don't wait for me, Scott." She commented even as she moved towards it. Looking up the vines growing along the side of the building, she nodded, finding handholds easily and ignoring her name being called from the cart.

Delphine sighed as she looked into the vanity while brushing her hair, the memories of soft lips still ingrained into her mind, lips pressing against her throat in a way no one had ever dared to, in a way she had never let anyone else close enough to do. Never had she felt the ache of her cheeks from smiling so much. Never had a day seemed so sunny or the sky seem so clear. Setting aside her brush, she blew out the candle and moved to her bed, pulling back the soft blanket. Never had the presence of a single person made such an impact on her life, and as she fell back onto the padded surface, hearing her laughter fill the air, it was as if it were from a source other than her own lungs. "Cosima." The name rolled off her tongue like a prayer, so delicate and holy that she felt unworthy in the presence of it.

What was this feeling she had and why had she never thought to feel it before? Was it an infatuation? This feeling she felt surpassed all others in her history, a need in her so unfamiliar that she was confused but still elated. Every sound she heard held similarity to the object of her mind's obsession: the ticking of the clock on the wall, the sound of her own heartbeat. She could even swear she heard the name being carried in through the window from the street below, as if the

light of the full moon dared illuminate her heart with the memories delivered onto her by the owner of such a name.

"Cosima." She whispered, temptation doing its worst to encourage her to lift her gown, to feel her fingers moving against her once more as it had the night before. Would this be her future, even when sleeping beside her future husband? Would she wait until he'd passed out from pumping into her unimpressed womb, no doubt imagining she were her more passive brother, and finally bring herself the pleasure she desired by work of her own fingers, imagining they belonged undoubtedly to her beautiful and irresistible sister? What a drab future it was indeed, but one she discovered she would be willing to suffer through for more days like today. Would Cosima still find her attractive, after her own chastity had been defiled by Felix?

Perhaps they might visit the tower again, and perhaps she might convince the brunette to take her purity there, where no eyes lingered upon them, before her husband would have the chance. Would the small woman want her? Surely the look she had seen in the dark hazel eyes had been one to match her own need.

"Delphine."

Delphine closed her eyes as the sound of her name on those soft lips came to her, a memory she would never give up, for it was the sound of heaven in a name. Her hands clenched in the material of her nightgown, inching the material up slowly, the sound of a whisper enough to fuel her arousal.

"Delphine." The sound was a little louder this time just seconds before the sound of something hitting her floor and a strangled "oowww" filled the silence of her room.

Delphine sat up quickly, the moonlight reflecting off the shadow that sat on the floor beneath her window. "Cosima?" She moved instantly, recognizing the small form easily. "Are you alright?"

Cosima chuckled, nodding as she leaned against the wall, embarrassment burning her cheeks a bright red. "Apologies, m'lady. I meant to be a little more graceful."

"Well, if grace is what you aimed for, I'm afraid you missed your mark." Delphine was on her knees, the cold stone biting into her skin and making her wince. "What are you doing here?"

A smile pulling at her lips, Cosima chewed on her bottom lip, having realized she had no reasons that were not incriminating. "A sign from God?" Perhaps she had consumed more wine than she thought, but she had reacted in the moment, seizing what had obviously been a sign and going with it. She had stuck her head into half the windows of the manor before finding the correct one, somehow escaping notice in doing so until crashing to Delphine's floor. "I... would you find me a fool if I said I wished to see you once more before tomorrow came?" She let her eyes travel over the woman's body, realizing that the only thing standing between her and the blonde's body was a simple nightgown.

Delphine felt a smile tug at her own lips as she shook her head. "A fool? Non." Unable to stop herself, she pushed the brunette's hair back, her hand stopping to linger on the woman's throat. "I was just thinking about you." It was a whisper, but watching eyes that were looking at her appreciatively, they were the only words that would come to her.

"Were you?" Cosima found that her tongue was no longer glued by hesitation or nervousness as it had been earlier in the day. "And what were you doing while thinking about me?" A groan nearly escaped her throat at the blush that instantly spread across the pale cheeks, a sign of the most beautiful guilt.



"Nothing..." Delphine looked away, her own bravado escaping for the moment until she heard herself continue, "...yet." She swallowed nervously, certain the brunette could hear her heart beating.

Cosima moved closer, her fingertip caressing the length of Delphine's jaw before urging her to look up, finding hazel eyes full of emotion. "And what was such a chaste angel planning on doing while thinking of me?" Unable to stop herself, she leaned forward, capturing soft lips in a kiss.

Delphine could taste the sweet yet bitter alcohol on the woman's tongue and any doubt she had seemed to be washed away with the haze of arousal. Suddenly she was on her feet, pulling Cosima towards the bed. Surely it must be a possession of some demonic entity, guiding her as she sat on the edge of her bed, the brunette standing before her, a silence that seemed to speak volumes between them.

This was such a bad idea, Cosima thought as she looked down to see pale fingers undoing the lacing of her breeches. She wondered if perhaps she should say something, to stop such a profoundly unintelligent encounter from commencing, but why then were her own hands tugging her shirt up and over her head?

Delphine's fingers stilled as she took in the woman that was half-naked, her eyes raking up the form as if realizing that this was the path her hands had started her on. Soft skin covering a defined abdomen led to breasts that were perfect for the brunette, full yet not too large. Even the angle and definition of the brunette's collar was perfect. She needed to see the rest of the woman, and her fingers moved faster to loosen the laces.

Noting that Delphine had yet to run screaming, Cosima kicked off her boots, slipping out of the breeches once fingers completed their job. She watched as the blonde's eyes took every inch of her in, hands pausing mid air as if waiting for approval. "Delphine, anything and everything you see is yours to touch and explore."

The voice pulled Delphine from her daze, the whisper reaching into her and moving her hands forward. She let them settle on bare hips, finding curves that were softer than her own, and she was suddenly aware of the boniness of her own body, knowing that beneath her own clothes lay a form that was too thin to be attractive. "You are beautiful, ma cherie." She whispered, pulling the woman closer. "Will you teach me...what it means to know the love of a woman?"

Cosima felt her mouth go dry. She had never thought her day would end like this, she pondered, as she gently tugged the blonde's nightgown up, revealing a body that was far more perfect than she ever dreamed. "Are you sure these are lessons you wish to learn tonight?"

Delphine nodded, pushing herself back to the center of the bed, watching hungrily as the woman crawled towards her. "Oui... teach me."

With half a smirk, Cosima covered the woman's body, pressing her back into the pillows as their lips collided, both women sighing into the kiss as flesh met flesh.

## Lessons Learned

*Haha sorry for leaving you all high and ... not so dry... last chapter. ;) I'm going to be at the RenFaire tomorrow so posting this a day early. I guess you can say this is nsfw...*

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A heavy rain had begun to fall, heavy clouds obscuring the light of the moon that had shone in the window. The two forms pressed together were so close, they were in little need of light. This close, Cosima could see everything from the blonde's slightly bruised lips to the small furrow in her brow. "What troubles you, Delphine?"

"Nothing." Delphine reached up, slipping her hand around the back of Cosima's neck. "I ... I am not sure how to please you."

A smirk crossed Cosima's face as she brushed her nose against the woman's. "Your pleasure is my pleasure," she whispered, kissing her way down a pale neck. She had settled her own hips between Delphine's spread thighs and become keenly aware of the heated arousal pressing against her skin. "Sharing your space, breathing your hair... heaven will have to work twice as hard to prove any better." As she descended, she was careful to avoid leaving marks or any evidence of her presence lest their folly be made public. She was well aware of the persecutions that lay beyond the rain speckling windowsill and while she was not worried of the risk to her own freedom, she would be damned if Delphine would have to deal with such troubles, especially tonight when her only goal was to feel the tall form moving against her own body in ecstasy.

Tonight she wished for naught but the soft flesh beneath her fingertips and the taste of Delphine's body taking over her senses. As her tongue dipped into the hollow of her throat, she heard the woman gasp and was quick to move up, to cover the blonde's lips with her own for a quick kiss. "I beg of you to hold your tongue, m'lady, lest we be discovered." When she received a nod of confirmation, she continued her path, kisses brushing lower until she reached soft breasts, wasting no time in capturing a hardened nipple between her lips. She heard the sudden gasp as fingers clamped around her bicep. Pleasing a woman was nothing new to Cosima, but this was different. Physical pleasure was second to the connection they were forging, a physical experience that would cement their sentimental bond. As she teased the dark pink nub with her tongue, she reveled in an intimacy that she had never felt.

Delphine fought the urge to cry out. Every inch of her skin was beyond sensitive for her flesh knew nothing of sin. Never had she encountered the hungry tongue circling her breasts nor the press of hips between her thighs and the sensation was beyond description. Words failed her, leaving her to the mercy of the lips and tongue that switched to her other breast, paying equal attention. Hips turned slightly, applying more pressure to her core and sending a wave of pleasure through her. Combined with the need that filled her, she had little restraint against the whimper that slipped from her throat.

With a near silent chuckle, Cosima kissed her way back to the woman's lips once more. She had planned to savor the woman, to roll her tongue against the slick arousal she'd longed to taste since those hazel eyes first captured her gaze, but it seemed as though it would be too much at the moment. Instead she let her hand slip down between them, caressing the line of the woman's hip bone. Breaking off the kiss, Cosima couldn't resist looking into those eyes once again, seeing pupils dilated just a bit, the woman's lip quickly finding a place between ivory teeth. "Are you sure this is what you want?" She asked, her hand covering dark blonde curls, cupping the heated flesh but not pressing forward. "This is a bridge you cannot cross twice." She traced the intimate line where flesh wet with unbridled desire taunted her with temptation and she was well aware

that this was the point of no return, the spear lingering at Christ's ribs, knowing that pushing forward would thrust them into damnation. There was no coming back from this.

Hazel eyes trembled with emotion and need but there was not a speck of hesitance. "Please." It was just a single syllable, but it was all Delphine could manage.

The word was a bare whisper and Cosima was surprised to find her hand covered by the blonde's, pressing her closer. Cosima took it as a sign, her fingers slipping through slick arousal, her lips covering Delphine's once more to muffle the moan she expected. She felt the woman's body arch into her own and it was the most delicious feeling in all of Venice. Cosima cursed the forms that slumbered just on the other side of the bedroom wall for their ears. She wanted nothing more than to hear the moans of passions that such proximity to Delphine's kin denied her. Perhaps tomorrow, should the blonde not be filled with regret, they might venture out into seclusion where none might eavesdrop on such intimacies. Only then might she hear her own name called from such wicked lips.

Fingertips circled swollen flesh, an attempt to draw out the encounter Cosima feared would end too soon should she not show caution. Each time her fingers dared apply full contact to the single point of Delphine's wanton need, the blonde would buck and moan. She had never seen such sensitivity and it was both a blessing and a curse. She had not lied when she had claimed Delphine's pleasure was her own, yet the Lord saw fit to gift her with such an angelic beauty that might peak too soon before her own hunger was to be satiated. But oh how beautiful such desire and fulfillment looked upon pale skin now flushed the crimson shade of passion. As she broke off their kiss, she nearly groaned herself, looking down at the length of the woman's heaving chest struggling to pull in enough air, hips that unceremoniously chased her tentative fingertips as Cosima attempted to lengthen the experience. She wanted to see the look of hopeless ecstasy in those hazel eyes that were currently squeezed shut, but she wanted to explore further as well, to never let this end. "Delphine, open your eyes."

Delphine did as she was told, on the precipice of the unknown. Touching herself had felt nothing like this. It was but a shallow comparison to the woman's knowing fingers, giving yet withholding, loving yet hesitant. She wanted to know why Cosima dared toy with her, why she would deny her the contact she needed, yet she couldn't imagine surviving anything more. Oblivion was a hand between her thighs, stroking and moving away, then returning to stroke again. It was a whirlwind of pleasure and the denial of pleasure and it was soon driving her mad with frustration. "Please, mon amour." She barely recognized the sound of her voice, pleading and desperate.

There was no way Cosima could resist that, not when such a tone buried itself between her own legs, vibrating against her own swollen flesh as if the whimpered plea were a tongue itself, hot and persistent against the apex of her own desire. "Delphine," she whispered, bringing her mouth close to the woman's ear, taking a moment to taste a nearby earlobe, "I'm going to claim your body as my own, taking from you what can only be taken once, but only if it is what you truly desire."

Delphine nodded, her head moving as though barely connected, for in truth it had already detached and floated above the earth, past the storm clouds that began to fiercely soak the city streets with rain, just as her desire unrepentantly began to soak the bed linen beneath their writhing bodies, and up into the graces of God himself. "My body is already yours." Her voice was but a breath passing her lips into the air they both breathed, and as Cosima's mouth crushed against her own, she felt herself filled slowly by a single finger. Be it one or a dozen, she could not stop the whimper in her throat nor her nails from biting into Cosima's sides. Just one finger and her body seized it as her own, muscles clenching around the digit in a reflex she had no control over, familiarizing herself with this new yet welcome invasion.

Cosima was careful with the virgin territory. Slick and ready as the woman was, she had not the same desire a man did when they carelessly impaled a woman with their girthless twigs, thinking the more blood they left behind for the chambermaid to clean up proved them more of a man. She would rather the bed be soaked with desire than the gorish evidence of an ignorant deflowering. As she slowly began to caress untouched depths with her carefully thrusting finger, she felt the woman's heated core welcome her. As she pressed deeper, she felt the blonde penetrate her soul, burying herself where Cosima would never be able to extract her.

If there were a place grander than heaven, it would still not be comparable, Delphine decided, as her hips moved of their own accord. She had been taught that anyone pressing into her depths the first time would cause her pain, to be prepared for an agonizing wedding night, yet there was nothing but gentle and overwhelming pleasure, even as she felt the penetrating digit expand, doubling in size as a second finger pressed into her. There was no feeling of being torn open as women had explained to her, but instead she felt an eternity of reckless desire, her own hips attempting to conflict with Cosima's purposeful tenderness. She could feel herself stretch, opening up to the invasion that she welcomed by spreading her thighs wider, wanting more, deeper, faster.

Cosima was so tempted to push deeper, to thrust carelessly and passionately, but instead she restrained herself, slowing down her thrusts and curling her fingers to caress the curve of the front wall. As she expected, she felt the woman's body arch into her once more, Delphine's lips pulling away to greedily gasp for air as nails once again bit into Cosima's own skin. She knew she had tortured the blonde enough and continued to move against the curve, her thumb coming up to circle the swollen button of desire.

Delphine felt as though the world were crumbling before her, earthquakes coursing through her body and shaking away all that wasn't important, pushing her closer yet further yet everywhere and nowhere. She wanted to scream but no sound emerged, her lungs too busy attempting to pull in enough air, attempting to keep her alive when she was surely dying from desire. Each thrust and circle of the hand killed her and each resurrected her again, giving birth to a carnal understanding of her own body, a growing knowledge that, suddenly and all at once, burst from within her in all directions, all knowledge and thought escaping her for a momentary void of deliciously silent perfection. And as she was returning to her mind and body, gathered in Cosima's arms with soft kisses brushing against her closed eyelids, she knew two single facts without a doubt in her mind and soul. The first was that she undoubtedly and irrefutably knew that she loved Cosima, not as a sister, but in a way that a woman loved a husband; in a way that she knew she could not imagine marrying Felix or stand sharing his bed. The second was that what Cosima had just done to her, what they had done together, becoming one physically and emotionally... they needed to do it again... as often as possible.

## The Gift of Love

*Hey all. Sorry about missing last week. To make it up to you I'm posting two chapters today. The second one takes a bit of formatting so it will be later today but it will be today. Thanks as always to my beta jaybear1701.*

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Cosima smiled as she brushed her nose against Delphine's, the woman barely awake in her arms. Physically she had been this close to many women. Emotionally... never. She ran her fingertips along the blonde's jaw, admiring the feel of her smooth flesh. "Your skin is so soft."

Delphine hummed a soft noise, brushing her lips along the arm that her head was resting on.

"I must take my leave, m'lady, but I cannot bear the thought of escaping this bed." Cosima let her eyes travel the expanse of pale flesh that was huddled against her body for warmth, not daring to pull the covers up lest such a vision be obscured. Delphine was... far from a skilled lover. She was uncertain and shy, but she was eager to learn. Cosima had guided her, shown her where to touch, how to touch, and good lord the blonde was determined... and sensitive. Never had Cosima been with someone who reacted so intensely to her touch and she marveled at each tremble, each gasp. She was hungry for more. She wanted to spend all night pressing into the blonde, or tasting her, but she knew such a desire would have to wait until another time. Already she feared she had stayed too long. It was now closer to dawn than dusk and every minute she stayed, more risk was upon them.

Her hand coming up to caress Cosima's cheek, Delphine pulled her down for a kiss. It was slow and torturous, a caress of lips and tongues that sent warmth through her body and she had to pull away, knowing the need she felt could no more be sated than the hour of the night could be drawn back so she might experience such carnal delights once more before the sun rose. "I have no words to express the feelings I am experiencing, ma cherie." She felt her eyes welling up, as if the emotions were overflowing, fighting to be released and escaping through her tear ducts. "Never has such a gift been bestowed upon me, and I hope you do not wake in your bed hours from now and feel regret in your heart."

Raising her eyebrows, Cosima shook her head, placing another kiss on the blonde's lips. "The only regret I will awaken to will be the lack of your body against my own, but I must go." One more kiss and she was rolling out of bed, stretching before beginning to dress. She could feel the eyes on her as she slipped on her breeches then shirt, suddenly finding nimble fingers tightening the laces of her breeches. It was an odd sensation and she closed her eyes, enjoying the feeling of Delphine helping her dress. It was strangely erotic... or perhaps intimate was more of the correct word to explain the sensation that flowed through her as hands slipped the boots on her feet.

Sometime between thrusting fingers and bruising kisses, the rain had ceased and the clouds had cleared, allowing the women to both stand in the light of the moon, one now fully dressed while the other no longer held any shame while under the gaze of her new lover. Delphine ran her fingers through dark hair, sorting it with a small smile. "When will I see you again?"

Cosima pulled her hair back into a bun to get it out of the way. "Midday I think would be best. I shall stop by and we could have lunch." She slipped her arm around the blonde's waist, hugging her tight. "I don't know how I will sleep with the memory of your hands and body running through my mind." Releasing the blonde, she knelt down to pick up the woman's nightgown,

slipping it over her head. "Even in something as simple as a sleeping shift, you set a fire in me that none but your hands can assist with." She brushed her lips once more over Delphine's, feeling an almost physical pain within herself as she pulled away. "I shall come by at midday. I only hope that I survive so long without your presence."

Delphine groaned at just the thought of breaking her fast with her mother and waiting for the hours to go by. "Wait, mon amour." Delphine captured her hand and pulled her back, meeting her lips in a hungry kiss that slipped through her entire being and settled between her legs, a weakness she had known nothing about until talented fingers dared open her eyes to such delights. A whimper escaped her lips as arms wrapped around her neck, pulling her in closer, a tongue flicking at her lips. With a groan, she allowed the lips to pull away from her but pressed their foreheads together. "I'll miss you immeasurably."

"I'll wait for you in your dreams, Delphine." Cosima whispered, pressing one more kiss to the blonde's lips quickly before escaping while she still could, slipping down the handholds of the wall and hitting the ground with a soft grunt. Her knees felt weak but her heart was light so she decided to jog the way back to the villa. She had never felt so complete in her life and she barely noticed the distance passing as she reached their lands, slipping in the front door as silently as possible. She had half expected Felix to be awake waiting for her on the stairs, the perfect opportunity to berate her. Instead she made it to her bedroom alone, finding a bathing tub waiting for her, water cold to the touch. It was just what she needed.

Stripping her clothes off, she paused in front of the mirror. Somehow, she felt different, as though she had been the one deflowered, as if the fingers that had touched her had been the first to travel the lengths of her body. She closed her eyes and Delphine was still inside her, fingers tentatively thrusting, tentatively stroking and rubbing. Opening her eyes again to take in her reflection, her body had been a canvas, painted with the evidence of the blonde's unrestrained passion. While she herself had been careful, restraining her own reactions so as not to leave any evidence of their passion, Delphine had known not the strength to prevent her own unbridled desire from controlling her actions. The bite mark on her shoulder was the setting sun, red with just a hint of purple bruising. The brushstrokes of Delphine's nails painted her back with crimson lines, marks the shape of crescents pressed into her ribs.

Good Lord in heaven, just the thought of it sent arousal dripping down her thighs. With a shake of her head she slipped into the cold water, willing it to chill her body, to cool the arousal that coursed through her. Still she felt her body refusing to let go. In an almost primal move, she brought her hand to her nose, breathing in the scent that still clung to her fingers, the scent that was all Delphine. "Shit." The word slipped from her lips as she let her hand fall into the water and between her thighs. She knew there would be no rest for her until she relieved the tension that was building at just the thought of the blonde and so she let her fingers slip through a wetness that had little to do with the bath, remembering the way the French woman's fingers had felt moving against her, her other senses already filled with the taste of soft skin and the smell of blonde hair.

"Wake up!"

Cosima groaned as she was pulled from Delphine's arms once more, the dream fading as her eyes blinked open, wincing at the sun that came in through her window. She could tell by the position that it was still morning and she looked at her brother with a glare. "What?" She had little strength to pull herself out of bed, not even wanting to roll over to face her brother. She vaguely remembered falling asleep naked and was glad she had not kicked the blanket off in her sleep.

"I need your advice." Felix spoke with a bit of an indignant tone in his voice as he picked her sleeping gown off from the floor, tossing it at her as he turned away from her.

With a grunt, realization dawned on Cosima that he would not leave so she grabbed the gown and

slipped it over her head, sitting up and rubbing her eyes. "What do you want?"

Felix looked around the room, hesitation obvious in his stance. "Why do you have a bathtub in your room still?"

"Nevermind the bathtub." Cosima slipped out of her bed, moving over to the dresser that had a ceramic bowl on it, pouring enough water in to rinse the sleep from her eyes. "What advice could my brother need from an unruly deviant?"

With a sigh, Felix moved to the window, looking out onto the town that was a bit away from their property yet already bustling with activity. "I need your assistance with Delphine."

Freezing as she wiped the water from her face, Cosima looked at her brother in the mirror. It was a gift that he was lost in his own thoughts for one glance at her face would surely reveal the worried guilt she felt. "What about Delphine?"

"I feel as though I have been negligent in my attentions towards her. You have spent more time with her than I and it is not you that will be walking through the chapel with her." He ran his hand through his hair, smoothing the dark locks back before facing his sister who was watching him with a curious look. "I think I should give her a gift. I need a suggestion on what would be perfect for her."

Biting the corner of her lip, Cosima searched through her clothes chest, removing riding clothes for the day. "And how am I to know what would be perfect for your bride?"

Felix huffed. "Do not pretend, dear sister, that you lack the skills to court a woman, for I doubt the petite nails that made those marks on your back belonged to a man, and last I've noticed, you are a woman are you not?"

"So good of you to notice." With a roll of her eyes, Cosima let her eyes fall on the clothes she was to wear and smirked, a perfect idea coming to her. "Well, she seemed to enjoy the ride we took yesterday, but she lacks the proper attire to do so. Perhaps some new clothes might suffice?" She offered. "Some female riding gear would be perfect considering you do in fact own a stable full of horses."

Thinking that over, Felix nodded. "Would a horse be too much?" He asked seriously, his arms crossed over his chest. "I do have that small filly that would be perfect for her. I could get a saddle crafted for her, with her name burnt into the side of it, a stylish floral pattern..."

"Whoa there." Cosima rose her hand to stop him. "Let's start with the clothing and we can work up to the horse. Maybe that would be better for a wedding gift. Leave me a bit of gold and I'll pick up something for her in her size. I was planning on seeing if she wished to continue our tour from yesterday."

Pulling a purse from his waistcoat, he dropped it on her vanity. "Do make sure it is wrapped appropriately and send her my regards. I will be working in the stable all day." He cleared his throat as he turned to leave, stopping with his hand on the door. "Colin had seemed very interested in learning aspects of the business yesterday. Do advise him that should he care to continue our discussions from yesterday, he is more than welcome to stop by while you ladies are staring at rivers and flowers."

Watching as the door closed, a smirk stretched across Cosima's face as she quickly dressed. She definitely had intentions to stare at flowers. In fact she hoped she might bury her nose in flowers... or at least one flower with perfectly pink petals.





## Into the Garden

**Thank you so much for reading. As promised here is the second chapter for today. If you're just tuning in, I posted 2 chapters today so you might want to go back one if you haven't read it already. This chapter is so NSFW lol. Jaybear1701, who pretty much keeps this story looking like words and stuff, once said she wanted 3k of Cophine smut so...I hope 3500 words is enough for her.**

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The sky was incredible, Cosima thought, the weather seemingly consistent since the day the French family came to town. There were lakes and oceans far less blue than the vibrant sky, and the clouds that lingered were perfectly sculpted by the Lord's own hand, a perfect playground for cherubs and angels. Everything was art in her eyes this morning, shaped perfectly like the softness of the skin that covered impeccably shaped hips. Nay, not art. Everything was holy, a sacred prayer begging to pour forth in humbled whispers.

The tower they had visited the day before provided the privacy they sought. Their clothes had been shed just moments ago, riding gear, both hers and Delphine's, piled upon the blanket Cosima had brought with her, the wine and fruit she had intended they consume set aside and forgotten as neither woman could resist peeling back the new clothes Felix had purchased to reveal warm flesh.

*"A gift, dear sister, from my brother. He was rather saddened that you had not the proper clothing during our ride and believed it would be best if you had your own." Cosima smiled as she offered the blonde the box with an obnoxious ribbon on it. It had taken less than half an hour to find proper clothing. Thankfully she had paid very close attention to the blonde's body the night before and she had little trouble finding the correct sizes.*

*"How thoughtful!" Madam Cormier had exclaimed as Delphine peeled back the wrappings, revealing the soft material with delicate embroidery. "Surely you must go and thank him." She reached out to touch the soft material, marveling at the delicate stitching around the edges.*

*Cosima cleared her throat, having already prepared the conversation. "Unfortunately my brother is busy all day tending to business in the stables today, but he does send his most heart filled regards and suggested we try out your new clothes on a ride today, if it would please you."*

*Delphine nodded, her fingers traveling over the smooth material. Her eyes drifted up to meet Cosima's and bit her bottom lip briefly. "It would please me very much, merci. It was very kind of him, but I'm afraid I've never dressed in clothing quite like this before. Would it be dreadfully inappropriate to ask for your assistance?"*

Her eyes drifting to Delphine's mother who was still admiring the stitching and back up to the smirking blonde, Cosima shook her head in amusement. *"Not at all, sister. I can definitely assist you in dressing." Cosima smiled, her nostrils flaring just slightly.*

*"Your brother is quite a hard worker, Mademoiselle Salvatore." Colin spoke as he sipped his coffee nonchalantly. "I was marvelled by his skill in his trade yesterday. There was much for me to admire."*

*Cosima was finding it more and more difficult to keep from laughing. "Indeed he often spends all day in the stables. He did mention that if you had the will to today, you were more than welcome to accompany him in learning the business."*

*"That would be excellent indeed." Colin nodded. "I believe I will accept his invitation. I feel I already learned so much yesterday."*

*Madam Cormier almost squealed in delight but settled for a happy sigh. "This is magnificent indeed. It is such a pleasure to see everyone getting along so well."*

*Cosima barely had the strength to hold back her smirk as she followed Delphine to her private chambers.*

Now, they were laying together on the blanket and Cosima took her time, allowing her lips to travel over the pale flesh, savoring every inch. There was no rush this time, no need to let passionate need take over. Each kiss was a prayer, a pious celebration of life and love. Not often did words from the holy book come to her of their own volition, but as she looked over the blonde's body and the expanse of delicious treasures that awaited her attention, the verses came easily, the passages that described the unity of love and lust, often used in ceremonies of joining. *You are altogether beautiful, my love.* Cosima let her nose brush along the line of Delphine's abdomen where she could see the shift of muscles tensing under her attentions. *There is not a flaw on you.* She smiled against the soft blonde hair that covered the smooth skin, noticing how the rays from the sun struck the pale downy hair, creating an illusion of illumination.

"Cosima..." Delphine groaned as she shifted under the caress, the brunette driving her mad with the softest of touches.

Cosima let gaze drift up, finding hazel eyes stormy with desire, pupils dilated with arousal. *You have captivated my love with one glance of your eyes.* She made her way over the pale sternum, her tongue grazing a freckle, watching as the chest heaved with ragged breath. *How beautiful is your love, my sister, my bride.* She paused to roll her tongue over a firm nipple, hands slipping through her hair as the long form arched into her touch. *How much better is your love than wine and the fragrance of your oils than any spice.* Stretching her own body along Delphine's, their naked flesh pressing against each other, she captured pillow-soft lips. *Your lips drip nectar, my bride.* As lips parted, their tongues brushed fleetingly against each other. *Honey and milk are under your tongue.* She let her hands travel down the curve of Delphine's ribs, over her waist and hips.

Delphine moaned against the lips and tongue, feeling the rake of teeth over her bottom lip as Cosima pulled back, an intense look in dark hazel eyes. Her hand came up, caressing the brunette's cheek, her thumb tracing damp lips. "What are you thinking?"

Turning her head to brush kisses against the warm palm, Cosima smiled. "I was thinking... the only time I've heard of such a beautiful form as yours was in the bible." She chuckled at the confused look and brought her lips down to Delphine's ear as her hand caressed the inside of a pale thigh. "Song of Solomon, chapter 4 verse 12. *A garden locked is my sister, my bride.*" She let a single fingertip slide along the length the woman's sex. "*A spring locked, a fountain sealed.*" With a smirk, she pressed closer, feeling the slick wetness that waited for her, her voice a sultry hot breath against the pale ear. "*Your shoots are an orchard of pomegranates... with all... choicest... fruits,*" she whispered, circling the swollen bundle of nerves with each word.

Never had Delphine thought she would enjoy such an intimate touch accompanied by a verse from the bible. Had she known such a thing were possible, she would have been more aware at mass. She knew the words Cosima recited, having read them when she was younger, when her nursemaid had advised her to skip over the verses during their studies. Of course she would read it. Who wouldn't when warned against it? Her attention returned to the present as Cosima shifted down her body, surprised to see shoulders settling between her thighs, the brunette's eyes even with her core. She felt a moment of embarrassment as the eyes raked over her most private of places, fingers spreading her wider, leaving her vulnerable.

"*Awake, o north wind, and come o south wind. Blow upon my garden, let its spices flow.*" Cosima whispered before breathing a heated breath against the swollen flesh, watching the woman's body twitch and thrust. Unable to resist any longer, she leaned forward and let her tongue travel the length of the woman's sex.

Delphine gasped loudly, unable to stop herself from thrusting her hips up to meet the exploring tongue, a sign to the brunette to continue, her hand locking in brunette locks to prevent otherwise. It was searing heat radiating from her core, and as the tongue began to move in a winding rotation, it was nothing but pure, pulsing pleasure. Never had she thought such an act would be performed upon her, that there were more intimate places to kiss than lips and breasts. She had thought that pleasure got no greater than she had felt the night before, and how wrong she was. *Let my beloved come to his garden, and eat its choicest fruits.* The words floated through Delphine's mind as she pulled the woman's head forward, urging her closer. Together, they were fire and passion, a delicious ache that radiated from tongue meeting core. When she thought she had reached heaven, a finger slipped into her, filling her and moving within her. She had little time to adjust before there was another finger, slipping into her, stretching her even as she felt herself clenching around the invading digits.

Cosima moaned into the slick flesh, not truly believing this was happening. What unholy pact had she agreed to for such a course of events to occur, for the tides to turn in her favor? Was it true? Did she really have her tongue buried between the legs of such a heavenly being? Was the woman really pulling her closer, wanting more, a fist forming in her hair as the blonde whimpered loudly? She had no doubt that there would be penance to pay later for such a betrayal, for her own audacity, but as she feasted upon such delicious nectar, she also had no doubt that any debt would be worth paying.

*I came to my garden, my sister, my bride, I gathered my myrrh with my spice. I ate my honeycomb with my honey, I drank my wine with my milk.* Cosima was truly in paradise, her tongue, lips and nose basking in the garden of God's own creation, or if it be Lucifer's creation it mattered not. The garden had been unlocked and she drank deliriously from the spring, finding life itself in the fountain, and as she felt the form suddenly begin to tremble, she sped her tongue up desperately, her fingers moving quicker and curving to caress the front wall, a place she knew would...

"Merde!" Delphine shouted, her breath coming in whimpers as she was pushed over, the world ending in an explosion, an internal combustion that set her soul on fire. And as she felt her body giving out, it was as if the Lord were breathing life into her, the world beginning again and she felt the fingers slip from her, but the gentle caress of a tongue, bringing her back to earth, and back to the tower they were in, away from the eyes and ears of her family. *"I am my beloved's and my beloved is mine, he grazes among the lilies."* The words passed her lips in a whisper and a new understanding dawned upon her. How naive she had been, thinking the passage was about a romantic picnic perhaps, lovers enjoying a meal of fruit and honey, embracing the moment with love and endearment. Now the meaning was clear to her. Or perhaps the meaning was innocent, and sin had tainted the interpretation in her mind. Which was it? Did it even matter?

Cosima heard the words and couldn't help chuckling, wiping her chin and lips against the pale thigh that still trembled in pleasure, a chuckle that caught the attention of hazel eyes that narrowed in her direction. *"Your opening is a rounded well, that never lacks wine."* She smirked, moving up the woman's body, dipping her tongue into the blonde's navel with mischief. Her upward climb stopped at the woman's chest, resting her ear against the heaving ribcage, listening to the steady thump of her heart. *"How beautiful and pleasant you are, o loved one, with all your delights."*

Delphine groaned, her legs wrapping around the hips that still settled between her thighs, feeling the brunette instinctively rock into her. "I am sure it must be a sin to speak passages as we

embrace this unwed consummation, ma chérie." She could smell sex in the air, clinging to Cosima's lips and face, similar to the scent she had detected from her own fingers the night before. The thought hadn't even occurred to her to taste the slickness that had clung to her digits

With a chuckle, Cosima nuzzled the nearby breast, capturing the nipple between her lips. "We have committed far greater sins, but as you wish. No more verse then." She pressed her hips against the wetness, knowing what sensitivity would meet the thrust, watching as the blonde's head tilted back, her eyes fluttering closed.

Her arms wrapping around the brunette, she pulled the woman up, the scent of sex that much more obvious. Unable to resist, she pressed her lips to Cosima's, her tongue seeking entrance to lips that didn't hesitate to open, to welcome the invasion. The taste that met her was peculiar, neither sweet nor salty, completely indescribable, but it remained on her tongue even as she pulled away. Breaking off the kiss, she leaned her forehead against the Venetian's. "Is that what you taste like... if I were to taste you as you did me?"

Groaning at the thought, Cosima brushed her nose against Delphine's, a smile pulling at her lips. "Do you want to taste me? You do not have to..."

"Oui." Delphine whispered, looking down the length of the body that still pinned her to the blanket. "I want to." She was certain of it, that she needed to know what Cosima tasted like and to bring her pleasure as the woman had to her. It was a surprise to her, as Cosima's hand captured her own and began to drag it down her body, their eyes locked on each other as Cosima pressed her fingers between the brunette's thighs.

Cosima moaned the softest sound Delphine had ever heard as fingers slipped through her arousal. When the blonde got distracted by her sex, the fingers beginning to move against her, she gasped a shuddered breath, pulling the hand from between her legs. "You said you wanted a taste." She spoke in an accusing tone.

"Pardon. There are such delightful distractions." Delphine spoke with a grin, her tone less than apologetic. As she brought her hand up, she noticed the slick wetness and hesitantly brought her fingers to her mouth.

Watching such a thing, Cosima decided, was a gift in itself. It took everything in her to hold back, to restrain herself from capturing those lips once the slim digits slipped free. As it would turn out, her restraint was for naught as hands slipped into her hair, pulling her down for a kiss. The blonde seemed determined to get her way as she soon found herself on her back, the woman adjusting to slide her hips between Cosima's thighs. She pulled her lips away with a groan. "To think two days past you were coyly batting your eyes at dinner, a look of bored disdain at your predicament."

"Hush." Delphine smiled as she kissed her way down the length of her neck. "I am far from bored nor am I filled with disdain."

Cosima chuckled, hands moving down her body with intent, lips tracing a path down her chest. "Are you sure you want to?" She asked, her voice coming out a squeak when teeth nipped her ribs.

Delphine breathed in the scent of arousal, finding herself drawn to the heated core, wasting no time in finding the source of what she desired most.

"Sweet mother of Jesus." Cosima exclaimed at the suddenness of the blonde upon her sex. She had intended on letting the woman explore, giving her time to get acclimated to the taste and feel but somehow the blonde knew exactly where to head.

Delphine had no idea what she was doing. She was lost in the complete newness of the situation, breathing in the intoxicating scent, experimentally running her tongue along what she believed her fingers had caressed to bring the brunette pleasure. When the shout sprung from Cosima's lips, she knew her assumptions had been right. Circles, her mind told her, renewing the caress of the brunette's own tongue. She tried to experiment, to see what worked best for her own unskilled mouth. At first she had tried moving just her tongue, but found she grew weary too quickly. She tried keeping her tongue stiff as she rotated her whole head, but soon she was getting light-headed and dizzy and returned to moving just her tongue, willing to suffer the strain if it meant bringing the brunette pleasure that she herself had found.

Cosima was finding it difficult to catch her breath, the pressure on her most precious bud never stopping. Her hands were clenched around the blanket, an attempt to control her reaction lest she reveal her true desperation. "Good Lord, Delphine." She wanted to be the responsible one, the teacher that guided the blonde with precise commandments of thou shalt move thy tongue in such a way, that taught her the ways of pleasure that she never knew before, but there was a fire within her that had been stoked too hot. Her blood sung with desire and it was a chorus directed by the tongue between her legs. She felt as though the fuse on her undoing had been trimmed short, her own body reacting uncontrollably. Either Delphine was a quick study or she was very lucky to... "No teeth!" Cosima practically yelled, the sudden presence enough to jerk her from her haze of pleasure.

"Oh no, I'm so sorry, mon amour, I did not..." Delphine yelped in surprise as a hand tangled in her hair, pulling her back to heated flesh. She would have laughed but instead she dragged her tongue along the length of the woman's sex, the brunette's own tongue hissing like an excited snake. She returned to the tiny button, experimentally flicking her tongue across it before returning to her circling, a hurricane that she struggled to keep going as she felt the thighs on either side of her head shaking. Her tongue was feeling strained, a discomfort building in her jaw, and she had to keep reminding herself to breath through her nose. How strange it was, she would reflect later, that she could be so distracted as to not remember something as natural as breathing

"Inside." Cosima panted, breath escaping her like a ship in the night, feeling herself drawing closer.

Delphine was careful to slowly slip her finger into the depths of the brunette's sex, feeling the heated, pulsating caress of clenching muscles, causing her to moan. She was distracted, watching as her finger disappeared into the the woman and emerged once again, coated in slick wetness, disappearing back in. Experimentally, she slipped another finger in, hearing the hiss, the brunette's thighs spreading impossibly wider, offering herself up to Delphine. Thankfully, the momentary pause gave her tongue a much needed second wind as she dipped her head forward again.

Cosima knew she was close, she just needed..."Mmmm, right there." She felt her eyes rolling back, as if the muscles in her head no longer controlled them. If the blonde could bring her to peak, she would prove better than any nun at the monastery, which was looking likely as she felt the pressure building in her gut. God the blonde had no rhythm at all, seeming to lack hand and tongue coordination, but Cosima didn't care. When she looked down and saw the beautiful blonde between her legs, mouth firmly fixed to her core, it sent a thrill through her that no one else could ever compete with and when hazel eyes opened suddenly to look up at her, their gazes meeting between the valley of her own heaving breasts in a gaze that could stop Lucifer himself in its quiet seduction, she felt the dam inside her break and she was crying out, her pleasure overflowing, the stare broken as she thrust her head back and her body was wracked with jerking tremors.

To Delphine's credit, she managed to follow the thrusting hips with relative ease, her tongue continuing to drive against the flushed bud until the woman was collapsing into a puddle of boneless flesh.

"Stop." Cosima whimpered, pushing gently on the blonde's shoulders, trying to separate herself from the tongue. She tugged the woman up, nearly laughing as she reached up to wipe the slick mess from Delphine's face.

"Was that sufficient?" Delphine asked shyly, feeling as though she knew the answer but still needing to be reassured.

"Sufficient?" Cosima laughed. "Nay, sufficient it was not, my love." She leaned up, the tip of her tongue tracing the blonde's lips, tasting herself on them. "Sufficient is not the appropriate word. Exquisite would be far more fitting."

The momentary worry Delphine felt floated away as she opened her mouth, allowing the tongue to brush against her own as she met lips for a kiss.

Cosima let her thigh slip between the blonde's, pressing against the arousal she found, chuckling at the high-pitched whimper. When lips pulled away from her own, the blonde adjusting to straddle her hips, Cosima caressed a soft cheek, still in muted disbelief that such a heavenly creature was there with her in that moment, pressed against her, already wet and eager for more.

"How long do you think we can stay here together?" Delphine breathed as she sat up.

Following the blonde up, Cosima wrapped her arms around the slim waist, pulling her closer, feeling the slick arousal against her belly. "A bit longer, at least." She whispered, reaching up to push blonde curls behind an ear before pulling the woman down for another kiss. Her hand slipped between their bodies and the blonde wasted no time in mounting her fingers, their lips never parting as they once again began to move, beloved and beloved flowing as one entity, forever hungry and never sated as fruit was consumed and wine was drunk, honey sliding over tongues in a garden they sowed together as one.

## Secrets Laid Bare

*Thanks for continuing to read. Thanks as always to my crazy beta Jaybear1701 who puts up with me giving her this shit super late to beta.*

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"Cosima, are you feeling well?" Scott asked as he wiped his brow, leaning on the pitchfork. "Do you not have an appointment to repent your sins, or whatever the excuse was?"

Cosima sighed heavily as she leaned back against the wheel in the shadow of the cart, picking at the top of her boots. "No." Delphine was out with Felix going around the city, and she didn't really want to think about it. She didn't want to think about him courting her, or her having to show interest in him. "No confession today." She whispered, picking up a dried strand of hay, breaking it between her fingers. She could feel her own emotions crumbling as the dried bits fell to the ground, mixing with the bits of hay she sat on. She thought about the softness that had enveloped her fingers just the day before, the whispered words of French that she couldn't translate slipping into the air.

How had it only been four days? How had she allowed herself to become so infatuated? Four days seemed like such a short time for these deep emotions to evolve, yet it had taken the Lord four days for birds to appear in the sky and fish in the ocean. It took less days to create the water and the land, and less days were needed to put the stars in the sky, the same stars that had accompanied the moon shining down on Cosima two nights ago as she stood before the shamelessly nude blonde who tugged tight the laces of her breeches.

She believed in love, but not the way that poets did. Not the way young girls thought of when dreaming of their future husbands, wanting to be wooed by flowers and serenades of over-emotional songs. No, she believed that love was physical, whimpering into the night as fingers touched and caressed. She believed that love was saved for the bedroom. It was to be savored till dawn in a moment of pure ecstasy as bodies glistening with sweat and other fluids moved against each other. Love was left behind with the sheets soaked with the proof of their coupling, cast aside like Moses into a basket, better suited for someone else to dote on. Yet as she thought about the French woman, she felt her heart beating out of control.

It wasn't just the sex, though her core dripped with lustful anticipation of the next time Delphine would touch her. It wasn't the thought of Delphine's lips pressing against her own, the tongue that teased her own lips as her fingers... No. It wasn't just that. Her mind returned to the night before last, that moment of laying in bed beside Delphine, watching as sleep threatened to take over the French woman. It was the moment when soft lips brushed against her arm in a kiss so tender that it sent chills down her back. It was the moment the day before, after their bodies had been sated and they had haphazardly dressed before consuming lunch, her own head laying in Delphine's lap as the blonde ran her fingers through Cosima's hair.

What in the world was she doing? Was this the love that people spoke of? What did that mean for the two of them? The odds were against them, yet the feelings that flowed between them were undeniable. She had actually contemplated joining Felix as a chaperon, just to be in the same space as the blonde, but the thought of seeing her brother doting on her, it was a crown of thorns around her heart, piercing the organ with every beat.

Suddenly, a pile of hay was dumped over her in a cloud of dust and Cosima stood quickly, shaking off the dried bits. "Scott!"

The man laughed. "Sorry, Cosima. Silence does not become you. You were just so quiet sitting there, your presence slipped my mind." Scott splashed some water at her from his jug before taking a drink. "In all seriousness, what has your breeches in a twist?" He watched as the brunette shook off the hay. "I don't believe I've ever seen you so troubled. Get caught looking up the wrong skirt?"

"Caught? No." Cosima sighed, flicking the last of the brown strands from her clothes. "Scott... I think I may have dug myself into a hole I may never hope to escape."

Scott huffed, returning to scooping hay into the cart. "What else is new?" He gave her a look as she continued shaking the hay from her hair. "So many holes have been dug by your indiscretions that the ground is at least a body-length lower than it used to be and you've created a mountain of trouble in your back yard."

Cosima rolled her eyes, "Very funny." She kicked at the ground. "I'm serious, Scott." She sighed heavily, dropping back to the ground again, leaning back and hitting her head against the wheel of the cart with a frustrated growl. How would Scott even relate to her problem? He was born a man, free to dip his crusty baguette into any woman's oils, not knowing what it was like to be seen as a perversion in the eyes of the church. All society expected of him was to wed, and even for that he would be paid a dowry. Never mind a need to be faithful. He would be allowed to come home with pustules and crawling insects and his wife would just have to accept it, to spread her legs and let him set her holy bush aflame with disease.

She could never do such a thing to Delphine. The blonde had managed to ruin all other women for her. No maiden she had previously tended to seemed any bit appealing since the French woman had arrived. How was she the abomination?

And how long would she and Delphine have really? She was already past the age where a father would start looking for a proper suitor. How long before her brother would do the same? How long before she was shipped off to live with a stranger, forced to bear fruit like a fig tree, offspring born of a parasitic wasp forcing its way into her. Already those of her age were married, some with children already, some with more than one, a sign of their nightly courtships. There were very few who remained unwed, and those were the ones that nature had been cruel to.

When Scott sat down on the ground beside her, she flicked a bit of hay off his shoulder. Scott was an exception. He had not wed yet, but he was also not foul of face. When he cleaned himself up, properly dressed and shaven, she could see how a woman could love him. He was not poor and he worked hard for a living, and yet... "Why aren't you married yet?" Cosima nearly laughed at the look he gave her, surprised and confusion touched by a bit of disgust. "Surely you must be feeling the pressure of your father, no doubt going on about the lack of some bastard child to carry on the family business."

With a shrug, Scott wiped his hands on his breeches, wincing as he started picking at a splinter of hay that was in one hand. "No interest really." He ran the back of his hand over his forehead, wiping away a drop of sweat. "My father is too drunk to make such complaints and I have enough women in town to whet my thirst with enough variety to keep me entertained. I need not a woman to sit around the house, knitting shirts, eating my food and chastising me for drinking too much wine."

With a half smile, Cosima tilted her head as she regarded the man. "What about love?" She knew the truth was that he had the same mentality she did.. or used to have before such a torturous angel appeared before her.

"Love?" Scott laughed. "I don't believe in love any more than you do, Cosima." He shook his



head and laughed for a minute before he realized Cosima's silence. "What's going on?"

"If your belief in the existence or non-existence of love is to mirror my own, than perhaps you might have to reevaluate."

There was a moment more of silence as Scott turned to stare at her in disbelief. "Cosima..."

Cosima sighed for what had to be the hundredth time, as if the reality of her situation wished to escape through her lungs. "Of all the sins I've committed so far, I may have found one that will no doubt condemn me to the deepest level of damnation." She fought back the tears that threatened to burn her eyes.

"Well..." Scott scratched his jaw, running his calloused fingers over the stubble as he tried not to laugh. "Considering you have been harvesting the forbidden fruit of the holy nuns of the monastery twice weekly for almost a year now, I'm a bit frightened to ask what you have done."

Cosima blew out a slow breath. "I have coveted."

Waiting for more, Scott rose an eyebrow when nothing else came forth. "Cosima... you have coveted before." He gave her an incredulous look. "There are many husbands in Venice that would ask for your beheading if only they knew exactly who left their marital beds damp with their wives' own ecstasy." When that got no response, he nudged her in the shoulder. "Will you tell me exactly who you have coveted and what exactly is so treacherous about it?" Still no response and he thought back to the last couple of times he had seen Cosima. The last time he had seen her, she had denied the flirtations of one of her usual targets of affection, so it had to be before then. He tried to think back to the last time she had seemed herself, and that had been when they were fencing. She had been filled with exuberance as they parried back and forth until... "Is it Delphine?" That got an instant reaction.

Cosima froze, trying not to react as she turned to him but failing miserably. "What makes you say that?"

If he wasn't sure before, he was now. "Cosima, nothing gave you away. I merely thought back through the likely objects of your attentions."

"Delphine is not an object." She gave him a distasteful look. "She is... much more than that." Her knees pulled up to her chest, she rested her arm across the top of them, and her chin upon her arm. "She is the Earth beneath my feet, and the stars in the sky. She is the sun showing me the way through life and the air in my lungs." Her eyes looked out upon the field that had already been harvested, not really staring at anything, just remembering the woman's smile and the way the dried hay reminded her of the sun in Delphine's eyes... dried hay scattered among fresh grass. "She has cast from me the demons of lust for the women of Venice, and replaced it with a deep-seeded need for her and her alone." Finally turning to look at Scott, she found him watching her with wide eyes and a half-opened mouth. "As Mary Magdalene traveled beside her savior, so shall I wish to travel beside my own."

"Did you just compare Delphine to Jesus Christ?" Scott gave her a look. "Are you aiming for blasphemy today?" He gripped her shoulder and gave her a playful shake. "I'm impressed, Cosima. We've been friends since only the Lord knows when and this is the first time you've ever released an utterance even close to love. I can't believe you lasted this long."

Cosima pushed him away, unable to stop the smile. She watched him get up and stretch. "Mmm. I have fallen farther than Lucifer himself, Scott, and I am equally damned. I have coveted, lusted, and feasted upon her in gluttony." She let the words pass her lips and her smile widened at the thought. "I'm in love with my brother's bride."

"How you haven't been beheaded already, I have no idea. You are truly blessed... touched in the head, but still blessed." Scott shook his own head in disbelief before returning to his work. "But what are you planning to do about it?"

What indeed...

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"Can you believe how sweet these pomegranates smell?" Felix gushed holding the fruit up to a pale nose, allowing the blond to breathe in the scent.

"That is lovely." The French accent responded with a smile.

Delphine rolled her eyes and sighed softly to herself as Felix and Colin discussed the current state of fruits. It was bad enough that she was forced to wear the dress her mother had chosen with its strangling bones digging into her ribs, but with Colin along to supervise, she had trailed behind the two of them in disinterest. Sure, Felix had offered to purchase a few things for her, obviously assuming that, like other women, she could be bought with jewels and clothing, but he was more interested in conversing with her twin than with her. They had had lunch less than an hour ago, and it had been delicious, but the company had been...less than inclusive, discussions of horses and stables filling the air, giving her time to think of Cosima.

And how her mind thought of Cosima. Everything reminded her of the brunette and often she'd have to fan herself, to relieve the flush in her cheeks lest Felix think he be the cause of such reactions. If he even noticed at all.

She couldn't help but wonder how far the two men had gone in their fascination with each other. She was sure she had seen a few lingering touches between the two, and she knew how willing her brother was. He was bold with his intentions, but unfortunately wasn't one for discretion. There had been a few rumours whispered amongst her friends about his actions back in France, rumours she had spent too much time squashing in hopes that they never reached his own ears, or their maman's.

What a ridiculous situation they found themselves in. Two families with a generation consisting of nothing but sexual deviants. Surely there must have been some sort of twist of fate that happened along the way.

"M'lady, would you mind squeezing my melons to assist me in determining their ripeness?"

The voice sent Delphine whipping around, finding Cosima standing before her with a melon in each hand. "Cosima!" She spoke in a loud whisper, covering her lips with the fan in her hand to muffle the sound, knowing Felix and Colin were too wrapped up in each other to notice. "You are horrible, yet a delightful sight to see."

"God, have you been subjected to watching them like this all day?" Cosima grumbled, noticing her sudden appearance had yet to be noticed. As such, she took a moment to admire Delphine's garb, noticing the bodice that had pushed her breasts up and in danger of spilling over the top. She would be lying to say that it wasn't attractive, but she could also tell the blonde was extremely uncomfortable, which made it less appealing. What in the world was she thinking? She loved bodices. Not wearing them, of course, but she loved the feeling of untying the laces, her fingers easing it open like a gift to be unwrapped, so why did Delphine's discomfort change her opinion of them?

"Unfortunately." Delphine smiled, unable to stop herself from reaching forward to pull a bit of hay

from Cosima's hair. "Were you rolling in the barn?"

With a soft laugh, Cosima set the fruit down and shook her head. "No, just Scott being a pest."

"Cosima! Where did you come from?" Felix gave her a surprised look, his eyes taking a quick journey over her form and turning into a disapproving sneer.

"Where did I come from?" Cosima gave him an innocent look. "I sprung forth from our mother's loins, not unlike you brother, though in truth I think I'm a much better fruit borne from our parents' copulation."

"Cosima!" Felix gave her a warning tone. "Please not in front of our guests. Not everyone speaks with such crass language." He turned to Delphine. "Please forgive my sister's words. I hope when she was giving you a tour, she was more careful of her tongue."

There was a brief pause between the women. "She was very cautious with her tongue." Delphine responded with an innocent smile.

When Felix turned away, Colin let his gaze move from Delphine to Cosima, his eyes narrowing just slightly.

"Well, I was on my way home when I saw you shopping. I'll continue on my way." Cosima smiled at Delphine. "Would you be interested in continuing our tour tomorrow?"

"Oui. Very much so." Delphine turned away from Felix and Colin so they wouldn't see her giving the brunette a pained, needful look.

Cosima grinned. "Tomorrow then."

When the brunette disappeared and they continued on with their browsing, Felix disappeared into a shop to pick up some concoction for his hair, and Colin stepped up beside his sister, his words switching to French. "That is some tour you've been going on." He paused to look around, making sure no one was listening. "One would think Venice was larger than all of France with as much time as you've been spending in seclusion with your sister-to-be."

Delphine looked at him out of the corner of her eyes, noticing the look that saw right through her. "It seems that these lands are rich and fertile and quite abundant. It's been a long and slow exploration yet quite...titillating."

Tilting his head to the side, a small smirk spread across his lips. "My my my. You continue to surprise me, sister."

"Can't be too predictable, now, can I?" Delphine's own smirk appeared, giving her brother a look of her own. "Might I mention that you hate horses?"

Colin cleared his throat, looking around again with a smile, the conversation making him just a bit paranoid. "I think... they might be growing on me."

"Or in you." Delphine commented dryly. "Please remember that when in public, it would not be such a wise idea to fawn upon my husband-to-be." She gave him a look. "I don't care what you do in the stables, but Maman would return us to France if rumors started." She waved the fan slowly, more to keep her fingers busy. "And I'm just starting to enjoy myself here."

"One would say the same for sisterly affection, Delphine." Colin paused. "As for the stables... I thought you would be more upset about such a thing."

Taking a moment to adjust her dress to make breathing just a bit easier, Delphine turned to make sure Felix was still inside where he seemed to be arguing with the clerk. "Please, Brother. The busier you keep his cock, the less likely it would be anywhere near me."

Colin rose an eyebrow for a moment before he looked away and chuckled. "As I said before. Surprise after surprise. You've changed, Delphine, and I think I know why. I can sense the sin just radiating off of you." He smirked. "My sister, the not-so-pure virgin. Tell me, Sister, have you tasted her flesh yet or has it just been her ducked under your petticoat? I hear women like her prefer to pleasure other women by pretending to be men with cocks made of leather or stone. Has she tried such a thing on you yet? Has she broken your seal of chastity yet?"

Fanning herself against the blush she knew was rising to her cheeks as her nostrils flared, she smirked as she tried not to think of Cosima's lips or tongue, a look that turned to a smile that she gave Felix as he rejoined them.

"Well, this shop is useless. I would take my business elsewhere if there were another shop like it in Venice." Felix looked between the two of them, his brow furrowing. "Perhaps we should head somewhere indoors. I think the sun might be a bit much for the both of you."

"Perhaps a drink somewhere?" Delphine suggesting, allowing the men to proceed her so that she could stick her tongue out childishly as her brother passed.

## Brimstone and Hellfire

*Thank you so much for continuing to read this quirky bit of fanfic. I love all of your comments and reviews so thank you for those. As always thanks to JayBear1701 for betaing this story and everyone else at obfrankenfic who leaves hilarious commentary, keeping me going on this fic.*

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It must have been past midnight when Delphine heard the sound of boots hitting the floor and felt the form slip into her bed, the mattress dipping as skin and clothes cooled by the night air pressed against her. Sleep still lingered in her mind and she wasn't sure if she still slumbered or not until lips caressed her jaw. No more than two nights ago, such a thing would have shaken her to the core with fright, but she was not the same person she was two nights ago. A slow warmth began to spread through her, rousing her fully as she rolled onto her side. She couldn't help but smile, her eyes blinking open to see the familiar form lit by the moon.

Two nights and she felt a fire in her that had never exist before. Two nights and all the mysteries of love and lust had been revealed to her, leaving her with no fear nor reservations as she looked up into dark eyes hidden in shadow. "I wasn't expecting to see you until tomorrow." One hand came up to tangle in brunette hair, pulling Cosima down to her in a kiss. Even something as simple as a kiss held depth and meaning she never considered before their hidden consummation. A soft touch travelled down her throat and she moaned, for she was both Sodom and Gomorrah and Cosima's lips were brimstone and hellfire, breaking through barriers and consuming her for her sins; however, as the woman pulled away, leaving a hungry need inside her, she whimpered with a pout.

Cosima laughed softly, her fingers ghosting down the long form and intertwining with Delphine's. "I needed to see you, if only to breathe in the scent of your skin." She was glad to demonstrate, burying her nose in the warm neck, breathing in deeply as though soft skin provided the air she needed to sustain life. On the edges of her senses, her body became alive when she detected a familiar scent. A wide smile spread across the lips that pressed against the skin before leaning back, bringing the blonde's hand up to brush her lips across, the scent getting stronger. It was exactly what she thought she had detected. "I see you could not wait for tomorrow, and I fear you have already been spent. I can only hope that your thoughts focused on myself and it was my own name on your lips as your own climax approached." She placed a kiss upon each of the fingers, her tongue darting out to taste the blonde upon the soft skin.

Delphine felt her cheeks inflame, embarrassment causing her to slip her betraying hand from Cosima's grasp. "You know there is no other I could ever think of, mon amour." She bit her bottom lip, the body pressed against her awakening her own body in a way that only Cosima knew how. "As I said, I was not expecting you until tomorrow and after just a brief moment of being close to you today, my body was desperate for your attention, even if it was only in thought with my own hand as a poor substitute for your own."

Cosima groaned, just imagining the blonde's fingers dipping into a well of slick heat while thinking of her. She could easily picture the blonde's sleeping gown pulled up her body, one hand squeezing a breast as fingers passed through wet blonde curls as she bit her bottom lip. It was a beautiful picture and she barely kept her own needs at bay, wanting nothing more than to follow the same path her mind had. "Well then, when the sun brightens the land and we are once again alone, I shall look forward to reminding you of what my hands feel like."

Delphine shook her head as she reached for the laces of Cosima's breeches, easily undoing them. "You are already here, ma cherie, and my fingers dared tread over terrain that misses your touch."

When laces were loosened, she pushed the offending barrier down until she could take two handfuls of supple flesh, guiding the woman over her. She slipped one hand down the front of the brunette's body, pressing her fingers through damp curls as she watched dark hazel eyes fluttered shut. "I shall take my reminder now."

The sheer determination in Delphine's voice had Cosima pressing her lips against the blonde's once more, attempting to kick her breeches off completely without dislodging the sinful digits. When she succeeded, she inched up the woman's gown even as pleasure radiated from the fingers moving against her, hitching the material up far enough to caress a soft breast, feeling the skin tighten under her attentions as the nipple grew firm and erect. "Never have I felt skin so heavenly." She whispered into the blonde's ear.

Delphine whimpered as a hot hand slid down her body and over her hip and finally dipped down between her legs, caressing the length of her sex in a move that was more teasing than anything. Having already unknowingly prepared herself for the brunette's arrival, she had little patience for teasing. "Please, Cosima." She captured the brunette's lips, knowing her body was completely ready for the woman, but her own awkward newness preventing her from finding the best way to express her need until frustration won out. "Inside... please."

Cosima smiled against her lips, dipping a finger into the liquid heat. The desperation was music to her ears as her fingers pressed into the blonde and she shuddered against the digits circling her own sex. "God, Delphine..."

The soft whisper in her ear was like fuel to the flame, and Delphine pressed her own fingers into the brunette, their bodies moving together. Just days had passed and already she lived for the sound of her name on Cosima's lips, wishing that in some way she would be able to hear the sound of it for the rest of her life, no matter how impossible it seemed. She refused to let her mind linger on the future, instead, spreading her thighs wider, inviting the woman deeper as she pressed her own fingers closer. "Is this okay?" She asked, her own fingers caressing the brunette's depths.

"Yes Delphine." Cosima groaned, attempting to concentrate her own ministrations as the blonde continued to move. "Right there, Delphine." Her words were a held back whisper, obviously trying to restrain herself. "Oh God, D..."

"Delphine!"

As Cosima's voice merged into her mother's, Delphine jumped and nearly knocked over her coffee, the half-eaten slice of bread falling from her fingers and landing on her plate. "Merde." She shook her head, trying to clear away the lingering exhaustion.

"You fell asleep at the table, Delphine." The older woman reached out, placing her hand to Delphine's forehead. "You're not getting ill are you? The Lord knows you sleep longer than anyone should." Tipping her daughter's face towards the light, she frowned. "Maybe you should skip your ride today. I would hate for you to not be well for the wedding."

"Non." Delphine pulled away, not even wanting to think about the impending nuptials, taking a sip from her coffee and hoping it would wake her just a bit more. "I'm fine, Maman." In truth, she was a little tired. Maybe more than a little. Cosima had left just moments before dawn and she felt exhausted, her body moving slow and lethargic. The coffee was doing very little to wake her and she sighed, pushing the cup away. "I'm going to get dressed. Cosima should be here soon." She said as she stood.

"This Cosima..." Madam Cormier lifted her own coffee to her lips, taking a sip. "Is she not older than you? Why has she not wed yet?" There was suspicion in her voice, as if this should have been an obvious observation for her daughter.

Delphine shrugged, not even sure of the answer herself. She had inquired about it once, on the walk they had taken that first night, but Cosima had just said her brother would never have the nerve to do such a thing, but what if the brunette was wrong? What if Felix grew weary of his sister sitting around his home? "She is not much older than myself, Maman, but I don't know what her future holds. Maybe she already has a suitor. We have never spoke of it." She didn't want to think about it. Right now, she wanted only to take Cosima into her arms and forget about her own impending marriage and anything else that would bring other people between them being together. Disappearing into her chambers, she sighed heavily, leaning against the wall. But they were going to end weren't they? She was promised to Felix. Moving to the vanity, she poured water into the ceramic bowl and splashed water on her face. Drying her face on a cloth, she looked at the clothes sitting on the chair and released a puff of air, letting her eyes fall on the bed. She could just rest her eyes for a minute, just a brief nap.

Of course she fell asleep, but she didn't regret it as she was awoken by soft lips pressing against her jaw. "Mmmm." Blinking her eyes open, she smiled. "Bonjour, mon amour..." She spoke softly before a panicked look came over her face and she was sitting up suddenly. "Merde... I fell asleep."

"It's alright, Delphine. I shouldn't have stayed so long this morning. You look exhausted." Cosima hummed softly. "Beautiful, but exhausted." Reaching up, she tucked a lock of blonde hair behind Delphine's ear. "You should have told me how tired you were. We don't have to go out today."

"Non... I want to. I was just resting my eyes." Delphine smiled, her hand coming up to tangle her fingers in the laces holding Cosima's shirt closed. "I don't want to miss any time with you."

Cosima smiled. "You know, as much as I enjoy the... physical aspect of our time together, we can always just... have lunch, talk, maybe nap together."

"Mmmm. A nap together?" Delphine smiled sleepily, Cosima's own smile reflecting her own. "What I would give to have you lay here beside me." With a soft sigh, she pushed herself up out of bed. Stopping in front of the chair with her clothes, she looked over her shoulder where the brunette was still sitting on the edge of the bed. "Will you help me dress?"

Her smile slowly morphing into a smirk, Cosima stood, stepping up behind the blonde and wrapping an arm around her waist, pressing her lips to the the back of her neck. "I prefer undressing you, but I can help you dress."

"Tame your lips, mon amour." Her voice was a whisper even as she leaned back into the woman's embrace. "Save your kisses for when we're truly alone."

Cosima let her lips brush across the blonde's neck once more before she slowly peeled away her clothes.

Delphine took a deep breath as the brunette seemed intent on taking her time, touches lingering against her skin just a few seconds too long. "Cosima..."

Chuckling softly, Cosima slipped the shirt over the blonde's head, guiding it down the slim form with her hands. "Have I told you recently how beautiful you are?"

"You have mentioned it, mon amour." Delphine took a deep breath as the brunette knelt before her, holding the breeches to allow her to step into them.

It took probably longer than it should have for Delphine to dress, but eventually they were traveling down a well-known path, Periwinkle moving smoothly beneath them as Cosima reclined just slightly against the blonde whose arms were around her waist. "My maman wants to know

why you're not married." Delphine whispered, brushing her lips along the woman's ear.

Cosima snorted. "Pure luck." She held the reins in her hand loosely as her other hand traced the fingers of Delphine's hand. "Felix often threatens to sell me off to the smith, as if he would dare."

Delphine froze, crooking her neck to look at the brunette. "Cosima. He is your brother and legally able to do such a thing."

"And would you obey your own brother if he attempted such a thing?" Cosima rolled her eyes. "I know it was your mother that set up this marriage. Your brother is of age and yet he takes no charge of your future or his own."

"My brother is still a child." Delphine spoke dryly.

Cosima sat up straighter, looking back at the blonde. "And you? Are you still a child? Did you not share a womb? He is older than my brother was when he took over the business. You would think he would stick up for his sister at least, instead of letting her be married off to someone from another country."

Delphine's brows furrowed. Yes they were the same age, but Colin took nothing serious. He could no more stand against their mother than she herself could. She no longer thought of herself as a child, not since Cosima had claimed that innocence from her, but no doubt Colin had been far more free with his own sins. She sighed. "You don't understand, Cosima." How could the brunette even understand the pressure they were under? "You are free from the burden that only a parent can lay upon your shoulders."

At that, Cosima pulled Periwinkle to a stop, turning to look at the blonde. "You know nothing about the burdens I face, Delphine. My brother and I have been on our own for long enough. My mother decided she no longer wished to be a mother when we were still children clinging to her skirts. The day she left, my mother pried my fingers from her dress so that she could escape. My brother has worked hard to make a name and home for not only himself, but for myself as well." She gave a heavy sigh, needing a little space, and slipped off Periwinkle's back. "You cannot judge us when neither you nor your brother know a thing about being your own person." Anger was set in her shoulders, her eyes narrowed at the blonde.

"Cosima... I didn't mean..."

"Don't... I just... I need a minute." Cosima spoke, turning away from Delphine and stalking off the road.

Delphine felt a pain in her chest as she watched the brunette walk away, putting distance between them. She was Sodom and Gomorrah and Cosima was brimstone and hellfire, leaving a path of destruction in her wrath.



## Like Mother Like Daughter

*Sorry this is a little bit of a short chapter. I just needed to get some stuff out of the way. Thank you again to Jay1701 for betaing this at the last minute again.*

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*"Mama?" Cosima could hear the loud commotion from where she was playing in her bedroom. At the age of five, she spent most of her days in her room, playing with toys and dolls that her mama had given her. Her favorite was a doll that had dark hair like her and hated wearing dresses like her. Her papa had been appalled at the idea, but mama had secretly sewn a tiny pair of breeches and a tiny shirt for the small form that matched Cosima's favorite riding clothes. Her mama was always the one to secretly encourage her to be herself while her papa tried to push her towards more feminine ideals.*

*With a sniffle, Cosima hugged the doll to her chest, her large hazel eyes narrowing in confusion as she peeked out her door. Normally at this time her mother would be at the market and her father would be in the stables with Felix. Her brother was so lucky that he got to spend his days with horses in the stable while she was forced to stay in the house, no one but the servants and herself keeping her company. But something wasn't right. Peeking out into the hall, she could see movement in the crack of the door to her parents' room and the sound of her mother's crying grew louder. With a hesitant breath, she moved to the door, spying on the activity.*

*Her mother seemed to be moving in a flurry, tearing clothes from her wardrobe. Tears streamed down her face as she moved, each movement frantic but almost unsure. She was in a hurry, but hesitant as well.*

*With her natural-born curiosity and unable to stop herself, Cosima pushed the door open, the action causing her mother to jump in panicked surprise. "Mama?"*

*"Don't startle me like that, Cosima!" The woman exclaimed as she retrieved the bundle of clothes she had dropped, stuffing it into a crude sack. "Go back to your room, Bella." She commented off-handedly as she moved to her vanity, dumping her jewelry into the sack. She eyed her make up, selecting a few that would not cause a mess in her things. Her eyes were stained red with tears when she glimpsed up at Cosima in the mirror, her expression turning even more troubled as her lip trembled just slightly.*

*Cosima froze where she was. She didn't understand what was going on as her mother looked away and cinched the bag, hefting it over her shoulder.*

*"Go back to your room." With a slight hesitation, the older woman moved the girl to the side, her fingertips lingering on the small shoulder before she was heading towards the stairs. "Your father will be home soon." She was quick to hit the stairs, wiping away her own tears as she moved. There was determination in her now to escape, to tear herself away from the tear-filled eyes that followed her.*

*"Mama!" Cosima had a bad feeling about this and she ran after the woman, nearly stumbling down the stairs as she scrambled down them with her smaller legs. If it wasn't for the heavy sack the older woman carried, she never would have caught up to her mother. She grabbed the long skirt just as she got to the bottom, tugging backwards. "Mama!" All she could think was that she had to stop the events that were transpiring, to halt the woman who was heading towards the door.*

*With a huff and a sniffle, her mama stopped, dropping the sack and kneeling down before the girl. "I have to go, Bella."*

*"Where?" Tears poured down Cosima's cheeks as she pulled the material to her chest.*

*The woman took the small girl into her arms, hugging her before wiping away the small rivers of tears. "I have to follow my heart. You can't possibly understand now, my love, but you will one day." Reaching up, she unfastened the necklace from her neck, a small pendant of St. Jude hanging from the thin gold chain, and fastened it around her daughter's neck, sorting the unruly dark curls with a sad smile. "You're a lot like me, Cosima. I can see it in you as if I were looking in a mirror." Reaching down, she carefully pried the small fingers from her skirt. "One day you will find your heart, and you will understand." She leaned forward, pressing her lips against the small forehead. "Take care of your brother, Bella. I know he is older, but there is a strength in you that he lacks." She gave the girl a small smile. "Maybe one day we will meet again, my love."*

*Cosima watched as her mother rose and lifted the sack once more, disappearing out the door without a look back. Stepping up to the door, she watched as the woman quickly disappeared into the darkness of a carriage that pulled away just as quickly.*

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Cosima sighed as she dropped onto a fallen log, resting her head in her hands. She had insulted Delphine. She couldn't believe she had said what she had to Delphine. It wasn't the blonde's fault that her own mother had abandoned her. She reached up, feeling the weight of the gold pendant hanging just below the hollow of her throat. She didn't know why she had put it on that morning, having kept it hidden away in her things for years. Maybe it was because after more than 10 years, she finally understood what her mother had told her so long ago.

It was getting closer to 15 years, now that she thought about it, since her mother left and she was still tormented by the memory of it. She didn't have many memories of her mother before that. There were a few of the two of them playing with her dolls together, or in the kitchen baking together, but beyond that, most of her life she remembered only Felix and her father; her father who had been cruel and unforgiving.

*"One day you will find your heart..."*

"One day I'll make a mess of my life and hers, is more like it," Cosima commented to no one and everyone. Was she like her mother? How could she relate to the woman who had disappeared one day into a carriage without even a look back? No, she was sure she wasn't anything like her. She would never abandon everyone. She wouldn't just turn her back on her family.

Or would she?

Surely what she and Delphine were doing was against the law. Her own preference was a perversion, but Venice was the City of Romance and such things were rarely prosecuted, despite the power of the church. But just the thought of Delphine being given to Felix like some prized filly, it filled her with a rage that she couldn't understand. It wasn't like her to feel anger. She was a lover, but the thought of such a marriage set her blood ablaze. Would she give up on Felix, who despite his nagging and idiocy was her only real family, for a woman who was simply a random person she'd met less than a week ago?

Yes they had passion, and yes they were both incredibly attracted to each other, but was there more to them than just that? What would happen when the lust faded into a bare memory of what

it once was? She'd never really had a lasting relationship before. She'd never grown too attached for fear that one day everything would fade, that she would be deserted once more. Would she abandon her family and open herself up to being abandoned again as well?

For anyone else? Definitely not. But for Delphine?

Maybe she was no better than her mother.

Cosima took a deep breath, fighting back the tears of anger that stung her eyes. She wasn't a child anymore. She refused to cry for an injustice that occurred so long ago. She wasn't a little girl anymore. She should stop behaving like one.

When a form dropped onto the log beside her, Cosima nearly jumped out of her own skin. "Delphine!" Her heart was racing, an erratic drum threatening to break through her ribcage.

Sitting up straight, Delphine pursed her lips, as if contemplating her courses of action. "Sorry." She kept her distance, a space between them far too noticeable. "Both for frightening you and for what I said. It was not my intention to upset you." She spoke slowly and carefully, obviously choosing her words cautiously.

Cosima felt the chill in the blonde's words, a cold breath down her spine leaving little doubt in her mind of her own folly. "The mistake was my own, Delphine. I am apparently still haunted by the past and I should not have taken it out on you."

Delphine nodded in understanding, but didn't move any closer or farther away. "Do you wish to speak of it?"

Cosima had had years of experience with women of all types, from the chaste nuns of the monastery to the sex-driven desperate wives of neglectful rich husbands. No wanton affair had prepared her for this moment, this situation in which she had to deal with emotional strain. She was used to severing anything that grew close to emotional. Was she even capable of those intimacies? Was she prepared to open herself up like this? Like those hazel eyes were begging of her? Looking up, she sighed softly. "Not to the extent in which you probably wish, but could we leave it at me saying that my mother leaving was not an easy trial for either my brother or myself." She looked down as a hand reached out to squeeze her knee.

"I'll not bring it up again until you are ready, ma cherie." Delphine gave her a weak smile, uncertainty still in her eyes.

Swallowing, Cosima took a deep breath and slid closer. "I'm sorry, Delphine. It doesn't come easy to me, speaking about the past." Capturing the woman's hand, she let their fingers lock together, comfort seeming to emit from their joint digits. "Maybe one day we can talk about it. Right now I just feel so..." As she was thinking of a word to describe the feeling she was surprised as she was cut off by a kiss, the blonde's hand releasing her own and wrapping around her waist, pulling her closer. It was amazing how instantly she felt her body relax, almost melting against the tall frame. This... this she could deal with. Talking, not so much, but soft lips pressed against her own, she was very comfortable with this.

Cosima smiled as she broke the kiss off, pressing her forehead against the blonde's. "Delphine?"

A smile playing at the woman's lips, Delphine bumped her nose against Cosima's. "Yes?"

"Where's my horse?"

## Thirsty

**Thanks everyone for continue to reading this. We're in the long stretch now. Thanks so much to jaybear1701 for beta reading**

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Delphine bit her bottom lip in guilt as she glanced at Cosima, wary of the small woman's temper. Although slim fingers were intertwined with her own, the brunette's shoulders were squared in quiet frustration, walking almost a full step ahead of her. Delphine had thought she had tied the reins securely to the branch, but she didn't expect the branch to break off from the animal's tugging. The crimson tinge to Cosima's neck spoke of her aggravation when she had discovered what had happened even though the smaller woman had held her tongue, instead slipping her hand into Delphine's and walking her back the way they came.

She had apologized. Lord, how she had apologized profusely, but Cosima had simply said it was not her fault, which of course only amplified her guilt. "Cosima..." Of course it was her fault. Periwinkle was Cosima's favorite horse.

"Please don't apologize again." Cosima spoke suddenly, looking over her shoulder.

Delphine's brow furrowed. Their earlier argument still weighed heavily on her conscience and the added guilt was unbearable. How could she have been so silly to think that a branch would withstand such a strong animal's tug? "Could we take a short break, ma chérie?"

Pausing in mid-step, Cosima took a deep breath, bringing her free hand to brush a bead of sweat away as she nodded. "For a moment." Cosima spoke as she moved to a shaded spot under a tree.

The sun was high in the sky and Delphine was glad to get out of the direct heat, sinking to the grassy ground with a groan. Where they sat, it was almost as if it were a border between lands, the large expanse of land behind the line of trees a sea of almost chest-high grass swaying in a breeze. "I'm sorry. I just need a minute to rest." She could feel the exhaustion from lack of sleep pressing down upon her, a burden she felt she deserved for getting them into the situation. She cleared her throat, feeling the slight burn of thirst.

"I wish I had some water for you." Cosima gave her a sad look upon hearing the sound, dropping down and leaning back against the tree. "You must be tired."

Delphine looked up through the blonde curls that had fallen into her eyes, biting her bottom lip, contemplating if she should admit it or not. Of course she was tired, but she was also rather disappointed in herself for ruining their plans. She had been looking forward to taking a nap with the brunette, but now she would settle for a smile. "Hey..." Or a kiss.

She let one hand circle Cosima's thin wrist, tugging slightly until she got the brunette's attention. "Come here." The breathy words worked wonders, drawing the shorter woman in. Delphine cupped sun-warm cheeks in her hands, leading their lips together in a gentle exploration, hoping to defuse some of the animosity.

It was more than effective as Cosima melted against the kiss, her hands settling on the blonde's hips. When the kiss was broken, her own lips chased Delphine's for the barest of moments, long enough to be noticed.

"We're out in the open, mon amour." Despite her words, Delphine felt the fire of sin course through her veins as she let her forehead rest against Cosima's.

"And yet you see fit to torture me with such an embrace." Cosima was joking now, her form more relaxed, more open to the woman.

Delphine nodded, accepting the accusation without argument. "It's true...But I torture myself as well, for your lips are my heaven, and how I wish we were in solitude so that heaven might consume my body and soul once more."

That brought a grin to Cosima's mouth, her pointed teeth showing as she chewed on the corner of her lip, reaching up to brush back the blonde curl. "I believe, if you are up to it, we may have enough time for you to take a brief nap, just to get a little more energy for the remainder of the walk."

God how she wanted it. Delphine hadn't even agreed before she was moving, stretching just slightly along the brunette's legs and resting her head on Cosima's thigh.

Cosima couldn't resist running her fingers through the woman's hair, organizing the locks so that she could see her face, admiring the smooth waves. "You are so beautiful."

Delphine blinked her eyes open, looking up at the brunette. "You are far too flattering, mon amour." She smiled, wrapping an arm around the shorter woman's leg. It was such a relief, sharing her personal space with the woman once again. It wasn't long until she felt sleep tugging at her, tempting her with its sweet embrace, a soft breeze blowing through the area, rustling the field of long grass in a melodic gust. It was a strange peace that descended upon them and she was enjoying the quiet moment until, just on the edge of falling asleep, the sound of a horse's gallop caught her attention.

"Whoa...!"

Feeling the brunette's form freeze, Delphine let her eyes blink open and she sat up quickly, seeing Felix dismounting, guiding his horse and Periwinkle. She ran a hand through her hair nervously, looking at Cosima who just sighed softly. Whether it was in relief or aggravation, she wasn't sure.

"What in the world, Cosima?" Felix huffed as he stepped up to them, reins wrapped around his hands. "Do you know how terrifying it was to have your mongrel come galloping into the stable with no rider?" He turned to look at Delphine, seeing the odd look on her face. "Are you alright?"

"Oui." Delphine nodded, dusting bits of grass from her knees. She was feeling more than alarmed at his presence. Had he noticed the closeness they had shared? Would he mention it and think it was more than sisterly to sleep in such a manner? "It was my fault. We had paused for a small break and I did not tie the horse correctly."

"Oh I know who's fault it was." Felix looked at his sister. "Seriously, it's been less than a week and you're already trying to kill her?"

"Hello, Felix. I'm fantastic, thank you." Cosima pushed herself up, dusting her breeches off and taking the reins from her brother. "Hello boy. Did you have a fun bit of freedom?" She ran her hands over the horse's neck. She laughed as he blew air at her. "Stop..."

As she stood, Delphine watched the interaction and smiled, glad that the horse hadn't run off. She caught Felix watching her out of the corner of her eye and smiled shyly, hoping she hadn't been caught staring.

Felix pursed his lips before turning to his sister. "Cosima... would you mind giving Delphine and I

a minute of privacy?"

Looking up in surprise, Cosima looked from the blonde to her brother. "I don't know... would that be appropriate?"

"Really, Cosima. I just need to speak with her without you eavesdropping. I don't need you to leave, just move away a bit so we can have some privacy."

Delphine could sense the defiance coming from the brunette. As much as she didn't want to be left alone with the man, she didn't want her lover to act irrationally. "It's ok, Cosima. I'll be fine."

With an uncertain look, Cosima nodded, walking Periwinkle a bit away before she started rummaging through the saddle bags, retrieving the water she had brought.

Putting a smile on her face that she hoped didn't appear as falsely interested as she felt, Delphine turned to Felix. "What did you wish to discuss with me?"

"I hope that my sister is not running you ragged. I know she can be a little overwhelming at times." Felix stood stiffly, his own hand running over his horse's neck nervously. "She has a tendency to act without thinking so I hope she has not been too offensive."

Delphine felt her eyebrows raise and had to reign her own emotions in. She fought the urge to defend Cosima, instead tilting her head to the side. "Non, she has been very friendly." She watched as he paused, his shoulders growing rigid not unlike Cosima's during their walk. "I've always been jealous of my friends back in Paris who had sisters and now I have a sister of my own." It seemed to relax him and she gave him a small smile when he turned her way.

"Well, I'm glad. Perhaps you might be a perfect influence to convince her to act more feminine in the hopes of getting someone to marry her."

The arrogance in which he spoke nearly broke her resistance and her fists clenched at her side.

Felix sniffled. "Well, my sister aside, I had another reason for wishing to speak with you." He cleared his throat. "If you noticed, the town is preparing for Carnival which begins tomorrow with a festival that is quite memorable. I was hoping that you might join me in attending the ball tomorrow night."

It was a strange feeling really. Delphine knew that she had no choice but to say yes, but she also felt the hesitance in his request, as if she was the last person he wanted to ask. Given the promiscuous behaviors of her loving brother, she understood his reluctance. On another level, she was slightly disappointed that Cosima had not mentioned it. She didn't want to go with anyone except the small woman, yet it was the last thing she was allowed to do. "Of course." Delphine smiled. "I would love to, thank you."

Exhaling a long breath, Felix nodded, mounting the horse smoothly. "Fabulous. Cosima should be able to take you shopping for a new gown and a mask suited for the festival."

As he rode away, Delphine sighed heavily, leaning back against the tree and crossing her arms over her chest. Why was she involved in such a disastrous situation?

"What did he want?" Cosima grimaced, leading Periwinkle towards the woman. She had waited until her brother was out of sight before approaching the French woman.

With a shrug, Delphine ran a hand through her hair in frustration. "Something about a carnival."

"Oh." Cosima nodded, obviously knowing what Delphine was talking about. "I thought he might

ask you. I knew it was very unlikely that we might spend time together at carnival, so I dared to not raise my hopes." She pursed her lips, not unlike how Felix had done just a moment ago, unfortunately reminding Delphine of their blood relation. "I really wish that we could go together, but the entire city can be expected to arrive."

There was a sadness that infected her resolve and with a soft sigh, Delphine pulled the brunette closer, pressing their lips together. She needed to cleanse her mind of Felix's recent presence, to remind herself of which Salvatore actually loved her and wanted to be around her instead of barely tolerating her out of necessity. She was exhausted, but now more out of playing the role of the excited fiancée than from lack of sleep.

Cosima smiled against the soft lips, slipping her free arm around the woman's neck as she pulled herself up to her toes.

As her tongue dipped past Cosima's lips, she was allowed a moment to explore hungrily before she groaned, feeling the Venetian pull away. "Non..." She whimpered as their lips separated and their foreheads pressed together, trading one intimacy for another. "I want you." It was a simple statement, but the desire she felt was anything but simple.

"We can't. Not here." Cosima groaned. There was desire evident in the dark hazel orbs that hid behind pained eyes.

How could it be that just hours ago she had been in the woman's arms and yet she felt herself needing to feel such an embrace again. "Then where?" Unimpressed by the whine in her own voice, Delphine released the woman, moving to Periwinkle's pack and removing the blanket. "Either you're joining me, or I'll have to imagine you joined me." With as seductive a look as she could muster, she passed the brunette and headed towards the field of grass.

## The Masks We Wear

*Thanks as always to JayBear1701 for taking the time to quickly read through this after I told her there wouldn't be an update this week and then changed my mind yesterday...*

---

"Really, Maman. A chaperone is not needed." Delphine rolled her eyes as she ran her fingertips over the porcelain mask, a half mask Cosima had chosen that covered only her eyes and was painted to match her gown. Already her body was wrapped in an over-embellished dress, black silk adorned with gold brocade stitching. The brunette had enjoyed helping her pick out appropriate attire entirely too much, insisting that she assist her in trying on multiple dresses. It had seemed like too much, but as she looked out her window, the sky already beginning to darken, she could see the city patrons dressed in even more elaborate garb than her own. She almost seemed underdressed in comparison.

"Don't be ridiculous, Delphine." Madam Cormier commented as she applied her makeup, already dressed in a gown that was simpler than her daughter's, but far more elaborate than anything she'd worn since having children. "It would not be appropriate for you and Monsieur Salvatore to galavant around together before you're wed. Besides, if I'm to live out the rest of my years in this city, sooner is better than later to foster the social connections one needs to survive."

Delphine scrunched her nose in distaste, having no care for such social politics. "That is understandable, but Colin has volunteered to chaperone us. You mustn't worry about any indecencies. I'm not exactly throwing myself at him with my skirt up around my waist." No, her mind added. Why would she greet him with her skirts up only to reveal Cosima hiding beneath them?

Her mind began to wander even further, lingering on Cosima, She wanted nothing more than to revisit the previous afternoon in the field, Cosima's soft hands and searing kisses.

"Delphine! Really..."

Shaking her head, Delphine turned away. The last thing she wanted was to have to deal with her mother as well. She had already convinced Colin to distract Felix long enough for her own escape, but what would she do with her mother there? "Perhaps instead of watching over us, your time would be best used creating those connections you so desire?"

With a soft huff, the older woman stood. "And how would they feel if I just let my children run rampant at carnival? I'll be known as the mother who lacks a firm hand with her children."

Resisting the urge to roll her eyes yet again, Delphine settled on shrugging instead. "Venice is not as conservative as Paris, Maman. They will think nothing of you allowing us this small freedom." When her mother gave her a look that meant nothing but silence, she let her shoulders sag. "Fine. I'm going to see how Colin is progressing in his preparations." Leaving the woman no opportunity to argue, she escaped her mother's room and headed towards her brother's, her knuckles rapping against the door for a bare second before the door was opened. Her eyebrows rose suddenly, taking in her brother's garb. "Wow... Colin, you look fabulous."

Tugging at the stiff stock collar, Colin grimaced. "I feel like I'm being strangled." He let her in and closed the door, looking her over with a speculative look. "You look beautiful." Now his lips turned up in a smile. "I'm sure Cosima will enjoy the view."



"More than Felix will, no doubt." She took a deep breath, feeling the bones of her bodice pressing against her ribs. "He will no doubt be busy admiring you." With a soft smile, she reached out and brushed a loose strand of his hair to the side. "You look so grown up, Brother."

"As do you." He reached up and tugged on a curl, nearly laughing at her rolled eyes. "So... is she still insisting on joining us?"

With a sigh, Delphine moved to the window to look out, laughter floating up from the street. "Unfortunately." She tugged at the overcoat of her dress. "Of all the times..."

"We'll just have to get rid of her somehow." Colin decided, lifting the porcelain mask Felix had given him. He gave his sister a reassuring smile. "Worry not, Sister. We shall get you to your debauchery on time."

Delphine gave him an endearing look before putting on her mask, glad for the silk ribbons that fastened the piece in place, unlike Colin's which he held up.

Felix appeared exactly on time, dressed in garb that looked remarkably similar in design to Colin's, a fact that didn't escape the older Cormier woman.

"Felix helped me choose something to wear." Colin explained as they walked down the street together towards the ball a short distance away, noticing Delphine's smile hidden behind her hand. "I will admit I thought the beautiful stitching and embellishments were a bit extravagant, but Felix assured me that not only was it acceptable, but that he would wear similar garb to sooth my nerves."

"That was very nice of you, Monsieur." Madam Cormier looked behind him, as if not having expected him to come alone. "Is your sister not joining us tonight?"

"No." Felix answered passively. "She will be attending Carnival with Signor Smith."

The woman's eyebrows rose as she took in the news. "Really? Is it wise for her to attend such an event alone with a man?" Her interest piqued at the news, she moved closer to Felix. "I've asked Delphine before, but she said the subject never arose in their discussions, but is Cosima planning to wed anytime soon? She has been of age for a bit, has she not?"

Felix seemed to stiffen at the subject and Delphine watched him curiously, wondering what his response would be. After all, she had been wondering the same herself. "Yes, Cosima is of age, but I'm very protective of her." He responded, as though the answer had been already prepared.

It suddenly occurred to Delphine that of course he was familiar with the answer. No doubt this was not the first time he'd been asked the same question. After all, to have a woman as beautiful as Cosima remaining alone without a suitor... it was unheard of.

"I've been carefully reviewing the choices, and there have been more than one. Signor Smith has been a friend of the family since we were children and his family moved here from England." Felix spoke with certainty. "Whether they will wed or not is still to be determined, but he has earned my trust to behave as only a gentleman would."

"I don't believe I've met Signor Smith." Colin spoke, more to contribute to the discussion than anything else.

Felix gave him a small smile. "Ah yes, he owns property not far from our own. His family supplies our hay."

"So he is a farmer?" Madam Cormier asked with a disapproving look.

"He's a businessman that supplies the need of hay to almost all of Venice."

Delphine blinked at the odd defense, tilting her head in surprise. So it would seem that Felix wasn't as self-absorbed as she thought.

Madam Cormier's response was cut off as they ascended the stairs to the large hall, music floating from the opened doors accompanying the sound of discussion and laughter. "Oh." She spoke in surprise as they entered.

Delphine couldn't resist letting her eyes rake over the crowd in search of the familiar costume Cosima had shown her. There were so many bodies moving around, voices heard over the music being played by a small orchestra. How would they get rid of her mother? Surely there had to be some sort of distraction they could cause to draw her attention away, but what could it be? Perhaps they could...

"Delphine?"

Jumping at her mother's harsh tone, Delphine turned to see everyone looking at her as if expecting her to respond to something. "Desolée. I was admiring the costumes."

"Not to worry." Felix gave her a polite smile. "I was just inquiring if there was a carnival like this in Paris."

"Oh." Delphine shook her head. "Non. Carnaval de Paris is not as colorful, I'm afraid. There is rejoicing, but there is much order to it. This is almost complete chaos."

Felix laughed at that. "Yes it can be." Seeing someone in the crowd, he waved the person over. "You get used to it though and after a while anything less than a Venetian carnival seems miniscule in comparison." As an older man neared, Felix smiled and lowered his mask, offering his hand. "Monsieur Lacroix. It is a pleasure to see you again."

"Signor Salvatore, the pleasure is mine. I'll have you know that stallion you sold me has already impregnated four of my broodmares." The older man laughed, a French accent that Delphine recognized immediately as Parisian.

"Well that's what he was intended for." Felix winked before gesturing to Delphine. "Monsieur Lacroix, my fiancée Delphine Cormier."

The man's eyebrows rose, accepting her hand. "Bonsoir Mademoiselle Cormier. Signor. I was not aware that you were going to wed."

Delphine tried not to grimace as the cold hand gripped her own, instead smiling and bowing just slightly.

"Yes. And this is her brother Colin and their mother."

His eyes falling on the older woman, the older man's eyes lit up as he took her hand, bending down to brush his lips across the back. "Bonsoir Madame Cormier."

Delphine watched in disbelief as her mother actually blushed. What in the world? She had not seen the woman blush in any manner since her father passed.

"Please Monsieur Lacroix. Call me Marion." The older woman smiled.

"Only if you agree to call me Aldous." The man smiled. "Would you do me the honor of gracing me with a dance?"

As their mother curtsied gracefully, Delphine looked at her brother who returned her look with a raised eyebrow.

"Well... that was unexpected." Felix commented with a confused look. With a shake of his head, he turned to Delphine. "Would you care to dance?"

She wanted to say no. She wanted to look around in search of her love, the one that sent a thrill down her back at just the sight of dark hazel eyes, and not the one that she was to wed. "Of course, Monsieur." Delphine curtsied.

Felix, of course, was a fantastic dancer, which Delphine never doubted, but his hand upon her back did little to excite her. Not like his sister did. It wasn't that she didn't like Felix. He cared about Cosima, as his comments during the walk had proven, and her own brother saw something in him, but she felt no love for him. She almost felt a guilt, not for falling in love with his sister, but for participating in such a charade... for allowing him to think she were genuine.

But did he really care if she was genuine? His eye was for her brother alone. She was nothing but the wife to make him seem like the acceptable businessman with his acceptable homelife. She was his fallacy, his disguise, and nothing more than a tool. She didn't think he did care. How could he object when his mouth was otherwise occupied?

But still she danced. She danced not for Felix, but for Cosima. Every step at Felix's side kept her close to Cosima, and for that opportunity... she danced.

As the music died off, Delphine fanned herself with a laugh. "I must take a break." She couldn't tire herself before she found Cosima.

"You must be thirsty." Felix cleared his own throat, wincing at the dryness. "I'll get us something to drink."

"Merci." Delphine gave him a thankful smile. As he walked away, she craned her neck in search of her brother. She wasn't surprised when she saw a glimpse of familiar color follow her husband-to-be just as a form sidled closer, the space beside her suddenly occupied.

"Est-ce que je peux le plaisir de cette danse?"

The mangled French accent brought a smile to Delphine's face as she was faced with a pure white porcelain mask, a tailored coat of white and gold hiding the feminine features beneath it. Familiar eyes sparkled with mischief and Delphine couldn't help the hidden melting of her heart. "Cos..."

"...anova at your service." The short voice spoke, offering her a gloved hand with a bow. "Shall we dance?"

Unable to resist, Delphine slipped her hand into the offered one, bending slightly in a curtsy before she allowed herself to be pulled onto the dance floor.

## What Happens at Carnival...

**As always, thanks to my beta jaybear1701 for keeping this sounding like English and constantly crying out "moar!" and laughs gleefully whenever there's a miniscule amount of conflict. Thanks to thetumbleweed who screamed "i need more detail" and thanks to the others in obfrankenfics who constantly reassure me that my writing is worth reading.**

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Cosima had seen her the second she stepped into the hall, a beacon of light drawing her in. A moth to the flame if she was to be cliché. Watching Delphine surrounded by her family... her mother... her brother... her husband-to-be... Cosima felt a pain in her heart, watching as Delphine smiled, chatting easily among the group. A man approached the group, obviously being introduced to the French family.

From far away, they seemed like a real family and she was the outcasted sister, not fitting into the perfect picture, her breath catching in her throat as she watched Felix's hand rest on the blonde's back as they moved to the dancefloor.

They were the ideal couple in the eyes of the church. Man. Woman. Just as society deemed them to be.

A shake of her head and she was moving around the outskirts of the room, mentally chastising herself for her illogical emotions. Delphine loved her. She had no doubt about that.

So what if Delphine was supposed to marry Felix, it wasn't a real marriage. She could hold no hatred towards her brother, as Felix was just doing as all men were supposed to do. He was a businessman and had to maintain a certain public image, and she would not ask for his head on a platter because of it.

It wasn't a real marriage.

The words repeated in her mind as she liberated a glass of wine from a server's tray, dropping her mask long enough to down the glass in one long sip and praying that it might calm the agonizing discontent. Unfortunately, with her mask down and revealing her true identity, it was long enough for someone to recognize her, a hand resting on her hip as lips brushed her ear.

"My dear Cosanova. I was sure you'd forgotten about me."

Cosima jumped slightly, turning to find very familiar crystal blue eyes hidden behind a mask. "Ah, Shay. You are looking lovely tonight." She swallowed, putting a little distance between herself and the blonde.

"As are you, M'Lord." Her Russian accent was dripping with sensuality as she closed the distance between them again, a small fox hunting its prey. "I have decided to forgive you for refusing me the other night, if you might grace me with a dance... clothing optional of course."

Cosima looked around, searching for a route of escape.

Shay hummed softly. "You know, Grigory has decided to forgo the ball tonight and has instead chosen to drink himself senseless." Her fingertips walked a path up gold stitching, too close for Cosima's comfort. "You wouldn't dare leave a woman alone at a ball would you?"

It was strange how, at one time, such an invitation would call to her immediately, yet as those eyes watched her, she felt nothing but panic. "I must apologize, Lady Davydov. I..." She was quick to lift her own mask as a burly man suddenly appeared, tripping slightly as his hand landed on the short blonde's shoulder.

"I have been looking for you everywhere, RAdost' moyA!"

"Grigory!" Shay exclaimed, her surprise quickly turning into an ingenuine smile. "I thought you intended to spend the night at the tavern."

With a laugh the man pulled her to him roughly, covering her mouth with his own in a sloppy kiss.

Was this the fate that Delphine faced in the future? Uninterested wife to a husband that drinks to get through the day?

Cosima used the distraction to slip away, shaking her head in disgust at the close call. "Well this is quite a party," she muttered as she weaved between moving forms. She would never be able to wipe that picture from her mind. Suddenly she stopped, almost running into Delphine and Felix.

"I'll get us something to drink." She heard her brother speak before disappearing. It wasn't long before she saw Felix stealthily being tailed by none other than the male Cormier twin. That had to have been planned. With Madame Cormier's attention occupied by the man she recognized as one of Felix's customer and their brothers seeming to be on the path to distract each other, she found it safe to step up beside the woman. How her brother had the strength to leave Delphine's side when she looked as beautiful as she did tonight, she would never understand.

"Est-ce que je peux le plaisir de cette danse?" The words were awkward as they spilled clumsily from her mouth but they were effective and she nearly laughed as the blonde jumped slightly. The laughter was robbed from her as Delphine turned to face her, a smile that could light a thousand moonless nights spreading across pale features with slightly flushed cheeks.

"Cos..."

"...anova at your service." Cosima smirked, offering her a gloved hand with a bow. This close, the woman's immaculate elegance was blinding, a woman countries would go to war for... or siblings. "Would it be irrational for me to ask you to dance?" As Delphine slipped into her arms, they moved to the dancefloor, Cosima's mask back in place to hide her identity from anyone in the crowd that could be watching. "Your beauty is awe-inspiring, Delphine."

A splash of crimson spreading across her cheeks, Delphine ducked her head. "Merci. I love this look on you." She smiled as they moved together, a slow melody that kept their forms close together. "You look very regal. This coat is so elegant" As she ran her fingers over the silky material, golden swirls erupting from every seam, she bit her bottom lip, eyes lit with devious intent. "I cannot wait to see it on the floor."

Cosima almost swallowed her tongue, instead she managed to squeak out a laugh. She wanted to pull the woman to her for a kiss, but knew how unwise that would be. "My my, Mademoiselle Cormier. Did I just hear an obscene joke slip past those virgin lips?" It had been barely a day, but it felt as though forty days and forty nights had passed, as if her lust had been starved only to be faced with such temptations.

Suddenly the music changed, a quicker pace that begged for a different dance that separated Cosima from the blonde, lest they draw suspicion.

Delphine's smile got impossibly wider as they separated, just their fingers touching as they circled together. They came back together in tune to the music, the steady tempo of the orchestra leading them back and forth like the ocean in a playful rhythm, their bodies touching for the barest of moments.

Cosima groaned as they pulled apart, her body begging for more.

Delphine pulled away and they crashed back together. "I need you." She whispered as the sea met the shore, her lips lightly grazing Cosima's ear just seconds before they pulled apart once more, this time the crowd pulling them further away, partners spinning away from each other to be paired with others.

Cosima took a breath, unable to control the sudden fire in her blood. How did the woman do that? Three words and she had come undone. Attempting to keep up the facade of control, she smiled at the woman she was paired with, an older woman who moved slower than her heart wanted to take her. She counted the steps of the dance, each step and twirl just another closer to being paired with Delphine again and when she finally got the blonde in her arms again, it took all her strength not to kiss her.

Delphine cast a look around them, weary of the eyes watching them, finding her mother distracted by Monsieur Lacroix. Felix and Colin nowhere to be seen. When her eyes settled on the short brunette again, she could see fire in the dark hazel eyes watching her and she couldn't resist the smirk that slipped across her face. She could sense the woman's distress and leaned closer. "Do you want to.." She didn't even get to finish the question as she was pulled from the crowd.

The ballroom never seemed so large until Cosima was trying to find an empty space. It didn't matter where, just anywhere free of prying eyes, but it seemed that carnival had brought out all of Venice.

A deserted hallway and she found herself pressed against the wall, her mask lowered to accept the kiss that scorched her soul. A hand caressed the core of her arousal through the material of her breeches and it took everything in her to keep from stripping away the elaborate gown standing in her way. It was an obstacle that she could easily remove.

"...I can smell the wine all over you, Grigory!" A raised voice grew louder as steps came around the corner.

With a disgruntled groan, Cosima pulled away and they were moving again, quickly heading away from the arguing couple that threatened their peace.

"Mon dieu." Delphine laughed softly as she was pulled around another corner, further into the building and further away from the crowd. She was soon pressing Cosima against a door. "We should return to my room." She whispered, brushing her lips against the woman's throat. "I wish to have you on a proper bed, mon amour."

"I wish to take you here, hidden beneath your skirts where no one could see me," Cosima responded breathlessly, tilting her head to the side to give the woman more room. "Then, after I've had my share, I will take you back to your room to have you again."

Delphine groaned against the woman's skin. "You make promises but can you keep them?"

Cosima chuckled, her fingers itching to peel the silk from the soft skin. "Always."

Voices coming down the hall caught both women's attention.

"Something tells me this is not the place." Delphine commented, looking down the hall, seeing

shadows approaching.

"Well... not *right* here." With a grin, Cosima reached behind her for the knob of the door, glad to find it unlocked as they slipped into what looked like an office.

Of all the hallways in the building, and all the heavy wooden doors that were apparently very effective at blocking out sound, neither woman expected the room to be occupied let alone by someone they knew, their gazes falling on the couple before them, the room smelling of musk.

"Oh my god." Cosima brought a hand up to cover her eyes, trying to flush the image of white knuckles clenching the edge of a desk and strong hands gripping equally pale hips.

"Merde!" Delphine turned away, her mouth open in shock, trying to process what they had walked in on. She had secretly spied on such a scene before on the ship to Venice, familiar with the sight of such unbridled desire, but the presence of the material pooled on the floor, two coats matching in style draped over an armchair, she hadn't been prepared for this.

"Delphine!" Felix yelled in shock, quickly withdrawing his sword of flesh from Colin's southernmost entrance in a hurry to pull his breeches up.

Pushing himself up from the table he'd been bent over, Colin winced, not knowing what to say about the disaster that was unfurling in the room.

"I... I..." Not sure what else to do, Delphine took a step back, escaping out the door again.

Shaking off her own surprise, Cosima took one last look at the hastily dressing men before running out, following the blonde.

## Laid Bare

*Thank you all for continuing to read. Your comments and reviews have been greatly appreciated. Thank you as well to JayBear1701 who continues to poke and prod and demand that I finish chapters for her to read.*

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"Delphine!" Cosima finally caught up with her as the blonde hit the stairs to outside. "Please."

"Not here," was all Delphine said as she slipped her hand into Cosima's, pulling her down the street.

Confusion filled Cosima as she took in the blonde's temperament, but she didn't refuse the gentle tug as they ducked around people, avoiding drunken men and promiscuous women flaunting themselves as they would only do when masks hid their faces. She wasn't sure how she felt about what they'd walked in on. She had gone from pure arousal to cringeworthy disgust at seeing her own brother in such a compromising position. Of course she knew of his preferences and, considering who she preferred to take to bed, had no care about such matters, but knowing what someone does in bed and actually seeing it... they were two vastly different things. Not only that. It also meant the cat was out of the bag for their brothers. There was no going back to pretending. "Delphine..."

"Calme-toi, s'il te plaît." Delphine hushed her, looking around to make sure they weren't being watched.

Experience had taught her to never argue with a determined woman and she found herself being pulled into the manor that housed Delphine's temporary residence, nearly stumbling on the steps. With everyone out on the streets, the manor was eerily vacant as their steps echoed off the walls toward Delphine's room.

Finally, with the bedroom door closed and ensuring their privacy, Delphine turned to press Cosima against the door, her lips finding the brunette's easily.

Cosima was taken back by the aggressiveness, feeling hands unbuttoning her coat. Her own body was easily remembering the arousal that had taken control just minutes ago and it was so simple to let the flood of desire take over, to give into the temptation as she caressed the blonde's throat. It wasn't until she felt the damp presence of a tear against her own cheek that she let her eyes flutter open, pulling away from the kiss. Moonlight reflected off the trail down Delphine's cheek and she reached up to remove the woman's mask, setting it aside. Her heart nearly broke at the sight of the sorrow in the stormy hazel eyes as she captured shaking hands in her own. "Delphine?"

"Please Cosima." Delphine struggled to free her hands, determination set in her features despite the tears that began to flow freely.

"I think we should talk first."

"Non. We don't have much time before someone comes looking for us." Delphine leaned forward to claim the brunette's lips once more.

Cosima groaned against the kiss, as teeth nipped at her lips. There was no arguing that her body needed Delphine, especially as a hand escaped her hold and slipped down the front of her



breeches, parting her already aroused sex with a knowing fingertip. It would be so easy to just fall into the wave of intoxicating pleasure, but there was a part of her brain that reminded her that they needed to settle things first. Cosima's body and emotions were at war, wanting nothing more than to claim the tall form, to fall to her knees and say her prayers to the only deity she deemed worthy of worship, yet knowing the blonde was in distress, her arousal wavered.

She couldn't believe she was doing it, but with a frustrated whimper, she captured the exploring hand around the wrist, gently yet forcefully removing it from her clothes. "Delphine..."

Unable to stop herself, Delphine let a sob slip as her mind refused to let her see anything but the bleak inevitability of the end of things. She wrapped her fingers around the brunette's coat, leaning their foreheads together. "He'll cancel the wedding, Cosima." Her words were a bare whisper, but loud enough for Cosima to hear the break in her voice.

The words overwhelmed Cosima with confusion for the barest of moments when it dawned on her. If Felix were to do such a thing, there would be nothing to tie the Cormiers to Venice, nothing to prevent Madam Cormier from returning with her children to France. Just the thought of such a thing was almost enough to break Cosima's own resolve, unable to see a future without Delphine in it... not when she'd just discovered what it felt like to love.

Cosima had believed their love was miraculous, no different than Moses parting the Red Sea and saving the Israelites, but suddenly the tide had turned. The staff guided by God had been removed and they were no longer the saved. Fate had proven them to be the damned swallowed whole by the waters rushing over the road to salvation.

"I'll talk to him." Cosima wiped away another of the blonde's tears, just a soft brush of her knuckle against the damp cheek before pulling the woman forward for a soft kiss. "It's going to be alright."

Delphine nodded, her hands moving to push the brunette's coat off her shoulders. "I cannot go back to Paris, Cosima." The soft whisper accompanied the sound of the heavy material hitting the ground, her fingers working on the toggles of the woman's waistcoat. "I refuse to give you up."

Swallowing audibly, Cosima nodded. "I won't let that happen."

Delphine wasted no more time in peeling away the excess layers of Cosima's clothes, stripping her down until all that remained was her shirt and breeches, the laces already loosened and offering enough room for her hands to slip down the front, cupping the brunette's heated sex.

Groaning softly, Cosima let her own hands fall on the silken material of Delphine's dress. She wanted nothing more than to release the laces, to claim the woman as they both desired, but Delphine's plea of hurrying before they were interrupted was ringing in the back of her mind. She knew that once Delphine was out of her dress, there was no getting her back into it. "Why do you tempt me when the world is coming down around us? Either of our brothers could interrupt us. Lord knows they have horrible timing and will want to discuss things."

"I don't care about my brother, nor yours." Delphine bit her bottom lip, pressing a fingertip into slick depths, grinning as the complaining woman pressed closer on instinct. "But maybe you're right..." With a smirk she pulled her hand from the woman's breeches, her lips turning into a wicked grin as she brought fingers to her mouth, running her tongue along the length of the digit. "Maybe you're right and we should just..."

Cosima captured her lips in a kiss, her fingers locking in blonde curls, pulling her closer. There was fire in her veins, one that could only be fueled by a French tongue pressing past her lips, claiming her as much as she claimed Delphine. The hand returned to her core, digits pressing into her and caressing the depths of her. Her own hands slipped between the blonde and the solid

wood, fighting with the knot on the laces holding her dress closed.

"Delphine?" Knuckles rapped against the door they were pressed against.

Their kiss barely muffled the whimper that emerged from Delphine's throat.

Her breathing unsteady, Cosima broke off the kiss. "Told you," she mouthed as she pulled away, a gasp escaping as she removed the hand from her breeches. She tugged playfully on a curl before quickly grabbing her waistcoat and jacket and slipping both on.

Delphine took a deep breath as she pressed her hand against the door, catching the scent that was all Cosima on her fingertips as she licked her lips before opening it just a crack. "What do you want, Colin?"

"Delphine, we have to talk." Colin looked around, making sure no one was around. "I know you're in there with Cosima, just let me in."

Glancing at Cosima who was fastening the last button of her coat, she stepped back to let her brother in. "What do you want?"

"Felix is beside himself." Colin ran his hand through his hair, unable to stop fidgeting. "He's convinced you're going to tell mother and ruin his reputation." With a shake of his head, he began pacing back and forth.

Delphine snorted. "Funny. I'm sure he wasn't thinking about his reputation when he had his cock buried in your..."

"Delphine!" Colin gasped. He gave her a terrified look. "Felix may be too caught up to see it but don't think I didn't notice you and Cosima were sneaking into a back room together." He let his eyes wander to Cosima before returning to his sister. "You would hate to have your secret spread as much as he would. You have to tell him you won't speak of it."

Dark hazel eyes narrowing, Cosima glared at him. "Don't you dare threaten her. She doesn't have to tell him anything," she growled, arms crossed over her chest as she leaned against the window sill. "I'll talk to him." She sighed softly as she felt the weight of the world settle on her shoulders. "I'll talk to Felix and we'll work everything out." Her eyes fell on Delphine and saw the grateful look in her eyes. "Just... go back to the ball and tell him I'm dealing with Delphine."

"You'll talk to him?" Colin gave her a nervous look.

"I'll talk to him."

"Ok..." Standing a little taller, he looked between Cosima and Delphine. "...I guess I'll..."

Delphine pat him on the shoulder, pulling him back to the door. "Go. Calm Felix. And while you're at it, keep maman at the ball for at least another hour."

"What?" Stopping at the door, Colin gave her a confused look. "Why would I..." He stopped at the look Delphine gave him. "Oh... right." His glance in Cosima's direction was rewarded with a raised dark eyebrow. "Well at least someone will get lucky tonight."

"We'll talk later, brother." Delphine spoke as she pushed him out the door, closing it with a click of the lock. Turning, she found herself pressed against the door by a small frame.

"Where were we?" Cosima smirked.

"Come here." Delphine cupped the brunette's face in her hands, pulling her closer. Their lips met and she was once again stripping away Cosima's clothes, the iron hold on her own torso giving way as Cosima's hands worked at the laces of her bodice, the dress being stripped away and added to Cosima's. "Je t'aime." She whispered, pressing Cosima into the bed and covering the length of her.

"Truly?" Cosima asked, wrapping her legs around the pale hips. "Perhaps you might prove your claim."

Kissing her way down the warm length of flesh, Delphine paused to capture a nipple between her lips.

Cosima groaned as a hot tongue circled her breast. "That... is a good start... hey!"

Delphine looked up at the woman with a grin, releasing the nub from between her teeth. "Pardon, ma cherie. I couldn't resist." Giving the abused flesh a kiss, she continued her path down the smooth terrain.

Her fingers tangling in blonde locks, Cosima licked her own lips in anticipation, groaning as her thighs were spread wider, a hot tongue sliding along the length of her center. "You are very much forgiven." She quickly commented. She swore she could hear Delphine's laugh but as the tongue moved against her, her thoughts went elsewhere. When she had first heard of the the pure virgin her brother had arranged to marry, she had imagined a pious self-righteous child thinking herself better than everyone for keeping her chastity. How wrong she had been. Never would she have imagined that just in so little time, she would have that very virgin buried between her thighs, proving just how studious she was.

There had to be a way to fix all of this, to keep the woman not only between her thighs, but at her side for years to come. She would never give this up. So long as Delphine wanted her, she would fight for her.

Cosima gasped as fingers pressed into her, moving in concert with the tongue that inched her closer to oblivion. Everything, she decided. She would give up everything for this... for her. Each wave of pleasure that ripped through her body, every whimper that slipped past her lips cemented her love, and as the dam broke and she felt herself tumbling into a haze of ecstasy, she felt the ridiculous sensation of tears stinging her eyes.

How preposterous. The great Cosanova didn't cry during sex.

But as the French woman scaled her body, she pressed their lips together, rolling them over so she might cover the longer frame with her own. "I love you, Delphine." She whispered between kisses, her own body still trembling.

Breaking off the kiss, Delphine reached up to wipe away a tear. "Prove it, mon amour."

## Let us Converse of Physical Affection, My Love

*The end is approaching. Only one more chapter and an epilogue after this chapter so...it's strange to see the light at the end of the tunnel. Thanks again to Jaybear1701 for making sure this looks human. Thanks to theumbleweed for keeping me humorous during this entire story.*

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"Come in."

Cosima took a deep breath as she entered her brother's room, finding him staring out the window, candlelight casting shadows against the stone walls of his room. "Felix?" she had regretfully left Delphine's side not long ago, her body still humming in delight from the unrestrained attention.

"From a young age I knew of your perversion." His unexpected comment brought her to a halt, uncertainty in her posture. "I've done my best to protect you these past years, when questioned by other men with their suspicions. Men wanting to bed you and claim you as their own. Sometimes, being approached by the suspicious husbands of women you've seduced." He turned to face her, the soft glow flickering over his features. "Father wished to send you away, you know, to have religion beat the behavior out of you. He'd grown quite weary of your antics but somehow I had managed to convince him to see reason."

Her brow furrowing, Cosima leaned against the door she had closed, trying to gauge where her brother was going with this.

"When I turned 16, father took me to the brothel and paid a whore two gold pieces to turn me into a man." Felix sighed softly. "I'd never thought much about my own desires before then, so let me tell you how surprised I was that seeing a woman in the nude did little to spark arousal in my loins."

Cosima cringed at that. "Felix..."

"No. Please let me finish." A steady breath was taken before he continued. "It wasn't until father died that I allowed myself to give into this... perversion of my own." He sighed. "I've managed to keep it a secret for years. It was bad enough to quell the whispers and suggestions about your indiscretions, but I couldn't allow the same to be said about myself. So when the opportunity arose, a financial partnership sealed by marriage, I saw it as a possibility for protection. No one would suspect such an unholy desire coming from a man married to someone like Delphine."

A small laugh came from Cosima, earning her a look from her brother. "Sorry. You're right about that."

"Yes well... I never intended to..." Shaking his head, Felix turned away again, looking out the window, noting the party goers stumbling down the streets, annoyingly loud and intoxicated. "I didn't give much thought about her having a twin brother... or that he'd be as equally stunning... and now I've put everything in danger. I've let my own desire overrule my sensibility and now everything is ruined." His voice trailed off, his troubled expression hidden from her.

Cosima pursed her lips, taking in her brother's defeated composure before commenting. "Are you quite finished yet?"

Turning in surprise, Felix's eyebrows were to his hairline. "Excuse me?" It was more disbelief than anger.

"I understand, Brother. Truly I do, but if you would stop your morose monologue long enough to allow me to comment, I would tell you that nothing has changed."

"How can you..."

"Did you honestly think that Delphine didn't know?" Cosima smirked. "She's known of her own brother's tastes since they were young and it doesn't take a scholar to figure out the rest." With a shake of her head, she pushed off the door and moved to her brother's side, joining him in looking out the window. "Catching you with your breeches around your ankles... literally... changes nothing. Your marriage will still happen."

Felix watched her in disbelief. "How is that possible? Delphine..."

"...will happily agree to a marriage and whatever social requirements are necessary with the understanding that you have no interest in her sexually." Now Cosima let her eyes drift to stare at him. "And that you accept that she has no interest in you either."

There was silence between them, one sibling regarding the other in quiet contemplation. "I see." Felix broke the silence first. His confusion turned to understanding. "You... the two of you..." He shook his head. "How could you, Cosima?" A sigh of frustration slipped from his lips. "Must you seduce every woman in Venice? Or did you think I didn't know about Cosanova?"

"This isn't the same." Cosima gave him an apologetic look. "I love her... immeasurably." She couldn't believe she felt the sting of tears in her eyes, but she fought to keep control of herself. "Please, brother. You've done so much for me these past years. I only ask one more thing of you." For Delphine, she wasn't beyond begging. "If this marriage falls through... if her mother has reason to return them to Paris... I couldn't bear it." The very idea of the blonde setting sail, of returning to her birthplace, was a pain in her core, her eyes blurring with tears she refused to shed. "I couldn't survive it."

His breath escaping in a slow exhale, Felix gave her a soft smile. "Has the mighty Cosanova fallen? Has she been lain victim to blonde hair and green eyes?"

"Hazel." Cosima corrected passively. "Her eyes are hazel... bursts of sunlight shining through the treetops of a dense forest." Realizing suddenly that she'd gone off on a tangent, Cosima cleared her throat. "Sorry..."

"Well..." Felix shook his head, moving to his bed and sitting down on the edge, taking in the predicament they faced. "And what about you, dear sister? If Delphine and I were to wed, that solves a portion of the problem..." The confusion in Cosima's face spurred his further explanation. "People have been talking, Cosima. Madame Cormier's question about your own lack of betrothal was not the first I've fenced this past year." His empathy showed in his worried eyes. "You know that if Delphine and I were to wed, your own options are limited. Colin would legally be your brother and the law would not allow you to wed." He turned the problem over in his head, looking at it from different angles. "Society would accept a single man more than a single woman, expecting instead for you to turn to the convent. Such a consequence would make a wedding between Delphine and myself a futile ruse."

Cosima snorted at that. "My convent days are behind me..." She mumbled, getting a curious look from her brother. "Nevermind. I have been working on this problem since the first time I laid eyes on Delphine, dear brother. Trust me when I say I have a plan." She put as much bravado as she could into the statement, not letting on that her plans had yet to be cemented. There was still at least one discussion she had yet to have, one that would be pivotal to the whole plan.

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"Thank you for meeting me."

Delphine turned from Periwinkle's stall, wiping the juices from the apple she'd fed the horse on her riding pants. "Of course..." Delphine looked behind him, expecting the shorter brunette to come from his office but finding the space lacking.

Felix smiled as he approached the blonde, trying to hide the embarrassment that still lingered. Last time they'd seen each other, the blonde had run off in...whatever emotion it had been. "Cosima is on a personal errand. I was hoping we might talk."

Her own embarrassment, from the last time she'd seen him, threatened her composure as she nodded, following him as he turned to step away. To her surprise, they didn't go far, stopping at the next stall. What had previously been a vacant barrier between Cosima's bastard horse and the rest of the horses was now filled with a pure white filly with a flawless coat and a neatly combed mane. "You have a new horse." How had she not noticed before?

"Actually... she's yours." Felix smiled at the surprised look the blonde gave him. "I know how much you cherish your rides with my sister. It would be far more proper for you to have your own horse."

Delphine watched him curiously, seeing the depths in his gaze. It wasn't just a horse. She could see as much to understand his acknowledgement of her time spent with Cosima had been, in his own way, a consent to their relationship. "You don't have to buy me with a horse, Felix." as touched as she was by his acceptance, she didn't feel right accepting such a thing. Who rewards a liar for keeping secrets?

With a smirk, Felix pulled a carrot from his coat, handing it to the blonde. "I'm not. It would seem very strange for the wife of a horse breeder to not have her own mount." Turning away, he made sure no one was around to eavesdrop. Clearing his throat, he gave her an uncertain look. "I'll admit that I have no idea how to pursue a woman and I had hoped it to be a proper engagement gift, but now I see how necessary it is. After all, perception is important in this situation, is it not?"

Offering the rest of the carrot to the magnificent creature, Delphine turned to face him, hesitance in her gaze. "It was never my intention to deceive you. I was prepared to do my duty to my family and commit to this marriage. I never intended for... this."

"Of course you didn't." Felix reached out to scratch the horse's muzzle. The silence that passed between them was agonizingly lengthy, neither knowing what really to say. "It would seem that none of us planned for this situation and yet here we are, two families of degenerates in love with the wrong people according to society."

"It is society that is flawed, Felix, not our love." It was so strange to be speaking of such matters with a man she was intending to marry, joining in a sacred bond that would never be consummated for the sake of saving face. "I'm worried about Cosima..." She wasn't sure if she should voice her concerns, not when their intentions were finally out in the open, but the man seemed genuinely concerned about his sister. "It seems that you and I are protected from the scrutiny in this sacrilegious contact, my brother was born as part of the more... privileged sex and he would be free from anything more than an occasional joke... and yet Cosima is still mercy to the city's scrutiny." Her lip found its way between her teeth as the worry she'd become so familiar with rekindled within her. "I gathered from your response to my mother last night that she was not the first to make such inquiries."

Felix nodded, understanding. "You're right. She is a target and has been for a while now, but my sister believes she is more than capable of handling this herself. She has concocted something of a plan, but refused to inform me of it which means we're all bound to her ability to solve this

rationally. I'd honestly hoped you might know. She can be quite insufferable at times."

With a soft exhale, Delphine felt her uncertainty beginning to overwhelm her. She had to have faith in Cosima. "Your sister, quite frankly, is as much of a brat to me at times as she is to you."

"Who's a brat?"

Felix and Delphine both jumped at the voice, turning to see Cosima striding in.

Delphine bit her bottom lip, this time to hide the second-hand smile that would have erupted as she took in the brunette's expression. The lips she loved so much were spread in a giddy smile and there was a spring to her step as she entered. "Cosima." She wanted to take the woman into her arms, to whisper how much she missed her, yet she doubted it was appropriate considering her future husband stood right beside her.

"How do you like the horse?" Cosima slipped beside the blonde, her hand instantly finding the woman's hip as she looked over the gate at the animal. "You should see the saddle Felix had crafted. It's probably the most feminine thing I've seen on a horse."

"She's lovely." Delphine thought little of the horse and more of the warm flesh she could feel through the material of her breeches, the hands on her hip a reminder of the time they'd spent in bed the night before.

"You seem downright chipper, Sister." Felix brushed off his sister's comment that he was sure was meant to be an insult. "I take it your task went well."

Cosima seemed to beam at that, pride evident in her expression. "It went perfectly." Realizing he was waiting for her to explain, she nearly laughed. "In due time, Brother. In due time. First, I think Delphine should try out her new horse." Turning to the woman, Cosima let her gaze soften. "What say you...sister? Take a ride with me?"

"Of course." Delphine answered without hesitation, her own curiosity piqued by the woman's evasive behavior. She laughed softly as the cheerful brunette hopped over the gate and began to saddle the horse.

"Ugh." Felix scoffed, turning away. "Let me know when you feel like including me in your scheme." Blowing out a frustrated breath, he turned away from the women, knowing his presence was no longer needed or appreciated.

## In the Eyes of God

*Alright. Here it is. This is the last chapter of Cosanova. I did feel that the epilogue I had added a weirdness and so I cut it. This story feels more complete with just this chapter as the end. I wanted to thank everyone for reading and commenting on this story and helping spur me on to complete what is actually the longest fic I've written to date. You guys have been so awesome and while there won't be a sequel, I'll see y'all in other stories. Thanks especially to JayBear1701 for betaing this and for the other members of OBFrankenfics who pushed for moar sex, moar euphemisms, moar detail!*

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"Holy Christ!" Cosima yelped, her fingers tangling in blonde curls, urging the deliciously swirling tongue closer. She whimpered in discontent as the pressure disappeared.

Pushing herself up and slipping over embroidered silk, Delphine laughed as she covered painted lips with her own in a brief kiss. "Hold your tongue, mon amour." She spoke with a devious smile as she pressed a second finger into heated depths, savoring the groan she was rewarded with. "You don't want us to get interrupted again, do you?" She let her eyes drift around the empty office, a large crucifix affixed to one wall. She would prove before the eyes of God's only son just who this delicious body belonged to.

"No... no... I'll hold my tongue." Cosima gripped the edge of the chaise, nails digging into the carved scrolls in the polished wood framing the stiff cushions.

"Hold it, but don't harm it... I have plans for it later tonight." Another kiss and she was returning to her knees, spreading wide trembling thighs once more to take in the sight that always made her mouth water, watching as her fingers disappeared into rosy flesh, glistening in the candlelight. Unable to resist the call of the flesh, she returned her tongue to the swollen bud she had previously been tending to. The brief reprieve had all but torn down the progress she had made and she aimed to start anew, relishing the sounds of Cosima being "quiet," the muffled whimpers spurring her determination.

As much as she enjoyed the delicious quakes coursing through her love's body, she knew they only had a few minutes, each second that ticked by bringing the possibility of discovery that much closer. The past month had given her much opportunity to learn the nuances of the brunette's body, learning how to make the woman tremble. Turning her wrist, she curved her fingers, caressing the surface with practiced expertise and marveling at the loud gasp that emerged.

"Sweet merciful Jesus!" There was as much force as possible behind the exclamation while still remaining a whisper.

Delphine always found it humorous, that her sacrilegious lover found the Lord nowhere except between the sheets or on her knees between her own thighs. But today was not about finding God, or even her own pleasure. Instead Delphine took everything the woman had to offer, working her fingers against clenching muscles, her tongue cycloning against swollen flesh. It wasn't that the Venetian needed recollection of just who she belonged to, but Delphine intended on reminding her anyway... especially today. Especially when declarations were made before the church, where the eyes of God saw different.

Now God would know differently, especially as the brunette's back arched, muscles clamping



down around her fingers. Layers of silk blocked her view of the woman's face, but Delphine could just imagine the dark hazel eyes clamped shut, her mouth open in a soundless scream, unbridled desire overflowing within the compact form. As the trembles began to subside, she slipped her fingers from the woman's sex and greedily drank from her well of nectar, lapping away the silken delicacy.

"No..." Cosima pushed her away gently, tugging her up instead. "You take too much."

Delphine smirked as she ran the tip of her tongue along the woman's lips, ignoring the bitter taste of her make up. "I'd hate for this beautiful dress to be ruined on such an important day."

Capturing the tongue between her lips, Cosima groaned, tasting herself on the slick muscle. She wanted nothing more than to strip the dress from the blonde's body but all of her attempts had been slapped away. "I want you." She whispered as she broke off the kiss.

"You will have to wait until later." Delphine protested, slipping off the shorter form and moving to the small pitcher of water she had prepared in advance to wash her hands and lips.

Cosima pushed herself off the chaise, her knees feeling weak as she smoothed down the ruffled material she wore. It had been the most cumbersome part of the evening, but she was beginning to appreciate the ease of access it gave to the devilish blonde.

Dipping a cloth into the water, Delphine approached the brunette, capturing the grabbing hands with a shake of her head. "We must go, mon amour." Using the cloth, she wiped away the smudged red around the edges of Cosima's lips and with a guilty grin, she removed the red imprint of lips that had mysteriously appeared at the top of the brunette's cleavage, chastising herself mentally. "Surely everyone is wondering where we've gone off to."

"How little I care for everyone else." Cosima rolled her eyes, pulling the blonde closer so she might capture perfect lips once more.

"Ma Cherie..." Her words were interrupted by a hesitant knock on the door.

"Open the door." An exasperated voice called from the other side.

"Merde. See what you did." With a sigh, Delphine did as she was told, unlocking the door and finding Felix tapping his foot on the other side.

"Are you kidding me?" He commented, pushing into the room. "People are wondering where you two are."

With a smirk, Delphine leaned towards him, placing a kiss on his cheek. "Don't worry, mon mari."

Felix pulled away, a disgusted look on his face. "You smell like a brothel. My sister is rubbing off on you."

Delphine rolled her eyes, taking a slice of the fig she had brought and enjoying the sweet taste. "In more ways than one." She winked at Cosima.

"If you two are quite finished here, could we please return to dinner?"

"I suppose so." Cosima huffed, stepping beside Delphine and running her hand through blonde curls to fix the slight disarray. "Hopefully it won't take much longer."

As the three exited the office, they returned to the reception hall. "Try not to look so miserable,

Sister." Felix commented as Delphine slid her arm into the bend of his elbow. "It's your wedding day."

"Don't think I won't kill you." Cosima commented while putting a smile on her face. With a sigh, she moved to the main table, followed by Delphine and Felix. Before taking her own seat at the center, she leaned down to brush her lips against her husband's cheek. "Sorry to take so long. These dresses take far too much effort to maneuver around."

"Funny... that never seemed to be a problem you had before." Scott commented into his glass of wine before gracing her with an innocent smile. "Has your sister successfully tended to your needs, Dear?"

"That and then some." Cosima smiled, stealing a look at Delphine who sat on the other side of her at the table, their chairs close enough for their legs to touch. On the other side of the blonde, Felix and Colin were joyfully resuming their discussion on horse breeding.

"Well, it looks like you've returned just in time for dessert." Scott commented as the servers ushered in a large decorative cake that was not intended for consumption. Instead each server also brought in smaller plates with slices of cake accompanying a glistening globe of fruit that smelled of honey and wine.

"Poached pears?" Delphine lit up, not believing Cosima would request one of her favorite desserts at her own wedding.

"Cosima mentioned she'd become quite a fan of this French dessert." Scott spoke to the blonde with a warm smile. "Speaking of French things, it's a shame your mother couldn't join us for the wedding."

Delphine nodded. "Yes, but she is still on her trip with Monsieur Lacroix. I'm not sure she will ever return. According to her last letter, she's apparently lost all desire to see Venice again. Something about sinners and miscreants... and how Venice pales in comparison to France."

"A shame, really." Cosima mumbled as she bit into a slice of the delicious dessert. "This is fantastic." As she sipped her wine, she felt a soft touch on her thigh, fingers inching up her dress with determined intent. Daring to let her eyes drift down, she traced the arm that had suddenly found a home on her thigh. Delphine was chatting with Felix about something, doing her best to eat with her left hand. When the hand finally managed to pull up the bottom of her dress, the warm hand traveled up her thigh, the tablecloth working as a perfect barrier to prevent revealing exactly what was happening.

"Are you alright, Cosima?" Scott asked, a genuinely concerned look on his face.

"Yes... of course." She smiled, taking a bite just as fingers found her core, arousing a moan from her. "Heavens, this pear is fantastic." She commented to cover the sound, nearly choking when she heard an innocent chuckle coming from Delphine.

When dinner finally ended and people began to clear, Cosima grinned as she walked with Scott down the hall of the manor. "It was a lovely dinner."

"I will admit, it was probably one of the more elegant receptions I've been to." He laughed, tapping the hand that was holding the bend of his elbow. "Felix truly has a knack for planning."

"He does, doesn't he?" Cosima laughed, grinning as they got to a door, the room Cosima had reserved for the night. She blocked his path, leaning against the wooden surface. "Would you mind giving me one minute before I allow you to enter?"

Scott laughed. "Of course." He bent down to place a kiss on her cheek. "Take all the time you need."

When Cosima said a minute, it was really all she intended on taking as she stripped out of the dress, hands not her own finding the laces that would help her remove the confining bodice. "Thank you." She told the woman who had helped her, attempting to keep her eyes swayed from temptation as she set the dress over a nearby chair. She donned a new outfit, much more comfortable before pulling her hair back.

Scott looked up from where he had leaned against the wall as Cosima beamed, crooking a finger at him. "I've a present for you, Husband."

Scott's eyebrows rose in surprise as he took in the sight before him. On the bed laid two women stripped bare, lips moving against each other's. A third woman, who had assisted Cosima in changing, stepped up to him, running a hand down the front of his embroidered suit. "You shouldn't have, Cosima." He spoke without truly meaning it, allowing the nude woman to undress him.

"Nonsense." Cosima smirked, tying the cloak around her shoulders and pulling the hood up. "A man should enjoy his wedding night, even if his wife is otherwise occupied." She turned away as too much of her friend... husband... became revealed. "I've paid these beautiful women handsomely for the night and another three shall replace them in the morning."

The complete absurdity of the situation brought a laugh from Scott. "You are the best wife ever, Cosima. Really."

With her own laugh, she escaped out the door, holding the cloak closed as she found her horse saddled and ready to leave. It didn't take long until she reached the home she was born and raised in, slipping in the door and nearly running into her brother. "Oh... hello, Felix."

Looking her over with a smile, Felix untied the cloak from her shoulders and hung it on the hook near the door. "I take it Scott appreciated his wedding gift?"

"Definitely." Cosima gave him a smirk, letting her eyes drift up the staircase towards her room. Many nights had ended like this since Felix and Delphine's wedding which had made it acceptable for the blonde to move in. No one need know which room the French woman actually resided in.

"Are you really going to keep my sister waiting?" Colin spoke as he entered the room, slipping his arm around Felix's waist and began pulling him back towards the den.

"No." Cosima answered even though she was now alone, nearly floating up the stairs and slipping into her bedroom, the click of the door locking getting the attention of the blonde who was wearing one of Cosima's shirts, writing at Cosima's desk... their desk now.

"That was fast." Delphine commented, pushing herself up from the chair to welcome the brunette with a kiss. "Although I did miss you every second you were absent." Her fingers found the laces of the breeches Cosima had only recently adorned. "You were beautiful today, but I think I like this look on you better."

"I think I like you better with nothing on." Cosima commented, tugging the simple shirt off the blonde in a one swift move. "So beautiful." She whispered as her eyes drifted down the long length of pale skin, stepping out of the boots and breeches easily.

Tugging the shirt from Cosima's body, Delphine removed the last layer that would prevent the nude form from pressing against her own. "Although she couldn't be here, Mother sent a bottle of

Champagne for you and Scott. I hope you don't mind me commandeering it."

"Mmm. My favorite nighttime snack... alcohol and a beautiful woman." She accepted the flute Delphine handed her, but reached up for a kiss first.

With a laugh, Delphine broke off the kiss, lifting her glass. "A toast. To you, the love of my life... the only person I could dream of spending the rest of my days with."

Cosima smiled, lifting her own glass. "To you... the only woman crazy enough to love me... and the only woman in all of Venice to tame the legendary Cosanova."

With a slight roll of her eyes at the past the brunette had confessed to her not long ago, Delphine sipped from her glass, enjoying the soft tingle of the liquid sliding down her throat. "Mmm."

Cosima was a little less graceful, emptying the glass in one sip, discarding the now empty glass so that she could wrap both arms around the woman's waist.

Delphine barely had time to set her own glass down before she was pulled over to the bed, suddenly finding herself pinned to the covers beneath a grinning brunette.

"Now... I believe there's a little paying back that needs to happen... seriously Delphine. What wickedness there is in you that I would find your fingers between my thighs when my husband sits not even half a meter away. I'm a married woman now." Leaning forward, she brushed the tip of her nose against Delphine's, enjoying the moment of intimacy without the fear of being caught. "I love you, Delphine." She couldn't resist confessing, seeing the stars in light hazel eyes.

With a loving smile, Delphine captured soft lips in a brief kiss before breaking it off, finding dark hazel eyes filled with desire as she allowed a more devious smirk to spread across her face. "Prove it."

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