

## COLLEGE (Chapter 54)

Warren and Sophia drove Warren's van to Wisconsin, packed with all their stuff. They had a great time, driving halfway across the country, seeing the sights. They got to school at the beginning of the last week in August, as they had a week of Freshman orientation before school actually started.

They lived in a high-rise dorm, which had sixteen floors in the high-rise part, with the dining hall on the first floor and the lobby on the second. There were two wings attached to the high-rise, with five floors each. The wings were, respectively, all male or all female. The tower alternated male and female by floors. Sophia was on the 9th floor of the tower, Warren on the second floor of the male wing.

Sophia met her roommate, Elise Davenport, a pre-med from a suburb of Milwaukee. Warren's roommate was Tim Delfino, a business major from Philadelphia. He also met Paul Hurlihy, a fellow pre-med from Cleveland, who lived across the hall. Known by the nickname Papa Bear, due to his large size and his boisterous personality, he and Warren became fast friends.

Warren and Sophia got through orientation, meeting new people and enjoying themselves. They even managed to get one of their rooms alone for a couple of hours a few times, so they could make love. They went over one of the University's ice rinks, took some of the money they had saved from their skating, and reserved a couple of blocks of time, two hours Sunday mornings and two hours Wednesday nights, for the whole year. The Sinatra free dance and their Original dance, which this year was a march, had been well worked out over the summer, but they needed to skate this fall. The people that ran the rink were thrilled to have the National silver medallists working out there, and gave them a good rate.

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Sophia was sitting with her floormates at dinner, a couple of days before classes were due to start. Most of the girls at the table were checking out the guys. Sophia just smiled and didn't say anything.

Courtney Bjornsen, one of the girls on Sophia's floor, noticed. "Whattsamatter, Sophia, don't like guys? I haven't seen you check out any of these specimens."

"No," Sophia said with a smile, "I love guys. But there's one guy I love more than any others, so I don't have to look."

"Oh, no, you're not one of those that's going to be loyal to Mister Wonderful back home, are you?" Courtney said snidely. "Mine thought I was going to. Yeah, riiiiiggggghhhhtttt. Like I wanna spend my college years pining for a guy at Penn State."

"No, actually, mine is here."

"What?" Courtney asked.

"He's here. Lives on the second floor. We came here together."

"WHAT?" Courtney was incredulous. "You went to the same college as your high school sweetheart? Why would you want to do that?"

"Because we wanted to be together," Sophia said.

"That's stupid," Jane, another girl from the floor, added. "College is a time for discovery. You're supposed to explore yourself. Not get stuck with the same old thing."

"She's right," said Courtney.

"Courtney, how long did you go out with that guy that went to Penn St.?" Sophia asked.

"Started the first of this year. What's that, about eight months?"

"I went out with mine for a year," Jane added.

"Well, maybe it was easier for you guys, then." Sophia pointed out. "I've been going out with Warren for three and a half years."

"WHAT?" Courtney sputtered. "Since freshman year in high school?" Sophia nodded. "All the more reason you should have cut him loose. You are **trapped**, girl."

"Well, I don't think of it that way," Sophia said. "Plus, we have a little.....oh, creative and business venture that we're partners in."

"Waitaminnit!" Melanie, one of the other girls, said. "I know who you are! You're Sophia Daniels!"

"Of course she is, dummy, she already told us her name," Courtney said.

"No, no," said Melanie, "she's **the** Sophia Daniels. Of Daniels and Kelleher."

"What, are you famous or something?" Courtney asked skeptically.

"If you are a figure skating fan, you'd know who I am, let's put it that way."

"Sophia and that hunky boyfriend of hers finished second at the US National Championships in Ice Dance this year. And they won the Junior World Championship. And where did you finish at the Senior World Championships?" Melanie asked

"Tenth. Which we were thrilled with, since it was our first try."

"Oh, so you skate with your boyfriend," Courtney said. "So that's why you stay with him."

"No, I stay with him because I love him."

"Uh-huh. Well, I still think you're nuts."

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Sophia was back in her room with Elise. She was thinking about the conversation with Courtney.

"Hey," Elise said, "Courtney's a bitch. Don't let her get you down."

"I won't," Sophia smiled.

"I'm just glad she didn't ask **me** why I wasn't checking out the guys," Elise muttered.

"What?"

Elise sighed. "Since you're my roommate, you should probably know this, but please don't spread it around. I'm a lesbian."

"Oh," was all Sophia could think to say.

"Is that it?"

"Well, I'm not quite sure what to say. I don't have a problem with it, if that's what you're wondering."

"Good." She looked at Sophia with a big smile. "I must say it's a **damn** shame that you are straight."

Sophia cracked up. "Straight **and** taken, and don't you forget it!"

"You really love him?"

"Yeah, I really do. He's wonderful."

Elise looked pensive. "Technically, I'm bi. I am attracted to guys, but I've never had a relationship with a guy that wasn't a disaster, and every relationship I've had with a girl has been good."

Sophia paused for a moment. "Well, what do you prefer.....I mean.....you know....."

"Sexually?" Elise cracked up laughing, as Sophia nodded, blushing. "Well, so far, women. Most of the guys I've been with have been hopeless. I.....well.....I like to have oral sex performed on me. Girls are just **better** at that. And I like reciprocating, too, but the receiving.....I've never met a guy that can satisfy me orally."

Sophia cracked up laughing. "I should rent Warren to you for a day, you'd change your tune in a hurry."

"Really?"

"Oh, yeah." Sophia stopped for a minute. "He's very, very good in bed. Which makes things easier."

"What kind of things, Soph?"

"Well, I sort of understand what Courtney was talking about. I love Warren to death, but we've been together for quite a while. I find myself looking at other guys a lot...you know, wondering. Then I remind myself, I've got the best, who needs the rest?"

"Hmmm. Maybe Warren would be up for some experimentation?"

"He probably would. I just don't know if **I** would. I'd feel guilty."

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Shortly after that, classes started. And Warren found himself under an avalanche.

Sophia found herself alone, far too often. Warren was almost constantly studying. Taking a full load of honors pre-med classes was proving to be tough, and Warren was still trying to organize his time properly. They went the first couple of weeks of school not seeing each other except for their twice-weekly skating sessions, and a couple of meals. Sophia was lonely, and horny.

"Warren, please, just a couple of hours?" she said to him one Saturday afternoon in his room. "Elise went home for the weekend. I need you, Snugglebear."

"Oh, Pookie, I wish I could. I have two tests on Monday, and they are both going to be tough. Let me see what I can get accomplished, and maybe I can take tonight off."

"I have plans tonight. Can't you take the afternoon off?"

"No, because that boxes me in, time-wise."

"Forget it," Sophia said, and stormed off in a huff. Warren thought about following her, but decided against it. He really **did** have to study. He hoped she understood.

She didn't. She studied, too—was doing very well, so far—and he was **smarter** than she was. She knew his courseload was particularly brutal, but **still**.....

After another week or so of this, Sophia was more frustrated, and hornier. It wouldn't take much for a complication to wreak havoc on her well-ordered life.

And it did.

## THE COMPLICATION (Chapter 55)

The complication's name was Eduardo Gonzalez.

Sophia met him in her calculus class—he was a math major. A native of the Dominican Republic, he had lived in New York City since he was thirteen. He was dark, and oh so gorgeous. Every girl in the class had been trying to catch his attention for a month. Sophia was bemused by it all—especially since Eduardo seemingly had eyes only for **Sophia**. He had made some sort of suggestive comment to her, a week into school, and she had just giggled and said, “Sorry, I have a boyfriend.” This was the wrong thing to say to Eduardo, because he took it as a challenge. He muttered under his breath, out of her hearing, “Not for long.”

The little gifts came first. A pair of earrings. A box of chocolates. All with the same type of inscription on the card: “I am not your boyfriend.....yet” said one. “Would your boyfriend be so thoughtful?” said another. When the CD of tunes from the Dominican Republic showed up, she figured out who the secret admirer was.

She confronted him after class the next day. “Eduardo, all the stuff you’ve been sending me is sweet and thoughtful, but you’ve got to stop. I’m very, very taken.”

“Sure” he smiled, but thought to himself—let’s see how taken she really is.

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Two tickets to the ballet arrived next, with this note: “These are yours to do with as you wish. If you have someone to accompany you, wonderful. If not, here is my number.”

She looked at the tickets, and called Warren.

“Hiya Pookie.”

“Hi, Warren. Listen, I have the opportunity to get two free tickets for the ballet tomorrow night. You up for it?”

He sighed. “Sorry, Soph, got a huge test on Friday.”

“Ah, can’t you take a few hours out? Study more tonight, or something?”

“I **am** studying tonight. I’m also studying tomorrow night. This one’s gonna be a ballbuster, sweetie.”

“Dammit, Warren, this is important to me.”

“And passing biology is important to me. C’mon, Soph, gimme a break, huh?”

“FINE!” She slammed down the phone. And picked it up, and called Eduardo.

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The ballet was wonderful. Eduardo was a perfect gentleman, holding doors open and stuff. She thoroughly enjoyed herself. And, when they got back to her dorm, he went to kiss her—and she didn’t stop him. His lips bore down hard on hers, insistent, demanding, his hands massaging the small of her back. When he finally broke the kiss, she felt a little lightheaded. He smiled his rakish smile, and said, “There’s more where that came from—after you become free.”

Free? Of Warren? He was promising her that if she broke up with Warren?

The next day, in class, he sat behind her, his eyes boring a hole in her back. He brought his foot under her chair and rubbed her leg. He put his strong hand on her back. After class, he grabbed her, and kissed her again, in the open, with a strong, sure hand snaking up to grab her breast. He was dominating her, and she was on **fire**. And he said it again, “Remember, the whole ball of wax—after you become free.”

When she got back to the room, the flowers were there, with a similar card.

She broke her date with Warren that evening, feigning sickness, and managed to avoid him all weekend with the same excuse.

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Monday, in calculus, he did the same thing. Surreptitious touches with a firm, strong hand. Footsie under the desk. And, after class, he grabbed her and kissed her again, one hand on her breast, the other one snaking its way between her legs, rubbing her drenched pussy through her jeans. She felt powerless to stop him, and it turned her on. Finally, he whispered, “Are you free Friday night?”

“Yes.”

“Really, truly free?”

“I will be.” She was in a trance.

“Good. Friday I will take you, and make you mine, and you will no longer be free again.”

Sophia ran back to the dorm, wrote the letter, and dropped it in Warren’s box..

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Warren bounded back from class, and checked his mail. Not much, except a letter from Sophia. A letter? She's not usually much of a letter writer. He walked into his room, and opened the letter.

He read,

My dearest Warren,

I am sorry, but I think we have reached the end. There is someone else. I will always treasure what we had together, but it seems to have run its course. I have been worried about us for some time. I feel trapped. I need to experience more than what we have. I know this will hurt you, and I am truly sorry for that, but this is the way it has to be.

Love,  
Sophia

Enclosed with the letter were the pendant and the claddagh ring.

Warren sat down hard on his bed, feeling like he had just been run over by a locomotive.

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Elise picked up the phone in the room. "Hello? Hiya, kid! Hold on. Sophia, it's Warren."

"Hang up the phone."

"What?"

"Hang up the damn phone!"

Elise didn't, but she said to Warren, "Warren, she's telling me to hang up the phone. No, I can't get her to talk to you. Sophia, he really wants to talk to you!"

"HANG UP THE PHONE!" Sophia bellowed. Even Warren heard that one, so, when Elise went back to the receiver, Warren himself had already hung up.

"Sophia, what the hell's going on?"

"I broke up with Warren today. I left a note in his box."

"You WHAT?"

"Yeah, remember that guy Eduardo I told you about? The Latino hunk?"

"Yeah..."

"We've kind of been.....well.....fooling around. Not **that** far yet, because he promised me **that** only after I was free. Well, now I'm free." She giggled. "Oh, you should feel his

lips, his hands, oh wow. He dominates me. He grabs me in the middle of class and in the hallway and I can't even begin to resist him. I want the whole thing, I want all of him."

"So you broke up with Warren?" Elise was incredulous. "You guys were talking marriage!"

"I'm too young to get married, and I'm too young to be a single girl in college with a studyaholic boyfriend who I never see. Warren and I want different things out of life."

"It never seemed like you did before."

"Well, things change. I changed."

Elise just shook her head. "It's your life, but I think you're nuts."

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Warren, for his part, was devastated. She wouldn't talk to him on the phone. She wouldn't answer her door for him. She blocked his number on her cell phone. She wrote the note, and that was that, and she was done with him.

And he would never understand it. How could she walk away from what they had together? How could she just cut him off that way—and for another **guy**? How the hell can you fall out of a love like the one they had for another guy overnight?

Warren would probably never know. All he **did** know was that he was alone, some other guy was holding Sophia in his arms, and it felt like half his heart had been ripped out.

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Sophia couldn't wait to see Eduardo in class on Wednesday. However, he didn't sit near her. He also didn't wait for her after class. She saw him up ahead, walking with Kelly Watson, who lived on the same floor as Sophia. She wondered what was going on. Just then, Warren popped into her head. And she felt an overwhelming pang of guilt. She willed it away.

Thursday, she was sitting in her room, and idly punched "play" on her CD player without checking the disc that was in it. The first thing she heard was "Romeo and Juliet". After that, it was "Moonlight Serenade." It was a CD that Warren had made for her, of all the love songs that meant something to them. Crying, she stopped the CD player. She picked up her cell phone and stared at it for a while. Ten times, she almost dialed the speed-dial number that was Warren's cell phone. Then, Eduardo popped into her head. She put the cell phone down, but she didn't stop crying for a while.

Friday came, and he, again, didn't sit next to her. He did however grab her after class, run his strong hand down her breast, and say, "Are you ready for tonight?" All she could do was nod.



Walking from her class to the dining hall in her dorm afterwards, she saw Warren. He didn't see her, but she got a full look at his profile. He was chatting with Papa Bear from his floor. Sophia hid behind a tree, and heard his animated description of getting Elizabeth Cushman drunk after the competitor's party at Nationals. She remembered that. She listened to Warren telling Paul about it, and it all became flooding back. She slipped into the building without Warren seeing her, and forgot all about lunch. She went up to her room, crying. She contemplated breaking the date with Eduardo, but thought of him and got all weak in the knees. Ah well, she thought to herself, I already let Warren go, might as well go through with it. She started to get dressed.

She was waiting for him when he arrived, dressed to the nines. He showed up, gorgeous as ever, and took her into his arms and kissed her deep, closing the door behind him. He led her to the bed.

"Now? I thought you were going to wine me and dine me first," she giggled.

"Plenty of time for that. But we both know what we want now, don't we?"

She let him lead her to the bed, as he caressed her breasts. She felt herself just starting to get wet, and moaned, "Oh, Eduardo." He reached up under her skirt, and pulled off her panties. He undid his belt buckle, pulled his pants around his ankles, threw her onto the bed, and climbed on top of her.

"Um, Eduardo? We have all night, you know. You can slow down so we can both enjoy this."

He ignored her. She tried to close her legs. "Eduardo, can we take our time, please? This is just too fast."

He slapped her, hard, across the face. Her eyes widened in horror and pain. He pried her legs open and lunged for her again. She was too stunned to resist.

She felt his cock up against the entrance of her pussy. He hadn't even taken her clothes off, really—just the panties, and lifted the skirt. She really wasn't all that wet yet, and her surprise at his haste didn't help, but he didn't much care. He aimed, and **rammed** his cock into her fairly dry pussy with brutal, sudden force.

"OW. Eduardo, that **hurt**!"

He ignored her, and started slamming his cock in and out of her pussy.

"Eduardo, slow DOWN! This HURTS! Come on! OW! Eduardo, you're HURTING me!" He still ignored her, as he pumped his cock in and out of her pussy.

"Eduardo, **stop** this. Please? Oh, it's too HARD Eduardo you are REALLY hurting meeeeeeee."

If anything, he increased the pace. Sophia started crying. “Stop this, please stop this, Eduardo, it hurts, oh it hurts....”

He finally stopped—only because he had reached his climax, and he poured his cum into her battered pussy. He quickly pulled out, pulled up his pants, and zipped them. Then he turned to Sophia and said, “Well, my dear, now you’re **really** free. Because I got what I wanted from you, and I’ll bet your lover-boy isn’t into sloppy seconds. Adios,” and with a cackle he left the room, leaving Sophia on the bed, crying.

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Elise walked in a few hours later.

“Sophia! Oh my God! What happened?” She was still lying on the bed, exactly how he had left her. She hadn’t even bothered to put her panties back on or pull her skirt down. She had **just** finally stopped crying.

“You know the saying, you can’t rape the willing? It’s a lie. I was willing, and he raped me anyway.” She described the whole encounter.

“Oh my God.” She looked down between Sophia’s legs. “Sophie, you’re **bleeding!**”

“I deserve it.”

“We need to get you to a hospital. This might be something serious.”

“I don’t care. Maybe it’s something serious. Maybe I’ll die. Or maybe I’ll live but never be able to have sex again—wouldn’t **that** be a fitting punishment?”

“Come on, Sophie.”

“I want to die, Elise.” She started sobbing again. “I really want to die. Look at me. Look at what I let happen to myself. And why? Because my hormones were in overdrive, and I was vulnerable to his ‘charms’, because my boyfriend studies too much? Oh, God. I want to die. I deserve to die.”

“Stop it,” Elise said. Then she sighed. “Look, if you won’t go to the hospital, let me take a look. I am pre-med, I know a little bit.”

“All right.”

Elise went down, and pulled Sophia’s lips apart. “OW!”

“Sorry, Soph. He really hurt you.”

“It feels like someone’s been whacking my pussy with a baseball bat for three hours.”

“Well, I found the source of the bleeding. It’s a cut, not too far in, and it looks like it’s going to be all right. But you might be bruised.”

“Of that, I have no doubt.”

“We really should get you to the hospital.”

“No. If it’s really bad tomorrow, then I’ll go.”

“All right.”

“I want to get out of these clothes, though, and into some PJs. And I can’t get up, I don’t think.”

“I’ll help.” Elise got her some PJs and helped her change, since she was shaky and unsteady.

“I appreciate this. Your TLC isn’t quite on Warren’s level, but it’s appreciated nonetheless.”

Elise giggled. “Did Warren ever have to dress you or something?”

Sophia smiled. “Oh, worse than that.” She told Elise about the famous hangover bath.

“Wow,” Elise said. She looked hard at Sophia. “Y’know, if I ever had a guy who loved me so much he was willing to wash vomit out of my hair, I don’t think I’d ever let him go.”

“That, roomie, is because you’re a hell of a lot smarter than I am.”

Elise looked at her. “Sophie, what happened?”

Sophia sighed. “The first thing you have to understand is that I’m kind of a nymphomaniac.” Elise laughed. “Really. Now, I’m **not** a slut—not before tonight, anyhow—but my hormones are in perpetual overdrive. And they have **not** been getting satisfied since we’ve been out here, because Warren’s got his nose buried in a textbook too often. And, to be fair, I’ve blown him off when **I** had to study once or twice.”

“The second thing you have to understand is what my sex life was like before Warren.” She described her previous boyfriends, and her abuse. Elise looked shocked. “The third thing you have to understand is that I’ve been to bed with one guy since Warren and I have been together.”

“You cheated on him, and with who?”

“We don’t consider it cheating, because I had his permission—and it was with his best friend.”

“You slept with his best friend, and he KNEW ABOUT IT?”

Sophia giggled. “Knew about it? He was there. In the same room, in another bed twenty feet away with **my** best friend.”

Elise’s eyes bugged out of her head. “I should also mention that his best friend and my best friend have been dating almost as long as we have. Oh, and us being in the same room was only the first time.”

“THIS HAPPENED MORE THAN ONCE?”

“Uh-huh. In a special place.” She explained about the cabin. “We were always in the same room, but, after the first time we often ended up in the same bed. In fact, there’s been a few times that Warren and Jason were in the same **girl**.” She giggled. “And boy is **that** fun.”

“I do **not** believe what I’m hearing.”

“I told you I was a nympho. Anyway, the point I was getting at is that Jason is a much more aggressive lover than Warren is. Warren is the epitome of kind, gentle, and patient in bed. Jason’s more aggressive in bed—and Jessie’s more aggressive than I am, which Warren found fun. I told Warren once that 95% of the time I preferred it his way, but there was that 5% there.”

“What I think I’ve figured out is that there is a small part of me that needs to occasionally be dominated in bed. Warren’s done that maybe twice in all the time we’ve been going out together, and he has to **really** be in the mood to do it. He can’t turn it on and off. It’s not really in his nature. Which is why Jason was a fun diversion, because he’s dominating. Not **rough**, not at all, but dominating.”

“Ah,” Elise said, “And Eduardo was dominating you from the moment you met him.”

“You got it. His eyes, his hands, his words, were all so incredibly demanding. And I got turned on like you wouldn’t believe. I wanted someone to throw me on the bed and ravage me.” She looked down at herself. “Not like **this**, though. You’d think I would have learned my lesson from the other guys that have dominated me—Jason being a notable exception, because he’s not a dominator, just a sweet guy with an aggressive streak in bed. But the other ones,.....I really should have known,” she sighed.

Elise thought for a moment. “Sophia, do you still love Warren?”

“Yeah, I do, with all my heart. Y’see, Eduardo wasn’t all of it. It had gotten very routine, you know? We’ve been together for a long time. I think I was thinking about ‘the relationship’ instead of the guy with whom I *\*had\** the relationship. We could have fixed things, but I never said a word to him. He’s all I’ve ever wanted, for three and a half years.”

“So, what you’re telling me is this—you had a guy for over three years, he satisfied you 100% emotionally and 95% sexually, and you dumped him because you had an itch that you wanted scratched?”

“That about sums it up. Stamp ‘fucking idiot’ on my forehead and parade me around the campus. Or maybe I should tattoo ‘slut’ right across my pussy.” She started to cry again.

Elise sat next to her, cradling her head on her lap and stroking her hair until the sobs subsided. “Sophia, do you think he’d take you back?”

“Oh, yeah. In a heartbeat. Don’t make that sound like bragging, because that’s not how I mean it. Because I know he will love me until the day **he** dies. I also know I’d take him back, in a heartbeat, if he had done the same thing.”

“Sophie. CALL HIM!!!!!!”

“I can’t.” She sniffled. “He’s better off. He’ll figure that out, sooner or later. Because I don’t deserve him.”

“I doubt he’d see it that way.”

“He will, eventually. He’s the sweetest, nicest guy on this campus. He’ll find someone. He deserves better than an idiotic slut.”

“Sophia.....”

“I appreciate what you’re trying to do, Elise, but I made this bed and I have to lie in it. I need to face this. I ruined everything.”

Elise didn’t know what to say to that. Sophia rolled off her lap and attempted to go to sleep.

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The next Thursday, Warren was sitting after class with his friend Alexa.

“Hey, what you doing tomorrow night?” Alexa asked.

“Nothing.”

“You want to go out? Maybe see a movie and then to Paolo’s for a pizza?”

Warren looked down. “Oh, Alexa, I’m not sure.”

She smiled at him. “What, you intimidated by a girl asking **you** out?”

Warren smiled, thinking of Sophia and just who had asked who out then. “No, of course not. It’s happened before. It’s just that.....listen, Alex, if you just want to go out as **friends**, two people having a good time together, than I’m up for that. But, I don’t know what your intentions were, and you have to know up front that I am absolutely, positively **not** ready for anything more than friendship. And it might be a long time before I am ready.” His voice got softer. “If I ever am.”

Alexa looked at him. Then she smiled. “What’s her name?”

Warren smiled back. “Sophia.”

“How long ago?”

“Last Monday.”

“Unexpected?”

“A landing party from the planet Klingon touching down on the quad saying ‘take me to your leader’ would have been less shocking.”

“Any explanation?”

“As John Lennon once sang, Some Other Guy.”

“Shit. How long you with her?”

“Three and a half years.”

“Oh, God. Serious?”

“I heard wedding bells ringing. Had no doubt of it. Thought she did, too, right up until I got the ‘Dear Warren’ letter in my box. Plus, she not only ended the best relationship anyone could **ever** be in, she also put the kibosh on a promising career.” He explained about the ice dancing. “I tell you, Alex, sometimes it’s a struggle to get the will to get out of fucking bed in the morning.”

Alexa looked at him. “All the more reason you need a night out.” She put her hand on his. “With a **friend**. That’s all I really had in mind, anyway.”

Warren smiled at her. He **did** like her, at least as a friend. “You convinced me.”

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That night, at the café, he caught a glimpse of Sophia. She was 20 feet away, and for a moment, their eyes locked. And he felt it—the same passion, the same connection, that he had always felt when looking in her eyes. But it was concealed, this time, underneath a bottomless well of sadness. He quickly turned away and disappeared into the crowd.

Tim was with him, and kept his eyes on Sophia after Warren turned away. She watched Warren's back disappear into the crowd, and seemed to take a step towards him, then stopped. She was plainly trying to not cry, wringing her hands and gnawing on her bottom lip.

She looks absolutely pitiful, Tim thought to himself. And I **know** my roomie is half-suicidal right now. Something's gotta be done.

On the way back to the room, he stopped in to talk to Papa Bear.

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"Listen, Lobster-breath, you got to do to **something**," Papa Bear was talking to Warren, with Warren's roommate Tim nodding on in agreement. "You're tearing yourself up inside."

"Look, she dumped you after three years, but you just **left**," Tim added. "Two weeks have passed.. You need to **fight**, Warren. You surrendered. You surrendered too easily."

"Right," Papa Bear picked up the train of thought. "Look, what's worse? Wallowing in self-pity, or taking a chance? Three and a half years, and you tell us you were practically married? I'd fight back. I'd fight to get that back with **all** I've got. If I loved her as much as you say you do."

"Time to make a stand, Warren," Tim concurred.

Warren sat, and thought. "I'm sorry, guys. I just can't do it. But, you're right. I can't wallow in self pity any more. I have to face the fact. It's over."

"Warren, it doesn't have to be," Tim said. He described what he saw in the café. "I think she still loves you."

"Uh-huh. So, then, why doesn't she tell me? She knows where I live. She's the one that broke this off. I tried to call her, to talk to her, for a week. I'm not going to do it again. It's over."

Tim and Paul just looked at each other, resigned.

## MOVING ON (Chapter 56)

Warren went out on that date with Alexa, and enjoyed himself. The next Friday night, they did it again. Afterwards, they ended up in Alexa's room—she had a single—just talking, and listening to music, sitting next to each other on Alexa's couch.

Until Alexa asked him a question.

"Warren, do you believe in casual sex?"

He sputtered on his coke. "Excuse me???"

"Have you ever had sex with a friend, just as friends?"

"Once." He explained about Jessie. To his surprise, Alexa didn't seem shocked. "Other than that, no. Just Sophia."

"Nothing before her?"

Warren laughed. "Sophia took my virginity."

"Ah. I've never been in love with anyone, not like that, but I've had lots of sex. It was very casual in the crowd I ran around with."

"Ah. Nope, never done that. Of course, since I've sworn off emotional entanglements to people not named Sophia, at least for now, casual encounters are the only way I'm gonna get any."

Alexa laughed, "Warren, are you horny?"

Warren got a rueful expression on his face. "Let's see. I went from, on average, three times a week, to not getting any for about a month. What do **you** think?"

Alexa was still grinning at him. "I think you're horny. Good." She got up off the couch, and sat down on his lap. "Warren, I want you to fuck me."

"You're serious."

"You bet your ass. No big romance, no emotional entanglements, just two good friends rutting like rabbits. I'm on the pill, and I know I'm clean, so no worries. Warren, don't I turn you on?"

He thought about that one. Alexa was damn good looking. More in a "cute" way, but great nonetheless. She was fairly petite, about 5'4", had light brown curly hair, and brown eyes with a devious little twinkle in them that reminded Warren of Jessie. She wasn't buxom, but her B-cup breasts were pert and firm.

"Yeah, Alexa, you do turn me on."

"Good." With that, she kissed him, long and deep. He responded to the kiss, and she broke it. Getting off of his lap and the couch, she walked over to the bed. He didn't follow. He sat on the couch, looking at her, obviously deep in thought.

"Warren," she said, "It's not disloyalty if **she** dumped **you**, you know."



"I know," Warren smiled at her. He got up and joined her on the bed. "You'll have to forgive me for being.....I don't know....."

Alexa smiled back. "I do. It's OK." She reached up and kissed him, lightly at first, and then deeper and harder. He leaned back, and toppled over on the bed, her in his arms, not breaking the kiss.

"Aggressive, Alex?" Warren asked with a smile.

"I've been known to be," she said as she hovered over him. He reached up and started unbuttoning her blouse. "Oh, and **I** am aggressive?"

"Well....." He had her blouse completely unbuttoned, and she shrugged out of it. He reached towards her bra.

"Clasps on the front, Warren." He undid it, and gently touched her breasts with either hand.

"Ooooooh, Warren," Alexa groaned, as he rubbed her breasts with his hands. She was sitting up, straddling his lap. "Oh, nice hands....."

"You haven't seen nuthin' yet."

"Oh, goody." He massaged her breasts, tweaking a nipple with a thumb every so often. Then he withdrew his hands and slipped them behind her back.

"Come here," he said, pulling her forward and down. She ended up sitting on his stomach, but leaning over. He took one of her breasts in his mouth.

"Ooooooh....." she moaned, as he teased her nipples with his tongue. This went on for a bit, with her breathing getting more ragged.

"W....Warren.....are you always.....mmmmm...this much into foreplay?"

"Yes," he said, and then reattached to her breast.

"Wow." She enjoyed his attention, and then realized his hands were going for the snaps on her jeans. She lifted off of him long enough to slip her jeans and panties off. She sat back down, expecting him to continue on her breasts, but he had other ideas.

"Lift up," he said. She did, questioningly, and he scooted down, so that his mouth was underneath her pussy. He then pulled her back down on top of him.

"What? Warren? Oh!" she cried, as his tongue made contact with her pussy. "Oh my God!" He worked his tongue up and down her labia, and then worked in deeper, making contact with her opening.

"My GOD Warren!" He traced around her lips, and then made contact with her clit. "WOW!" was all she said, as he teased and poked her clit with his tongue. It didn't take long before she stiffened on top of him in her orgasm.

"Jesus Christ, Warren, if I had known you were that handy with your tongue, I would have jumped your bones after our date last week!"

"Enjoy yourself?"

"You betcha." She climbed off of him, and went to undo his jeans. He took his own shirt off, and helped her scoot his pants down. "Niiiiice," she breathed, and then bent over and engulfed him in her mouth.

"HMMMMM..." Warren said. "That's not a bad tongue you got, either." She slid up and down the length of his cock with her lips, and then engulfed him, deep-throating him. She started sliding up and down the length, taking him all the way deep with each stroke, and holding him there deep in her throat. As he started gasping, and she could tell he was close, on the next stroke, she got him deep in her throat—and started humming.

He yelped, and then said, "OH FUCK! CUMMMMINNNNGGG!" to give her a chance to disengage, but she didn't. He came prodigiously, as she swallowed every drop. After he was done, she cleaned him off, and then scooted herself up so that her face was near his. She waited for him to open his eyes. When he did, still panting, he saw her grinning at him.

"Holy Shit! Where did you learn **that** little trick?"

"Practice, practice, practice." She giggled. She looked down at his softening dick. "How are your recuperative powers?"

"Not bad, usually, although after **that** I'm not going to make any promises." She giggled at him. "They are, however, usually better if I find something to occupy myself."

"Like what?"

"Like this." He gently pushed her over, so she was lying flat, and reached his hand down between her legs. He ran his fingers up and down her lips for a bit. Satisfied she was wet enough, he gently slipped two fingers in. "OOOF!" she said, as he slowly slid his two fingers in and out. He repositioned himself a bit, so he could get his other hand down there. He used the other hand to tease around her clit, while the first hand steadily moved the two fingers in and out. She bucked toward him a bit, trying to get him to make contact with her clit, but he wanted to tease her a bit. Her face flushed, and her breasts heaved as her breathing increased. Then, he made direct contact with her clit, while the fingers in her curved upward and hit her g-spot.

"AAAHHHH!" she gasped, as her hips rose off the bed. He kept it up, massaging her clit, while the other hand alternated between long strokes deep into her and contact with her g-spot. "AAAHHH! AAAHH!! AAAHHHH!! AAAHHH!!" Her hips were undulating wildly, making his job a bit more difficult, but he managed. It wasn't long before she went over the edge. "AAAAHHHHHCCCCUUUUUMMMIINGGG!"

He stopped his hand movements in her pussy as she came down from her orgasm. He looked at her, flushed and wheezing, until she opened her eyes, and smiled up at him. Then he started moving his fingers again. She groaned, as he leaned down and replaced the hand that was on her clit with his tongue.

"OH MY GOD WARREN! AAAHHH! AAAHHH! AAAHHH!!" she yelled, as she quickly built back up to another one, her pussy spasming on his fingers and grinding into his face. After she came down from this one, he withdrew, and climbed up to watch her face.

"Warren, you are unbelievable," she finally said. "My God. You know how to touch a girl, that's for sure."

"Glad you're enjoying yourself."

"Oh fuck, am I. How are those recuperative powers of yours?" In response, he leaned closer, so she could feel his rock-hard cock on her thigh. She just giggled. "Just fine, it seems. Warren, fuck me!"

"Gladly." He positioned himself, and easily slid into her. He started slow, alternating long and short strokes. She went nuts. "Oh, God, Warren, that's so good, so good, ooof! Ooof! Oooof!" He fucked her short and quick, then long and deep, trying to make sure he made contact with her clit on the long strokes. It wasn't long before she felt herself build up again. As she got close, she reached up and pulled his face down, enveloping her mouth with his. When she came, he felt it in her pussy wrapped around his cock, in her legs wrapped around his hips, and in her mouth, wrapped around his, as she moaned into it.

He wasn't done yet, not by a long shot, so he kept going. She broke the kiss, and whispered in his ear, "Warren, it has **never** been this good. Never, ever, ever. You are a stud."

Warren giggled. "I went to a prep school for high school, and, ever since that time with Jessie, her nickname for me has been Prep Stud."

"It fits," she giggled back. "Ooooooohhhh... Warren, Jesus Christ, I'm going to go **again**."

"Almost there myself, Alex," he said. She went first, which was all he needed.

He disengaged, and fell on the bed next to her. She cuddled into him.

"Warren," she said after she caught her breath. "I swear, what I am going to say to you is the absolute truth. I've been with upwards of twenty guys, some of which I thought were pretty damn good. But that is the best sex I have ever had, and it's not even close. You know how to treat a woman in bed. Wow. I'm still in the clouds."

"Thanks. You're pretty damn impressive yourself, especially that blowjob. But do you want to make my ego even more unmanageable than it already is?" They both laughed.

"Well, actually, I thought it might need a little boost, after.....you know.....but I was **not** lying for your sake. You're that good." She looked over to him, and realized she had said the wrong thing. "Oh, shit, Warren, I'm sorry, I didn't mean to bring that up."

"It's OK, I suppose it was in the back of my mind anyway. Now that it's over, and my extreme horniness has been satiated, I'm thinking that it was a little quick, you know? But I'll get over it."

Alex sat up in the bed. "We can talk about this, you know. We're friends. Despite what just happened, we're still friends. I know you don't want anything romantic, and neither do I. So, if you need to talk.....you still love her, don't you?"

"Always will," he said, matter of factly.

"What are you going to do?"

"Get over it. Eventually. I hope."

"Have you tried to talk to her?"

"For a week afterwards. I got tired of having phones hung up in my ear and doors slammed in my face."

"Well, maybe now that more time has passed, she'd be better able to realize what she did, and regret it."

"I can't think of that, Alex. I just can't. If I obsess about her, if I allow myself to think 'maybe, now, she might', well, I'll end up jumping out your window." Alexa lived on the fifteenth floor. "And I am **not** kidding. I need to get over her, and I need to get over her in a hurry. It hurts too much not to." He thought for a minute. "Alex, I just realized something, and I'm sorry. I used you today."

She smiled at him. "You think I hadn't figured that out? And you think I wasn't using you? Warren, if you make me cum like **that**, you can use me any time you want."

He laughed. "Well, OK, but I'm a little uncomfortable with it."

"I know. It's OK. We'll loosen you up eventually. Since we're not romantically involved, there's no need to be exclusive. I don't want to, and I don't want **you** to. And, after today,

all I have to do is spread the word, and you'll be fending them off with a stick. We'll get you used to casual sex in a hurry."

He stared at her. "You're serious."

"Damn straight. I know you don't want romance right now, that you feel you're incapable of falling in love. Fine. Have fun. If a girl throws herself at you—like I just did, you know—enjoy yourself. Fuck your way through the University of Wisconsin. Go for it."

Warren couldn't help but crack up. "Alex, I'm a nerd. A geek. You **like** nerds, you told me so yourself, but other people....."

"Like I said, Warren, let me spread the word."

"HMMMMM."

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About a week later, on a Monday morning, Sophia was eating breakfast with Elise.

"SOPHIA!!!!"

"Elise?"

"You were out in space."

"Yeah, I suppose I was."

"And you're not eating."

"Not that hungry, I guess."

"You're losing weight, you know. I can see it in your face."

"A little, maybe. Not much of an appetite, I suppose. So, how was your weekend at home?"

"The usual. How was your weekend? Your date Saturday night?"

"OK. He was nice. I slept with him, you know."

"On the first date???"

"I was horny. He was nice. He was nice in bed, sweet, gentle. It was good." Sophia's voice was very soft, and very matter-of-fact.

"So, that's a good thing, right? You had sex, and enjoyed yourself?"

"I guess."

"You had sex with someone that wasn't violent."

"Yeah. That I **did** need, I'll admit. I needed to get that out of my system. But....."

Elise finished the unspoken thought. "But he's not Warren."

"No."

"You need to talk to him, you know."

"I can't. I just can't."

"You're making yourself miserable."

Sophia didn't say anything to that, just stared into space some more.

### **HAPPY? (Chapter 57)**

It was a month after Warren's first encounter with Alexa, just before Halloween, and she had kept her word.

It had been a whirlwind. Four different girls, besides Alexa, and all had left raving. Warren had thought about that. He supposed he should be getting a big head by now. He wasn't. He was glad about that. He enjoyed it. He liked to see the lady he was in bed with satisfied. It wasn't any big gift, it wasn't any secret. It was just caring that his partner enjoyed herself. Apparently, from some of the stories that he was hearing, he was in the minority. But, it really was important to him. He knew why, too. Alexa had asked him that.

"Warren, you know I've told you that most guys don't put so much emphasis on a girl's pleasure. Why do you?"

"Different reasons. It's a combination. First, I'm that kind of guy, anyway, I suppose. Second, I had a good teacher." He smiled at that.

"Sophia?"

"Sophia. Third, when you spend the first three-plus years of your sexual life making love, exclusively with one brief exception, to someone you are totally in love with, it becomes important."

"You were so in love with her, her pleasure was important to you."

"Right. And, the fourth reason, is that I got lucky the first time."

"What do you mean?"

"Well, Sophia had had five different partners, over two years, before me. And, on our first night together, I gave her her very first non-self-induced orgasm. In fact, I gave her her first **three** that night. And it was completely out of instinct, I had little idea what I was doing, I just guessed right. But the look on her face, after the first one? I will **never** forget that. It's stayed with me."

Alexa sat for a minute, looking at Warren. "I understand, now. I think it's a wonderful thing. She gave you a great gift, you know." She sighed. "But, whenever you talk about her, your eyes get grey. Did you know that?"

Warren laughed. "My eyes are hazel. They change color according to my mood."

"I figured that. My little sister has hazel eyes. They don't get grey much, though. Only when she's in a lot of pain." She took a deep breath. "Warren, I suppose I thought that, if I got you a lot of girls, you'd forget about Sophia. But that's not going to happen, is it?"

"No."

"I guess I was also hoping that one of them would sweep you off your feet."

"Sorry. Hey, if **you** didn't do it....." They both laughed. "But, you need to know this. It **has** made things better. I'm not over Sophia, no, but at least I'm not sitting in my room every night staring at the walls. I go out. I have fun. I go to bed and have fun. Alexa, it **is** fun, especially with you, and it's been a great help. Getting me over Sophia is out of the question. Keeping me from feeling sorry for myself has been accomplishment enough, believe me. Thank you."

"You're welcome, and I'm glad of that."

"I need to get to the rink."

"I'll come watch." She often did.

When they got to the rink, and Warren had changed into his practice clothes and skates, and was warming up on the ice, Alexa stood by the boards.

"Warren?"

"Hm?"

"Why do you still come and practice, twice a week, by yourself?"

"It's good exercise. The ice time is paid for."

"Would you ever skate with anyone else?"

"No."

"So, you're still hoping, aren't you?"

"I suppose. This is her ice time, too. I guess I always hope she'll show up. Meantime, it **is** good exercise. And I like to skate, as long as it's by myself. Too bad there's not a singles ice dance."

"What about regular singles skating?"

Warren laughed. "You obviously have never seen my feeble attempts at jumping!"

Alexa grinned at that. "How long has it been since you skated with Sophia?"

"A while. We did both times during orientation week, and during the first week of class. The next couple of weeks, we didn't, because I was so busy. Then she dumped me."

"You hardly saw her at all those first three weeks of class before she dumped you, right?"

"Right. I was rather unprepared for my workload. I thought I went to a tough high school. In fact, I **did** go to a tough high school. I think I overreached, though, when I planned my classes for this semester. And it hit me like a ton of bricks."

"And Sophia didn't handle it well."

"What do you think? She's not here, right?"

"Did you explain it to her?"

"I tried."

Alexa thought for a minute. She knew she was about to push the envelope, here, but she felt she needed to. "Warren, did you study a lot in high school?"

"Oh, yeah."

"How did Sophia handle it then?"

"A lot better. Of course, I studied at her house more than I studied anywhere else."

"Warren, why couldn't you do that **here**?"

"Huh?"



"Study together. It might have helped."

"Well, we both had roommates. She had her own room at home. Senior year, after her stepfather and stepsister moved in, she moved into the basement. We had all the privacy in the world. I practically moved in."

"You could have found a way around that. We're talking about studying, not sex. There are other places. Besides which, Tim is hardly ever in your room."

"True. I don't know, I guess. I just got overwhelmed with the workload, and didn't handle it well. I needed a while to ramp up my time management. It's better now."

"Warren," she took a deep breath. "I need to say this. Your breakup with Sophia was not all her fault."

"I suppose you're right. Although breaking up, after all the time we were together, was an extreme overreaction"

"Maybe so, but if you can take some responsibility, what that means is this--if **you** go to **her**, it wouldn't be the complete act of surrender you seem to think it is."

"Alexa, you're too fucking logical for my own good."

She laughed at that. Warren continued, "Are you trying to get rid of me?"

"You're my friend. I care about you. I want you to be happy. You're **not** going to be truly happy until you get back together with Sophia. And don't tell me 'it's over' or 'I have to forget her' because you **haven't** forgotten her, and it's **not** over, not in your mind, and the proof of **that** is you being here, on this ice."

"YOU TELL HIM!" came a bellow from behind him. He turned. It was his floormate, Papa Bear.

"Hi, Paul." Alexa greeted him.

"Hiya, beautiful. You too, Lobster-Breath."

"Why do you call him that?" Alexa asked.

"He's from Boston. They eat lobster there, don't they?"

"I love lobster," Warren interjected. "Papa Bear, what the hell are you doing here?"

"Looking for you. Tim told me where you were. I forgot it was your 'glide around the ice aimlessly and hope Sophia shows up' day."

Warren couldn't help but laugh. "You saw through me, too?"

"Of course. Papa Bear is all-knowing, all-seeing." He had worked his way to the stands, and planted himself next to Alexa. "Like I said, I was looking for you. I wanted to hang out, see if you wanted to go find something other than dorm slop for supper."

"That sounds appealing."

"You too, Lex, if you want."

"Naaah. After I watch Twinkletoes twirl the ice a few times, I have stuff to do."

"Too bad. You brighten the scenery." Alexa giggled at him. She had gotten to know Paul pretty well through Warren, and was used to him. "Anyhow, Warren, are you going to take this pretty girl's advice, or **what**?"

"Oh, I don't know. Look, remember, she dumped me for another guy. And I have no idea if she is still with him, or what."

"She's not, I know that for a fact. I also have information that he was gone five days after she dumped you, and that it was very unpleasant. But I don't know any more specifics." Papa Bear informed him.

"I didn't know you knew **this** much. Where did you get this? Why didn't you tell me?"

"I have my sources, and you never asked. I thought you knew. Shit, Warren, you've **seen** her. I was with you, the last time, in the student union last week. Did she look happy to you?"

"No. I think I need the whole story."

"Can you ask her roommate?" Alexa wondered.

"I don't know. I don't know Elise very well." Just then, he clapped his hands together.

"But I know who I can ask! I don't know her number at school, but I can get it."

"Who?" Alexa asked.

"Jessie, that's who! And I happen to be going away this weekend. To Chicago. To Northwestern, as a matter of fact, to see Crash."

"Aaaah," Paul said. Both Paul and Alexa knew all about Crash and Jessie. "And Crash still talks to her."

"Regularly. They broke up, but that was just a convenience thing. They've dated in college, but I know for a fact that they are looking very forward to the Christmas reunion. And they talk all the time."

"So, while you're there, you'll have Crash call her and you'll pump her for info."

"You got it, Papa Bear."

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Sophia had barely thought of ice dancing since the breakup with Warren. She only thought of it when someone goaded her about it--usually her mother. She had begun to dread the phone calls from home. She was just picking up the phone for another one.

"Hi, Mom."

"Hello, sweetheart. Have you talked to Warren yet?"

Sophia sighed. "Do you have to start every conversation with the same question?"

"Until you give me the answer I want, yes."

"It's not going to happen, Mother. It's over."

"Are you happy with that?"

Sophia didn't say anything.

"That's what I thought."

"Mom, it's complicated."

"How complicated can it be? You broke up with him. It was a mistake. So you **tell** him that."

"It's not that easy."

"I have his cel phone number, you know."

"MOTHER! You would not DARE!"

"I'm tempted." Sophia heard Ellen's sigh on the other end of the phone. "Sophia, you haven't done something this self-destructive since....well, since Scott."

"Breaking up with my boyfriend is self-destructive?"

"Breaking up with your boyfriend on an impulse, and then regretting it later and not doing anything about it, that is what is self destructive. Plus, I know you're not taking care of yourself."

"What?"

"Last time I tried to call you, you weren't there. So, I had a little chat with Elise. You know, Elise, your roommate? She says you're not eating, you're not sleeping, you mope around all day, and you look like something out of the night of the living dead. "

"She's exaggerating."

"Is she. Honey, please go talk to Warren. Fix this."

"Mom, it's unfixable. He deserves better than me."

Ellen took a deep breath. "Honey, do you really think that a guy who put so much hard work into helping you build up your self-esteem would agree with that?"

Sophia inhaled sharply at that.

"That's what I thought," Ellen said. "Think about it, Sophie. You thought you weren't good enough for him once before, remember? He disagreed with you then."

"That's different. I hadn't hurt **him** then."

"You're right about one thing. You **did** hurt him. But staying away from him won't fix that hurt. For either of you."

## OLD FRIENDS (Chapter 58)

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Author's note. The game for chapter 58: spot the Monty Python reference. Caller number ten with the correct answer wins The Spanish Inquisition. Nobody expects The Spanish Inquisition. And, no, that wasn't it.

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"Here." Crash was handing Warren a sandwich. "Got these at a deli in downtown Evanston. Keep 'em in the fridge.

"Damn, Crash, you rule. I love Ruebens."

"I know you do. And this place makes great sandwiches."

Warren took a bite. "Shit, you ain't kidding." Crash handed him a small foil package, which he unrolled. "A kosher pickle, too? You know how to treat a guest, pal o' mine."

It was Saturday, early afternoon. Warren had arrived on Friday night, and Crash had shown him around. They had hit a few campus hotspots and a party or two. Warren had stayed in Jason's room--his roomie was out of town, that's why they had planned this weekend.

"Crash, this is a helluva sandwich."

"Glad you like it. Got it for you, since I know Ruebens are your thing, and a buddy of mine, who likes Ruebens, said that these guys made a great one. I'm partial to their roast beef, here. That's one of the nice things about going to school in a big city like Evanston. Lots of stuff around."

"True. Rather unlike beautiful bucolic Madison, Wisconsin."

"Yeah, but I bet that has its advantages."

"Well, yeah. The campus is gorgeous. The town is very focused towards the college. And, this is Wisconsin, and you know how much I love cheese. And they even have cheese shops."

Crash looked at Warren. "Cheese shops? Shut that bloody bouzouki UP!"

Warren doubled over with laughter, and then said, "I don't care how fucking runny it is!"

They calmed down and Crash took a bite of his sandwich. Then he looked at Warren. "We've talked on the phone a lot, but I was waiting until I saw you in person to ask you this."

"Wassat?" Warren asked through a mouthful of Rueben.

"When the **fuck** are you going to do something about Sophia?"

Warren sighed. "That seems to be a running theme, lately. You aren't the only person to ask that."

"Well?"

"What's to do, Jason? She dumped me."

"Yeah. And regrets it to such a degree that she cries herself to sleep more nights than not. I know that for a fact. And you know my source of information is rock-solid."

"Jessie."

"You got it."

"I don't know any of this, you see? She dumped me. For another guy."

"Oh, yeah, and that other guy turned out to be Scott The Second."

"WHAT?"

"He hit her. And practically raped her--she was, technically, willing, but he did it with such brutality that it felt like a rape."

"Oh Jesus Christ. And she **still** doesn't come to me and tell me any of this."

"Warren, she's ashamed."

"Yeah, she would be. I know Sophia well enough to believe that."

"You have **got** to make the first move. She's tearing herself apart. And you don't need to hear this from me, by the way. My Saturday Afternoon Date is about fifteen minutes away."

"Huh?"

"Jessie calls me every Saturday afternoon. I call her on Wednesday nights. The phone should ring shortly. And **she** can tell you."

Warren took a deep breath. "I don't know if I can do this."

"Sure you can. You must miss her. I know you still love her." Crash grinned. "And you're probably hornier than hell."

"The first two are true. The last one is not. I've been with five different girls since Sophie dumped me."

Crash almost choked on his roast beef. "WHAT???"

"It's true. I can get it anytime I want." He explained about Alexa and her friends.

"Wow. Jessie's gonna love this--you really are the Prep Stud," Jason said incredulously.

"I told Alexa about Jessie giving me that nickname, now Alexa calls me that," Warren smiled.

"So, you've forgotten about Sophia in a hurry, is what you're telling me?"

Warren snorted in derision. "Yeah. Fat fucking chance of that. I'm just using sex to fill a hole that ain't gonna be filled no matter how hard I try, but at least it keeps me from slitting my wrists. And it is fun." He took another bite of his sandwich. "It's ironic. I'm probably living most guys' College freshman fantasies. Unfortunately, it's not mine."

"Yeah."

"Hey, where's the bathroom?"

"Go out the door, turn left, third door on your right."

"Got it."

Warren did his duty, and went back into Jason's room. He found him on the phone.

"He just walked back in," Crash was saying. "Here," he handed Warren the phone.

"PREP STUD!!!!!!!!!"

"SHE-DEVIL!!!! How are you doing, Jessie?"

"Wonderful. How you doin'?"

"Hangin' in there."

"You put up a good front, Warren. How miserable are you, is what I should have asked?"

"Well, you know, Jess. Doing the best I can."

"Yeah. Crash just told me about your extra-cirricular activities. Five different girls in a month? You're trying to live up to that nickname, aren't you?"

Warren laughed. "It's something to do, you know?"

"And you're making lotsa girls real happy, I know, I speak from delicious experience."  
Warren cracked up laughing. "OK, all these girls--is it just sex?"

"Yeah. Well, this one girl, the one who got me into this--Alexa--we **are** good friends. But that's all we are."

"Good. So, what about Sophia?"

"You tell me, Jess. I haven't talked to her in over a month. She dumped me for another guy. I just found out **today**--from Crash--that the other guy turned out to be an asshole."

"Oh, Jesus, did he. Look, Warren, Sophia made a mistake. A big, huge, what-the-hell-have-I-done mistake. I do not know what gets into that girl, but her self-destructive streak is a wonder to behold. She's miserable. Her roommate told me she's losing weight, doesn't sleep, cries all the time, and mopes around all day. She's apparently keeping her grades up, but that's it. I talk to her, and she cries 'I want Warren back!' and when I tell her to go **get** you back, she says that you're too good for her, and she's unworthy, and you can do

better, yadda yadda yadda. Warren, she's my best friend. FUCKING DO SOMETHING! Would you please?"

Warren sighed. The pressure and upset was finally starting to get to him. "Dammit, Jessie, why is it up to me? She dumped me, remember! Why is this up to me?"

"Because you've always been the strong one in that relationship, you know that."

"Yeah. And, Jessie, there are times that it sucks. She fucked up, and I've got to fix it. She single-handedly made my life a living hell because SHE got a Goddamned ITCH and I've got to fix it?" He took a breath. "I'm sorry, Jess, this isn't directed at you. I've been bottling this up for a month."

"I know. Warren, do you still love her?"

"Yes."

"Would you be happier if you guys were still together?"

"Yes."

"Swallow your pride, Warren."

"I see your point, Jess, but it's not just pride. I would be happier if we were still together, yes, but by that I mean if we never had split up. Getting back together, now--I don't know if **that** would be the right thing to do. Especially if I'm the one that has to carry the ball, when I'm not the one that ended it."

"Why does that make a difference?"

"Because, for us to get back together, she has to convince me that she really **wants** to! I'm not going to get back together and look over my shoulder waiting for this to happen again. I can't do it. My feelings have never been in question, here, at least they shouldn't be."

"You weren't faultless in this, Warren. You know you could have pulled your nose out of those textbooks of yours more often."

"I **know** that, Jessie," Warren sighed. "But it was still no reason to destroy everything. I never, ever, ever, for a millisecond even **contemplated** breaking up with her, or losing her. I did not want this. She did."

"I understand, Warren, I do. Think of this, though. Do you want to go through the rest of your life wondering what if?"

"I don't know if that's as bad as going through the rest of my life wondering when she's going to leave again." Warren sighed. "Jess, I'll think about it. OK?"



"OK. Please do. I care about both of you. You belong together. Can I talk to that hunk of a Crash, again?"

"Sure, Jessie. Hey, take care of yourself, OK?"

"You too."

-----

Warren took a walk around campus for a while, to think but also to give Crash some private time on the phone with Jessie.

"You done?" he asked when he got back to Crash's room.

"Just hung up. You missed some good phone sex."

Warren cracked up laughing. "So, what's up with you two, anyway?"

"I just told you. Phone sex. Long distance relationships suck."

"Waitaminnit. I thought you guys didn't **have** a long distance relationship."

"Yeah. That's what we keep telling ourselves. This came up when I talked to her on Wednesday, actually. We had originally decided that, if I was dating or sleeping with someone, she didn't want to know, and vice versa. We were gonna do whatever while we were away, talk on the phone and write to one another, and see where we were every time we got back home. Well, on Wednesday, she asked me if I was dating. I told her the truth--a little, nothing serious, mostly just friends. She told me she had the same thing. We're both free to date. We're both free to do whatever. Neither of us wants to, and we're both crossing days off on a calendar before we're both back home. I compare every woman I meet to Jessie. They all fail. It was a good idea, cutting each other loose. It was even logical. It was also useless." Crash gave Warren a rueful smile.

"Wow. How are you guys handling this?"

"Not bad, all things considered. Hey, we're still free to go out, have a good time, even try to find someone else. I just don't think that's ever going to happen."

"Yeah, but this is just the first semester. Are you going to be able to keep this up for four years?"

"Well, there's a possibility we might not have to. She hates Umass, you know. There's no need for her to come to Northwestern--you don't wanna pay this tuition to go into nursing. But there are other schools she's looking into."

"Really."

"Yeah. Us being apart just makes no sense, to either of us. I love it here, and there aren't too many schools that are better than Northwestern if you want to go into law. She hates it there, and you can study nursing lots of places. The big thing is the money. Most places are going to be more expensive than Umass. But, she's talked to her parents about it. They have a budget, of course, but there are some options."

"That's awesome. I hope it works out all right."

"Yeah. I miss her. Of course, I'm talking to a man whose soulmate lives seven floors above him and they're not fucking speaking."

"Crash, lay off, would you please?"

"All right. I'll say it once more, then I'll shut up. You two belong together. Fix it."

"Someone should tell **her** that."

"Leave that to the She-Devil. Now, let's go to the student union so I can kick your ass at pool."

"That would be a first, pal."

-----

Sophia was in her room, studying, when her phone rang.

"Hello."

"Greetings from Amherst, Massachusetts. Whassap, girl?"

"Hiya, Jess? How you doin'? How's Crash?"

"Great, and great. I just got off the phone with him, actually. Had a nice talk with his weekend visitor."

"He's got a weekend visitor? Who?"

"Well, Evanston, Illinois is not all that far from Madison, Wisconsin, you know."

Sophia took a breath. "Warren."

"Yup. Prep Stud, in all his glory, cavorting around Evanston with the Crashmeister. We had a long talk."

"How's he doing?"

"You **could** go down seven floors and ask him that yourself, you know. How's he doing? He's fucking his way through the University, apparently. Five different girls since you gave him the heave-ho. He let a friend take him to bed, she found out what I already knew--that he is, indeed, the Prep Stud--and now he's got a line forming, because his friend spread the word about his....er...talents."

Sophia paled. Why are you telling me this, Jess, she thought. What she said was, "Good. As long as he's happy."

"Not even a little bit."

"Huh?"

"He's miserable. He just hides it better than you do."

"What?"

"Yeah. It's ironic, if you think about it. He can have his pick of girls to take to bed. He just can't have the only one he wants, the one he's still in love with, because she's sequestered in her room feeling sorry for herself."

"He told you this?"

"Yeah. He's also furious at you, you have to understand that. He just found out **today**--from Crash, and then me, what happened with that asshole you dumped him for. He's upset you never talked to him, never told him, never told him that you made a mistake."

"Shit."

"Shit is right. Now he's fucking his way through med school--or pre-med--and what's going to happen is one of those girls is going to get her hooks in him. She's going to wear down his resistance, and get him to fall in pseudo-love with her, and **then** when you finally come to your senses and try to get him back, it may be too late, because we both know that Warren is as loyal as a puppy. So, what are you going to do about it?"

"What **can** I do? I just hope he finds someone worthy of him."

"Jesus. Do I need to spell this out? The only person he wants is YOU. What can you do about it? He's driving back to Madison tomorrow afternoon. So, tomorrow night, you knock on his door, and you tell him, 'I'm sorry, I made a mistake, I want you back.'"

"I can't. I just can't."

"You can, and you'd better. Before it's too late."

## DOWNBOUND TRAIN (Chapter 59)

After she got off the phone with Jessie, Sophia decided to call Kate.

"What do you mean, you and Dave still haven't done it?"

"We still haven't done it. It's driving me nuts. We can never get alone."

"It's too bad Labor Day weekend didn't work out, that was perfect."

"Yeah, it would have been, if poor Dave hadn't been deathly ill. But, now, we're **never** alone. We don't even mess around much anymore, because someone's always here. Usually Dad. I think he suspects something, and is doing everything he can to head it off at the pass."

"What about my room?"

"Dad declared that off-limits."

"And he won't let you shut the door to your room if Dave is there."

"You got it."

"Kate, if you can hold out until Christmas, we'll work out something. I promise."

"That would be nice. I want him so bad I can taste it."

"How's he handling this?"

"Much better than I am, believe it or not. "

"Really. That's different," Sophia giggled. "How's your relationship holding up under the strain?"

"Perfect, actually. Is yours fixed yet?"

"Don't go there, Kate, OK? I just heard about it from Jessie."

"All right. You know how I feel."

-----

Sophia read for a while, then went down to get supper. After supper, she went back to her room, but she was bored, and upset after the phone call from Jess. Elise had gone home for the weekend, so she was alone. She decided to find a party.

-----

Elise got back to her room about 2pm on Sunday. She walked in, and found Sophia still asleep. Completely naked.

She went over to shake her. "Soph? Sophie? It's two o'clock in the afternoon."

Sophie stirred. "Urp. Ohhhhhhhhh. Elise?"

"Yeah, it's me. Are you OK?"

"I'm not sure."

"What happened?"

"Jack Daniels. Lots of it. Oh God I feel horrible."

"I'll bet. "

"Went to a party last night, intent on drowning my sorrows. Uggh. I think I drank enough to drown twenty peoples' sorrows."

"Uh-huh. Do you know why you don't have a stitch of clothing on?"

Sophia looked down. "Oh shit," She blushed bright red.

Elise laughed. "Don't worry. I won't attack you."

"Thanks," Sophia said dryly. She reached between her legs. "Oh shit. I do believe I got laid last night."

"Who?"

"I have no idea. I don't remember much from last night."

"Jesus Christ, Sophia!"

"Hey, the way my life is, the less I remember, the better off I am. Wonder if I enjoyed myself."

"Sophia, you are a complete mess, you know that?"

"Yup. Get me some clothes, willya? And stop ogling."

"Can't help but ogle, kid. It's a damn shame you're straight."

Sophia giggled. "Sorry." Elise handed her some clothes. "Thanks."

"Sophia, what are you going to do?"

"What?"

"About Warren."

Sophia glared at Elise. "What I'm going to do is murder the next person that asks me what I'm going to do about Warren, OK?"

"Sorry."

"One of the reasons I went out and got shitfaced last night is the tongue-lashing I got over the phone from Jessie."

"What, about Warren?"

"Yeah. She talked to him over the phone, he's visiting Crash. She's trying to get us back together."

"She's a smart girl."

"Ah, who needs Warren when I can go get sloppy drunk and have sex that I don't even remember?"

Elise just shook her head.

-----

Sophia sleepwalked through her classes the next few days. Suddenly, on Wednesday, she was seized with an impulse. She wanted to skate. What the hell, they had ice time on Wednesdays, right? Nobody was using it, or so she thought. She dug her skates out from the bottom of her closet, found one of her practice outfits, and headed to the rink.

She went through the lobby, and headed to the doors leading to the rink itself, when she heard voices.

She peered in. She saw Papa Bear, and a girl that she didn't know, sitting in the stands. On the ice, she saw Warren. She leaned against the door, staying out of sight. Where she was, she could hear what they were saying.

"Here we are, another chapter of Waiting For Sophia." Papa Bear quipped.

"Ah, come on. From what Jessie told me, she's never going to come," Warren pointed out.

"Yeah, cause she's scared. When are you going to take Jessie's advice, and go to her?" Alexa asked him.

"I'm still mulling that one over."

"So, what would you do if she came through that door?" Papa Bear asked him.

"I think about that all the time. I'd probably pull her on the ice, have Alexa cue up 'You'll Be In My Heart', and have her put it on repeat. And skate to it until we both collapsed. Preferably on top of one another." Warren sighed. "It just ain't gonna happen. I heard it through the grapevine that she got extremely shitfaced last Saturday night. It's like, here we go again--you both know of her past. I don't know if I have the energy for this again. If she came to **me**, it would help, because at least I'd know she wants this."

"Jessie **told** you she wants it, from what you told me," Papa Bear pointed out.

"I know. I just don't know what to do. I just wish she'd walk through that door."

Sophia heard all this, plain as day. She almost walked through the door, into the rink, ten times. She didn't. Once they stopped talking, and she heard the music from the Sinatra program that they were supposed to skate this year, she turned and ran from the rink.

When she got back to her room, she was crying. Elise was there.

"What happened? I thought you were going to skate."

"Warren was there."

"So? I'm sure he would have liked to have a partner back."

"He would have. He dreams about me walking through the door. He said so, I heard him."

"SOPHIE! God DAMN! Why didn't you?"

"I don't know. I couldn't. Why couldn't I? Jesus, why couldn't I?"

"Sophia, sit down. You are **shaking**!"

"I'm so scared. I'm scared to get up in the morning. I'm scared to go to bed at night. I'm scared of him. I'm scared of myself. And I don't know why."

## **TRUE LOVE (Chapter 60)**

Warren was eating supper with Papa Bear on Friday night when Alexa came over.

"Got another one for you, Prep Stud. This one's a special case, though."

"OK, I'll bite," Warren said.

"She wants you to take her virginity."

"Huh?"

"Yeah. She used to prattle on about waiting for Mr. Right. Finally, I found out what she really meant. She just wants her first time to be with a nice, gentle guy who will make it good for her. I, of course, immediately thought of you."

"Hmmm. Who is it?"

"Caitlin McDermott, my next door neighbor."

Papa Bear looked up with a start. Alexa didn't catch it, but Warren did.

"The gorgeous red-head?" Warren asked.

"That's her. She wants to do it tomorrow night, but wants to meet you a bit tonight, you know, talk some."

"OK. I'll be up in an hour or so."

"Great." Alexa took off.

When she left, Warren looked at Paul, and said, "OK, Papa Bear. What was that look for?"

"What look?"

"When Alexa said Caitlin's name, you looked like someone had kicked you in the balls."

Papa Bear stared at his food for a couple minutes. Then he said, "I know Caitlin. She's in my English comp class, and she usually goes with the group of us that hits the Student Union on Fridays after class."

"How well you know her?"

"A little. She's a little shy, but we've talked some. She has an unusual sense of humor."

"Not unlike a certain floormate of mine. You got a thing for her, don't you?"

"Yeah. You know that, despite my bluster, I'm shy around girls. I'm as much of a virgin as she is, I've told you that. I've been trying to get the gumption up to ask her out for a month."

"And here I am, being offered a night with her, easy as you please. You must hate me right about now."



Papa Bear looked up, surprised. "NO! I don't hate you, of course not. I just....." he trailed off.

"Don't worry about it."

"What do you mean?"

"Just what I said. Don't worry about it." He got up and tossed his trash in the barrel, leaving Papa Bear wondering exactly what he was going to do.

Warren got back to his room, and thought about what had just happened. He had pretended he was enjoying what he was doing, and on one level he was. He pretended it was harmless, and it probably had been.

This wouldn't be.

He remembered his first time. Would it have been that special if it had been a one-night stand? He didn't think so. Now, he knew he could give Caitlin a better first time than, say, Sophia had had. But, she had been right the first time. She should wait for someone special, no matter what Alexa said.

Plus, no **fucking** way could he do that to Papa Bear.

He thought for a while, and went up to Alexa's room. She was there, as was Caitlin.

After the introductions were made, Warren sat next to Caitlin on the couch.

"Caitlin, I've been thinking.....I can't do this."

"Huh?" Caitlin said.

"HUH?" Alexa said.

"Alexa, you stay out of this. Caitlin, I'm flattered. I also think you're gorgeous. But I can't do this. Your first instincts were right, you know. Your first time **should** be more special than a one night stand with a guy who's trying to run away from what he really wants."

"Conscience attack?" Alexa asked. "I thought I had freed you from those."

"Not entirely, Lex. Caitlin, do you see what I'm saying?"

"Yeah, Warren, I do. And, honestly, I'm touched. But I don't want to wait forever, either. And I'm very shy around guys, so the prospects are not good."

"You're not shy around **me**, it doesn't seem."

She smiled. "Well, that's why a one night stand would be easier. No emotional baggage."

"Let me tell you something. Sex with emotional baggage is better than sex without it."

"Sex without emotional baggage is better than no sex at all," Alexa interjected.

"No, Lex, maybe he's right," Caitlin admitted. "It's difficult though. The guy I have a thing for has had plenty of opportunities to ask me out, and just hasn't."

"Maybe he's as shy as you are."

"I doubt it," Caitlin contended. "He's very outgoing and boisterous. There are a bunch of us that go out after class on Fridays, and he's one of them. He's the life of the party, wickedly funny. We talk quite a bit, but he's never given me the slightest indication that he's interested in me."

Warren smiled inwardly to himself.

"Look, Caitlin," Warren told her, "my best friend at this school is loud and boisterous and funny--and very, very shy about approaching girls he likes. In fact, he was just telling me that he's been mooning over some girl for a month, one that he goes out with in a group every Friday after class, and he hasn't been able to get up the nerve to ask her out. He's crazy about her." He grinned, hoping she'd make the connection.

"Warren," she asked after a minute, "who's your best friend?"

"Paul Herlihy. Affectionately known as Papa Bear," Warren said with a broad smile.

Caitlin looked down, almost afraid to ask this question. "Did he tell you who he wants to ask out?"

"Yes." Warren's grin grew larger. "And that's the other reason I wouldn't feel right going to bed with you. It would kill Papa Bear, the girl he's gaga over in bed with his best friend."

Caitlin's eyes grew wide. "You're kidding."

"Nope." Warren was still grinning. "He has got it bad."

"Damn," Alexa interjected, "I knew you had a thing for someone, but never knew it was Papa Bear."

"Yeah. He's so funny, and sweet. Why is he so shy around girls?"

"I surmise that part of it is self-consciousness about his size," Warren said.

"That just makes him more cuddly." Caitlin giggled. "Listen to me. I'm getting delirious. Now, how do I get him to ask me out?"

"Do it yourself," Warren said.

"Oh, I don't think I can do that."

"Sure you can."

"The only time I ever see him, is with lots of other people around. That would be tough."

"So, go to his room."

"I don't know where he lives."

Warren smiled again. "Across the hall and one door down from me. And I happen to know he's there right now, and I also happen to know his roommate is not. Let's go."

"NOW?"

"The more you think about it, the longer time you have to chicken out. It's real easy. 'Paul, will you go out with me tomorrow night?' Or tonight, even, he has no plans that I know of. He says yes--which he **will**--and you take it from there."

"Oh God. Can I really do this?"

"Yeah, you can. Come on."

"He'll be out in a minute," Alexa said. Caitlin smiled, and went out in the hall. "You're the sweetest guy I know, you know that?" Alexa asked Warren. "That was a good thing you did, for her **and** for Papa Bear."

"Thanks, Lex."

He went out in the hall, and he and Caitlin went to the elevators. They went down, and Warren led Caitlin to Papa Bear's door. "Ready?" he asked her.

"No, but do it anyway." She giggled. "Warren? Thanks."

"You're welcome." He knocked on Papa Bear's door, as Caitlin stood off to the side.

"Lobster breath! Whasssaap?"

"Hiya, Papa Bear. Got someone here looking for you." He stepped away from the door, and Caitlin stepped towards it

"Caitlin?"

"Hi, Paul." Warren crept away from the door, towards his own room.

"What can I do for you?" Paul asked.

She took a deep breath. "I was wondering.....do you have plans tonight?"

"No."

"Would you like to go out with me? Maybe see a movie, get something to eat afterwards?"

Paul was incredulous, but kept his cool. "I'd love to," he managed to squeak out.

"Great! I need to go upstairs and get my coat. Meet you in the lobby in five?"

"Great."

"See you then." She walked off, breathing a giddy sigh of relief.

Papa Bear watched her go, barely believing what had happened. Then he ducked back in his room, and grabbed his own coat and keys and such. Before he headed to the lobby to wait for her, he went to Warren's room.

"Enter."

Paul opened the door. "You are the best. Absolutely the best. How did you pull that off?"

"Easy. She's got it as bad for you as you do for her. So I gave her a little push."

"I owe you for this, pal. Big time."

"Just have a good time."

"I plan on it." With that he left.

Warren sat back in his chair, a satisfied smile on his face. He hadn't felt this good about himself in a while. Good for Papa Bear--he deserved it, and Caitlin seemed like a real sweetie.

Now it was time to do something about his own love life.

He walked out of his room, got on the elevator, and went to the ninth floor. He knocked on Sophia's door.

There was no answer. Fine, he thought to himself, she's out. I'll talk to her tomorrow. He went back to his room, studied for a while, and then hit the sack.

-----  
He woke up the next morning, planning on breakfast and then another try at Sophia's room. But first, he decided to check out the skating newsgroup on the internet. He still read it even though he hadn't posted anything since the breakup.

He scrolled through the subject headers, until he stopped at one. "Oh no."

It read: "Daniels/Kelleher breakup confirmed!"

He clicked on the message. It read;

"I have a good source at the University of Wisconsin. Daniels and Kelleher broke up almost two months ago! Not just on the ice, but off the ice, too. She dumped him for some other guy, then dumped the other guy, and has been sleeping her way through Wisconsin every since. Warren is apparently inconsolable. Let's hope he finds another partner--and another girlfriend--that isn't such a slut!"

The signature was a poster that was known for spreading gossip.

Warren took a deep breath. He was worried about this happening. Nothing stays a secret among the internet skating community for long, and some of them, like this poster, could be downright nasty. He remembered some nasty false rumors about Liz Cushman a year or two ago.

He checked his e-mail, and saw lots of emails from Liz, Christine, Jack, and other friends. He couldn't deal with that now. He threw on his clothes and bounded out the door, headed for Sophia's room.

Elise answered the door. "Warren?"

"Hi Elise. Is Sophia here? I need to talk to her."

"No, she's not." Elise took a deep breath. "Warren, she's in the hospital, in a coma."

"What?"

"She had to be rushed there last night. Alcohol poisoning."

### **BABY STEPS (Chapter61)**

Warren and Elise were in Elise's car, on the way to the hospital.

"Why she does these things to herself....." Warren said.

"I know." Elise sighed. "I should have seen this coming. She's been a mess all week." Elise told him about the previous drunken episode, and about Sophia seeing him at the rink.

"She was there? She heard me? And she still didn't come in?" Warren took a deep breath. "She had the opening of all time. She knew how I was going to react. And she still didn't come in. Why am I even bothering?"

"Warren, you have to understand. When she came back to the room, she was as shook up as I've ever seen a person. She **wanted** to go into that rink, but couldn't. She was scared out of her mind."

"Of what?"

"I don't know. I'm not sure **she** knows. Anyhow, we were in our room after supper last night, and she was reading the internet, and she read **something** that disturbed her."

"I know what it was. That's why I was at your door this morning. Well, one of the reasons. I was going to come up anyway--I tried to come up last night, but you guys weren't there. But I came up so early because I read the thing on the internet. The skating world found out about our breakup, and the person who posted the information only got part of it right, and the message was very unkind to Sophia."

"Aaah. Well, after she read that, she said 'I'm going out'. I had to go to the library. When I came back in a few hours and she still wasn't there, I went looking for her, because I had an idea of where she went--a frat party a friend of ours told us about. Sure enough, she was there, and drunk off her ass. Shortly after I got there, she passed out, I called 911."

"Good fucking thing you went looking for her, Elise."

They pulled up in front of the hospital, and went to the intensive care unit. "They are only going to let one of us in at a time. They usually only let family in, but Sophia named both of us as stand-ins for family, since her family is so far away."

"I know. I named her and Papa Bear."

"Let me go in, and then I'll come get you."

"OK."

Elise walked into the room. Sophia was still tied to all the machines--but she was awake. Her eyes fluttered open, and she gave Elise a weak smile. "Hiya, roomie."

"You're awake!"

"Yeah. I'm going to be fine, they tell me. I managed not to pickle any of my brain. God, I'm so glad you came and found me last night."

"You're right--the guys at that frat house didn't even want me to call 911, they were so worried about being found out."

"They should be thanking you, now, it would have been worse if I had been dead. Which they tell me was a possibility. Oh God, Elise, what am I going to do with myself?"

"Not do this again, for one thing. Please. I don't think my heart can take it."

"Deal."

"I got someone that wants to see you."

"Who?"

"Wait right here, I'll send them in."

Sophia waited expectantly, looking at the door. It was a couple of minutes.

"Warren?"

He walked over to the bed. "Hiya, Pookie. I'm glad you're awake."

"Warren? What are you doing here?"

"I went looking for you this morning. After I read that stuff on the newsgroup."

"Oh." She looked up at him. "You went looking for me because of that?"

"Well, actually, I went looking for you last night, too. Just to talk. And I was going to try again this morning. I went to your room earlier than I had planned, though, because of the newsgroup."

"You went looking for me last night?"

"Yeah."

"Shit. And I was out trying to slowly kill myself."

"Sophie, Sophie, Sophie. What **are** we going to do with you?"

She sighed. "I read the newsgroup, and I just lost it. What horrible things to read about yourself in a public forum. Especially when every word of it is true."

"Bullshit, Sophia, you're **not** a slut. Have you been sleeping your way through Wisconsin?"

"No." She managed to smile at him. "From what Jessie tells me, **you** have been, though."

"Oops. She told you that?"

"Yeah. She was trying to whip my behind into trying to get you back, by warning me that you had other options."

"Only for sex, not for anything else."

"Warren, you don't need to explain yourself. I set you free, not the other way around."

"I turned one down last night." He told her about Caitlin and Papa Bear.

"Ah, so me dumping you didn't completely obliterate your conscience. Good for Papa Bear. I hope true love works out."

"I always tend to hope that myself." She looked up, startled, right into his eyes. He looked back. "Sophie? Why did you run away from the ice rink on Wednesday, when you heard what I was saying?"

"Elise told you about that?" Warren nodded. Sophia thought for a minute. "I don't know. I just don't know. It was like blind, irrational terror, or something."

"Why did you break up with me in the first place?"

"I don't know that, either. Warren, I'm so, so sorry. I'm so sorry for what I did. Can you ever forgive me?"

"Of course, Pookie, all you had to do was ask." Sophia smiled. Warren took a deep breath. "Sophia, I love you. I never stopped. I want to see if we can fix this, and get back together."

Sophia smiled wider. "I want that, too."

"But I don't think we can just pick up where we left off. Too much has happened."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean, that I just asked you two questions. You answered both of them with 'I don't know'. I think you need to figure out the answers to those two questions. "

"You're right." She thought for a minute. Her voice got softer. "I just don't know if I can do this alone."

"You have to."



"Where does this leave us, then? Are you going to walk back out that door and leave me to sort through my addled mind by myself?"

"No," he smiled at her. "I'll be here. I just don't want to rush back into anything." He took a deep breath. "Look, Sophia, if we get back together, I don't want to be looking over my shoulder."

"You won't, I can promise you that. The past six weeks will be a painful reminder of what happens when I do stupid things."

"I believe you. You still need to figure out **why** you did it in the first place."

"Part of it was **you**, you know. You blew me off for three weeks," she said angrily.

"I know. And I'm sorry."

"You should be!" She took a deep breath. "Shit, why the hell am I getting mad at **you**?"

"Because you have a good reason to. Sophia, I never claimed to be perfect. I know damn well that I could have handled those first three weeks, and my schoolwork, better than I did."

Sophia gave him a little grin. "Glad to know I'm not the only one that's been feeling guilty."

"No, you aren't."

"But, you're right. That wasn't the only reason. If it was, I overreacted to an extreme. I just don't know."

Just then, a nurse came in. "Sophia?"

"Yes?"

"Two things. We're transferring you to a regular room in a bit. We're going to keep you overnight, and, if everything looks OK, you'll be able to leave tomorrow."

"OK."

"Second thing is this: we have a psychiatrist that we bring in, if we think she's needed. Her name is Mary Derocher. She's seen your file, and would like to talk to you."

Sophia thought for a minute, then made a decision. "Yes. Yes, I think that would be a very good idea. I need help."

"Wow, that was easy," the nurse smiled.

"We've been talking about that before you came in."

"Good. I'll tell Mary."

-----

Warren volunteered to go pick Sophia up at the hospital Sunday at noon. Elise was glad to let him--she had had plans, and thought she was going to have to cancel them.

She was still weak, so the doctor had told her to try to stay in bed for the rest of Sunday. She was allowed to go to class on Monday.

"You need anything?" Warren asked her after she had gotten into bed.

"I need my books. I have to study."

Warren grabbed them and brought them over to her. "Anything else?"

"Actually, if you don't mind, a pot of tea would be nice."

"I don't mind at all," Warren smiled at her. He found the Mrs. Tea maker she had with her, and her tin of Earl Grey, and started the tea.

"So, did you talk to that psychiatrist?" he asked her.

"Yeah. I'm going to see her three times a week, Monday, Wednesday and Friday, at quarter to three, for an hour each time."

"Good. Did you call your mother?"

Sophia sighed. "Yeah. Called her from the hospital yesterday. She freaked, but then calmed down a little bit. Called Jessie, too. Mom was going to call Dad for me."

The tea was done, so Warren poured her a cup, adding cream and sugar the way she liked it.

"Your tea, Madame. Listen, I have a pile of studying to do."

"That's fine, I'll be OK."

"No, no. I'm not leaving. I'm just going to get my books. You need someone here with you today, and Elise is gone until tonight, so I'll be right back."

She smiled at him. "Thanks, Warren."

He smiled back, and went downstairs to fetch his books.

-----  
They studied all afternoon, occasionally chatting a bit about not much, listening to the Beatles. It got to be about 5:30, and Warren looked up from his textbook. "Hey, I'm starving. Have you gotten any appetite back yet?"

"Yeah," Sophia said. "A little. They told me to stick to soup and stuff, though."

"Soup, a little toast, that kind of thing?"

"Yeah."

"Give me your meal card. I should be able to swing this. I'll bring it back up."

"OK.." She handed the meal card over. He left, and came back up about fifteen minutes later, with chicken soup and toast for her, and a burger for himself.

"Here you go, Pookie."

"Thanks, Snugglebear." She beamed at him, then got serious. "I was thinking while you were gone. I just keep putting you in situations where you need to take care of me, don't I?"

"I suppose." He took a bite out of the burger. Then he grinned. "At least this time I didn't have to clean up any vomit."

Sophia giggled, and then said "I **am** trying to be serious. I can't help but think that I cause you more problems than I'm worth."

"Yeah, and that's your biggest problem, Sophia. That you think that. That's why you let me stew in my own misery for six weeks instead of telling me you had made a mistake. Don't you understand that?"

"I'm not sure."

"Stop doing my thinking for me. If you caused me more problems than you were worth, I wouldn't **be** here. I wouldn't do this. OK?"

"OK," she smiled at him.

They finished their meal in silence, and Warren stayed with her late into the night.

-----

Sophia went to class Monday, and felt OK. She met with Mary Monday afternoon. Warren's schedule that week was tough--he had exams in almost every class, and a paper due in English Comp, as it was the week before Thanksgiving--but he made sure he saw

her every day. Wednesday, after their classes and before her session with Mary, they ate lunch.

"So how are you feeling?" Warren asked her.

"Physically? Perfectly fine. All recovered."

"Good."

She went to her session with Mary that afternoon. They were still talking about her early years, what happened with Scott and some of the others. Sophia had mentioned Warren, but Mary and she were leading up to that.

When her session ended, she walked out of Mary's office, and was surprised to see Warren standing there.

"Hi, Warren. What are you doing here?"

"The second part of your therapy."

"Huh? Oh, this is Mary. Mary, this is Warren." They shook. "Now, what do you mean, second part of my therapy?"

"The physical part. Sophia, you look like hell. You've lost weight. Your muscle tone is gone."

"Gee, thanks."

"Don't mention it. You need to get your ass in gear. Nationals is in less than two months, you know."

"Nationals?"

"Nationals." He held up the bag that contained her skates. "Remember, ice dancing? Our ice time starts in fifteen minutes. I'm sick of not having a partner. Let's go."

Sophia beamed. "You still want to skate with me? Even though our relationship is still, kind of, you know....."

"Yes, I still want to skate with you. Like I said, therapy. Maybe not just physical therapy, either." He held up another bag. "I even brought that sexy black practice dress of yours."

"You rascal. Let's go."

They practiced. It was ragged, and Sophia was clearly out of shape, but it felt good, to both of them.

## SOMETHING OLD, SOMETHING NEW (Chapter 62)

"So, we're up to the point where you met Warren." Mary was saying. It was the beginning of their Friday session.

"Yeah. We were just friends." Sophia told her a bit about how their friendship developed.

"You seem to have let him in pretty quickly."

"I don't know if I let him in or he burrowed his way in," Sophia laughed. "For some reason, though, I trusted him almost immediately. You have to know him. There's something about him. Everybody that knows him trusts him, I found out later. "

"OK. When did you know you were starting to think of him as more than a friend?"

"I'm not sure. I was so fucked up then, I wasn't sure what I was thinking. I think I started to feel that way long before I admitted it to myself."

"Do you know why your feelings for him developed?"

"It started because of the way he treated me. I had never been treated like that, not even from people that claimed to love me. Now, with some people--like my Mother--it was because I didn't give them the **chance** to treat me well. But, comparing Warren to every boyfriend I had ever had at that point, he treated me miles better. I think that was the beginning. He just made me feel....loved. I hadn't felt loved in a long time."

"I think that was the first inkling, but I wasn't admitting it to myself yet. What happened after that was that I got to know him better and better. Everything I saw, I liked, you know?"

They talked a little about how their relationship had developed, and what the first three-plus years were like.

"It sounds almost idyllic, Sophia," Mary commented.

"Yeah, it was."

"OK, so you have this wonderful relationship with this wonderful guy. You come out here, and in three weeks, you end it."

"Yeah."

"Why?"

"I don't know."

"What was going through your mind?"

"Lots of things. First of all, there was another guy." She explained about Eduardo.

"But that wasn't enough to break you guys up, was it? It shouldn't have been."

"No. Although I think I tried to convince myself that it was. I hadn't seen Warren almost at all in three weeks. We got here, and his nose got buried in a textbook. He had a hard time adjusting to his workload."

"And you didn't take that well."

"No I didn't."

"Did you believe him, that he had that much work?"

"That's a good question. You have to understand, Warren is incredibly gifted academically. He graduated third in his high school class, from a very tough school, and still made time for me, and for our ice dancing, and he worked every year except Senior, because that's when our ice dancing really took off. He juggled everything masterfully, for the three and a half school years I knew him. To see him overwhelmed by schoolwork was a very new experience."

"And you got suspicious that there was more to it."

"Maybe I did. Subconsciously, I think I did. My brain **knew** that Warren is as honest as the day is long, and wouldn't hurt me if his life depended on it. I don't know. Something inside me just....panicked."

"And Eduardo was coming on strong."

"Real strong. Sending me love notes, romancing me, grabbing me in the hall outside class. Plus I had girls on my floor telling me I was nuts for staying with a high school boyfriend in college, that I should be living it up. It was too much."

"So you broke up with him. Did that ever feel **right**?"

Sophia thought. "No. It never did. It felt necessary." She turned her head, and gazed out the window. "But I still don't know **why** it felt necessary."

-----

Warren called Sophia up on Saturday afternoon and asked her on a real, honest-to-goodness **date**. She eagerly accepted. They went to a movie and for some Chinese food afterwards, and had a great time. He even kissed her goodnight. She told him that Mary had asked him to come to their next session on Monday, and he agreed.

Sunday, Warren went to her door early in the morning. "You ready to skate?"

"You betcha!"

"Hey, can I come watch?" Elise asked.

"Sure!" Sophia said. "As long as you realize I'm way out of shape and we're not very good at the moment."

Elsie laughed. "I'll cut you some slack."

"You won't be the only spectator there. I wanted a chance to talk to you about this, Soph. Papa Bear and Caitlin wanted to come."

"Cool."

Warren took a deep breath. "And Alexa. I actually asked her to come. She's going to help us out with something."

"Alexa's the main one you've been sleeping with, right?" Sophia asked him.

"Yeah. But, first and foremost, she's a friend. She's known about you all along, you know. And she comes watch me skate a lot--she likes to watch. And she's really looking forward to watching us skate together."

"OK. Fine. I can handle this."

When the three of them got to the rink, Papa Bear, Caitlin, and Alexa were already there.

"Hi Kids!" Warren yelled as he and Sophia stepped onto the ice. Sophia looked at them--Alexa, really--a bit warily. Elise went around and sat with them, introducing herself.

Warren skated over to the boards, and put the boombox they used for their music in front of Alexa. "Got the camera, Lex?"

"Sure do."

"Camera?" Sophia asked.

"Alexa's got a digital camera."

Alexa smiled at her. "Warren and I talked about this. We've got a plan, and I'm going to use this digital camera to get the internet vultures off of your back."

"All will be revealed, I promise," Warren told her.

"OK."

"Now. Sinatra?" Warren asked her.

"Sure. Let's see how much we remember."

Alexa cued up the music for them, and they went through it a couple of times, isolating certain parts, and working on moves. It wasn't going particularly well.

"No!" Sophia yelled. "Not like that. Closer here, and then the turn. You're too far away."

A few minutes later: "No, Warren, get **in** here! This is a tight hold, don't you remember?"

"I guess not."

They did a few more moves. "Warren, your arm is supposed to be around my waist from the back. Close into me."

A few more moves. Sophia abruptly skated away from Warren. "Dammit, Warren, this is not going to work!"

"What isn't going to work?"

"You're afraid to get close to me! You keep messing up the choreography by pulling away from me!"

"Sophia, we haven't done this choreography in three months. I'm just forgetting."

"Since when do I have a better memory than you do?"

"Better memory for **dance steps**? Since forever!" He turned to their four spectators, who were watching with increasing dismay. "I remember everything else in life better than she does, except choreography. Apparently, I have a better memory about her having a better memory for choreography." He grinned at his friends, and then grinned at Sophia. He succeeded in breaking the tension.

"You're right," Sophia admitted with a smile. Then she dropped the smile, and looked down at her hands. "It just seemed like you were pulling away from me. I don't mind taking our time with our relationship, but we can't do that on the ice."

"I'm not. And I'll prove it to you. Alexa? Cue up track two, if you please." He led Sophia to the middle of the ice. "Oh, and Lex? Get that camera ready. You get to take pictures of a command performance of a program that won a National silver medal."

Sophia smiled. Then Alexa started the music. Glenn Miller filled the rink.



They flew through their old free dance like they had done it yesterday, instead of months ago. They were a bit ragged, but that was to be expected. It wasn't perfect. It was a lot better at Nationals, or Worlds. But, for both of them, it **felt** fantastic. They both skated the whole program with wide smiles on their faces. And, when they got to the final bit, where they moved in close and tight, Warren proved what he had said.

The audience of four clapped as loud as they were able. Sophia and Warren took mock bows, smiling and laughing.

"Oh my God, I can't tell you how much I missed that," Sophia said to him.

"Me too," Warren admitted.

"Warren, you know what?" Alexa said. "You dance like you make love."

Sophia glared at her. Warren said, "How so?"

Alexa smiled. "The world revolves around your partner. I kept trying to watch both of you, but my eyes were glued to Sophia, and you made sure of that. God, you guys are good."

Sophia's expression softened into a smile. "Yeah, it's actually called partnering. And he's the best in the world at it."

Alexa grinned at her. "That's two things he's the best in the world at." Sophia gaped at her. She just laughed.

-----

They all ended up going to brunch together. Sophia and Warren went up to drop off their skates.

"Alexa makes you a bit uncomfortable." Warren said.

"Well.....maybe a little. She has more recent memories of sleeping with you than I do. I know why we're not jumping back into a physical relationship, and I agree with it. But.....you know....."

"I'd tell her to cool off the comments, but she won't listen to me, so why bother? That's just the way she is. She has a very unique attitude towards sex."

"How so?"

"She's not possessive about it at all, and can be very uncomprehending that other people are. And she talks about it like she was talking about how good the omelet is."

"In other words, if she talks about sleeping with you, and I get all bent out of shape about it, she won't understand why."

"Right. Listen, we can blow them off and go elsewhere, if this makes you uncomfortable."

"No. I just won't get all bent out of shape about it. Do you love her?"

"No."

"If you never have sex with her again, will it bug you?"

"No."

"Will it bug **her**?"

"If it's because you and I are trying to work through our problems, no. Not even a little bit. She said to me once, 'You and I are friends. I want my friends to be happy. You won't be happy with anyone other than Sophia. End of story.'"

"That's a very generous attitude to have, actually."

They got down to the dining hall. Their friends were already there, talking as they approached with their food.

"Well, that's why Alexa wanted me to sleep with him," Caitlin was saying to Elise. "Not that I'm at all upset by the way things turned out," she said, cuddling into Papa Bear's side.

"He's the best lover I've ever had. At least, the best male one. And I've had quite a few," Alexa was saying. Sophia and Warren sat down. "Ain't that right, Sophia? Now that you guys are back in the saddle, you must be very satisfied."

Sophia looked down, not saying anything. Warren said, "Actually, we've postponed having a physical relationship again until we can repair our emotional one."

Alexa looked down, dismayed. "Oh. Well, then, I'll just shut my big fat fucking mouth."

"It's OK," Sophia smiled at her. "Really. Anticipation, and all that. Besides, I have a good memory."

Alexa laughed, relieved.

"Waitaminnit," Warren said. "Did you say, a minute ago, best **male** lover?"

Alexa gave him an impish grin. "Did I never tell you that I was bi?"

"No!" Warren cracked up.

"Oops. Must have slipped my mind. But, yeah, I am."

"HMMMMMMMM" Elise said from next to her, giving her an appraising look.

"Watch out, Alexa," Sophia laughed. "I think my roomie sees something she likes."

Alexa looked at Elise. "You're.....?"

"Yes, I am," Elise said with a big grin.

"I think I'm in trouble." Alexa was smiling.

-----

Warren and Sophia were studying in Sophia's room later that day.

"Do you know where my roommate is right now?" Sophia asked him.

"No. Where?"

"With Alexa." She giggled.

"You're kidding."

"Nope. I know Elise's type, and, believe me, Alexa is **it**. I was seeing that gleam in Elise's eye **before** Alexa said she was bi."

"This is very funny, you know that?"

"What, that you passed on your old sex buddy to your past-and-future girlfriend's roommate?"

"Exactly!"

Sophia smiled to herself, for more reasons than one.

-----

Sophia's phone rang. "Hey, it's Elise. Is Warren there?"

"Yeah."

"I'm in Alexa's room. She wants both of you to come down."

"OK."

They went down, and found Alexa on the computer.

"All right, this is the deal. I have a website, and I set up a special page for these." She showed Warren and Alexa the pictures she had taken. They looked great.

"OK. Warren told me how to subscribe to the newsgroup and the mailing list. Here's the post I'm going to send out, with a pointer to the URL that I have those pictures on."

SUBJECT: Daniels and Kelleher **not** split up!

MESSAGE: I'm a good friend of Warren and Sophia. I go to Wisconsin with them. They have been working on some problems in their off-ice relationship, but they have **not** split up as a dance team. In fact, I have some photos of them practicing that I took **today**. They are fine on the ice, and their off-ice problems are being resolved. They plan to be at Nationals.

"Well, is that good?" Alexa asked.

"Perfect," Warren said.

"Yeah, what he said. Thanks, Alexa." Sophia smiled at her.

"Anytime."

### WARREN EXPLODES (Chapter 63)

Sophia had just gotten to Mary's office on Monday, and had settled in a chair. "I wonder where Warren is?" she asked, just as her cell phone rang.

"Hiya, Sophie, it's Warren.."

"Where are you?"

"That's why I'm calling. I'm going to be a few minutes late."

"WHAT? Why? Warren, we're sitting here waiting for you! I only have an hour per session, and I expected you to be here! This is important! What is so damn important that you would be late? I can't **believe**....."

"Sophia!" Mary interjected.

Sophia caught herself. "Warren?" she said into her cell phone. "Oh shit, he hung up."

"I would have, too! Why were you yelling at him?" Mary said.

"He's late."

"Did he say why he's late?"

Sophia looked down at her hands. "I never gave him a chance to say." She looked at the cell phone, and dialed Warren's number. To her surprise, he answered.

"What?" he barked.

"I'm sorry. I had no right to do that."

"Fine."

"Are you still coming?"

"Yes. I'll be there in a few minutes." He hung up.

"Sophia, what just happened?" Mary asked her.

"I don't know. He said he was going to be late, and I just.....I don't know. I panicked. I got an image of him in bed with Alexa or some other girl, or with his nose in a textbook, ignoring me, and I just.....lost it."

Just then the door opened, and Warren stumbled in. On a crutch, with one of his ankles taped up.

"Oh Jesus, Warren! What happened?" Sophia asked.

Mary had set up two chairs in front of her, for the two of them, and Sophia was sitting in one, but Warren did not take the other, instead plopping on the couch against the wall.

"I sprained my ankle, walking across the quad. Slipped on some ice. And the campus police brought me up here, so I didn't have a car, so I had to hobble a block from the emergency room to this building. And, on top of that, I get yelled at."

"Warren, I really am sorry. I just expected....."

"That's right. You expected. You and every other fucking person in my life. Do you know the first thing my mother says to me when she calls? 'Are you keeping your grades up?' Then, it's 'Have you fixed things with Sophia yet?' **Everybody** asks me that! Like it's my fucking responsibility to fix what **you** broke! And, when I **do**--and end up taking care of you after **another** drunken binge in the bargain--I get yelled at because I'm a few minutes late. And I don't say a Goddamned thing because you are such a china doll that if I say anything, you'll break. Between you, and my schoolwork, and everybody's expectations of me--even to the point of all my friends asking me for advice--I am holding up the weight of the fucking world. And I can **not** do it anymore."

Sophia looked stunned. Warren took a breath, and turned to her. "I am here for **you**. This is **your** problem, not mine. I do **not** deserve to be yelled at. I came very close to turning around and going back to the dorm. I've had it."

"I really am sorry," Sophia said in a very small voice.

"Warren, how long have you been holding **that** in?" Mary asked him.

"Quite a while. My mother got it over the phone last night," he managed to smile a little at that.

"Do you think I expect too much of you?" Sophia asked.

"Sometimes."

"You're probably right," Sophia agreed.

"Do you ask anything from her?" Mary asked.

Sophia interjected. "No, he doesn't. Very little. Maybe that's the problem, maybe you should ask more from me."

Warren let out an exasperated sigh. "The **last** time I.....forget that, I've said enough."

"No, Warren. Say it," Sophia implored.

"Warren, this is the time and place to get it all out," Mary agreed.

"OK. The last time I asked something of you was at the beginning of the semester, when I asked you to cut me some slack while I got used to the workload. And we all know where **that** got me. And, I know you well enough, Sophia, to know that **that** had something to do with your expectations of me, because you didn't expect me to have problems with schoolwork. The Prep Genius, having problems with schoolwork? Never. He **must** be hiding something."

"You're right," Sophia agreed. "That's exactly what I was thinking."

"Warren," Mary asked, "are you bitter or resentful about Sophia breaking up with you?"

"Oh, you betcha."

Sophia looked at him, stunned.

"Still?" Mary asked.

"It was getting better. Screaming at me over the phone did **not** help."

"Then, why are you here?" Mary asked. "Why are you still willing to work things out?"

"Because I still love her. That never changed, not for a second. And because I still think it's worth it."

Sophia relaxed. "Thanks, Warren. I needed to hear that."

Warren smiled at her, and got up and hobbled to the chair next to her.

"All right," Mary said. "Warren, you still think you can work things out?"

"Yes."

"Good. Now, we need to talk about the breakup. Sophia, over our past three sessions, has told me a lot about her history, both with you, and before you, Warren. There's a pattern here., and what Warren just went off about has a lot to do with it. Sophia, why did you go out with Scott?"

"Because he asked me, and I had been without for a while."

"Did you ever think he was any good for you?"

"Deep down inside, probably not."

"So, you panicked, and did something self-destructive."

"That makes sense."

"And who pulled your ass out of the fire?"

Sophia smiled at Warren. "Mister Wonderful over here."

"Right. Now, you told me about your first fight. This time, Warren didn't perform to your expectations. You panicked, and did something self-destructive--you got sloppy drunk. And who pulled your ass out of the fire again?"

"Now, this breakup. Again, Warren was not meeting your expectations. And you panicked. And did something self-destructive--Eduardo--and waited for Warren to bail you out again. Even when he gave you a golden opportunity to help yourself, at the ice rink, you panicked even worse--and then went and did something **more** self-destructive, which **finally** got Warren's attention. Your relationship hums merrily along as long as things are OK. When you hit a rough spot, Sophia, you panic. When you panic you do something self-destructive. Now, this behavior predates Warren. You are still trying to get the attention you never got from your Dad, that you didn't get enough of from your Mom, and that you didn't get from your first boyfriends."

Sophia looked stunned. "Oh my God." She took a deep breath. Warren grabbed her hand, and she looked at him with a grateful smile.

"You did it today. Warren didn't meet your expectations, and you lashed out, because you panicked."

"Why do I do it to **Warren**, though? That's what I don't understand."

"Because you know, deep down in your heart, that I'll keep coming back for more," Warren said softly.

"Huh?" Sophia asked.

"Did you ever have any doubt that I'd try to fix things?"

"Yeah, of course I did. I thought I wrecked things forever."

"Maybe consciously, and maybe afterwards. But not while you were doing it, I don't think, especially subconsciously," Warren said.

"I don't know," Sophia said. "Did **you** always know you'd try to fix things?"

"I don't know, because I believed up until fairly recently that you had truly left me for another guy, and were probably still with him. I always hoped, I know that. And, yeah, I was playing the 'She's got to fix it' game for a while but, after I realized that you weren't with anyone else and regretted the breakup--yeah, after that I knew it was just a matter of time."

"After I hurt you that much? You just said you were bitter and resentful."

"Yeah, I was." Warren took a deep breath. "I can't think of much that you could do to me to truly make me give up, or to ever make me leave. That's probably what hurt the most."

Sophia was stunned. She just looked at Warren, unable to say anything.

Mary picked up the conversation. "Why do you say that, Warren? What hurt the most?"

"When she broke up with me...." Warren stumbled a little bit. "I couldn't do that. I don't think I could ever do that. So, when she did it.....I guess I realized that she doesn't love me as much as I love her."

"That's not true," Sophia half-whispered.

"Warren, I don't think it **is** necessarily true. Because of what we've talked about here. Sophia's got a problem. She's got a problem because of a past that has nothing to do with you. Unfortunately, you are the recipient of the worst of it."



"Warren," Sophia asked him, "had you ever doubted how I feel before this happened?"

"No," he smiled.

"Good. Because you **shouldn't**. What's in question here is how I deal with problems in my life, not the depth of my feelings for you. They are **not** in question. They never were, even when I broke up with you. I **beg** you to believe me."

"I'll try, that's all I can promise."

She smiled at him. "That's good enough."

"Well, let's end on a good note," Mary smiled. "Are you guys going back home for Thanksgiving?"

"No."

"OK. Sophia, I will see you Wednesday. Warren, could you come again on Friday with her?"

"Sure."

Sophia got up, and Warren struggled to get out of the chair on his injured ankle. "Damn, that hurts!"

"Did they give you anything for the pain?" Mary asked.

"Yeah, but I haven't taken it yet. I didn't want to get all loopy in the middle of this." Warren smiled.

"They only gave you one crutch?" Mary asked.

"They said that was easier, since one of my legs is fine. I'm not so sure, though."

"Come on, Snugglebear." Sophia grabbed the arm that wasn't holding the crutch. They made their way through the lobby and into the elevator.

"Shit!" Warren said as they got out of the elevator on the ground floor. "My car's at the dorm."

"We'll have to take the shuttlebus, then." Sophia grabbed his arm again. "Come on, I'll help."

They got out to the shuttlebus stop, and Sophia helped Warren get up the stairs, and into a seat. They rode to their dorm in silence, holding hands. Sophia helped him get out of the bus, and then helped him up the long flight of stairs to the dorm lobby.

"Come on, Warren. Lean on my arm. I'm not a china doll **physically**, you know."

He smiled at her. "I do know that."

They made it up the steps, and through the lobby, down Warren's hall.

"Jesus! What the hell did you do?" asked the approaching Papa Bear.

"Slipped on ice and sprained my ankle."

"You clumsy oaf," Papa Bear teased.

"Yeah, this from a man who can knock over a shelf just by breathing on it."

"Yeah, but I never ended up on crutches and all taped up because of it. Take care of the oaf, would you please, Sophia?"

"Absolutely."

She helped him into his room. "Where's Tim?"

"Went home for Thanksgiving already, blew off today and tomorrow's classes."

"OK." She settled him on his bed. "You sit tight, I'll be right back."

She returned a few minutes later, with a duffel bag. "OK. You hungry?"

"Yeah. What's in the duffel bag?"

"My stuff. You want supper?"

"Yeah." He started to get up.

"Sit down. Off that ankle, mister. Give me your food card."

He handed it over, but said, "I don't know what the menu is tonight."

"Relax, I know what you like. Back in a jiffy," and she was off again.

She returned soon with the food. She gave Warren his--she was right, it was all stuff he liked--and sat at his desk to eat hers.

"Done?" she said after a while.

"Yeah. Thanks, Sophia."

"Here. Take one." She handed over the pain pills. He took one, while she went rummaging through his drawers. She grabbed a tee-shirt and sweatpants, his usual sleeping attire. "Put these on, before you get groggy." He looked up at her, bemused, but took the clothes. He managed to get his clothes off without getting out of bed.

"Man, I forgot what a hunk you are," Sophia said.

Warren laughed, and put the tee-shirt and sweatpants on. Sophia went to her duffel bag and took out a flannel nightgown.

"Your nightgown?"

"Yeah. I'm staying here tonight. I figured I'd get you doped up on pain pills and take advantage of you."

Warren laughed. "Honey, once that pain pill hits, there ain't gonna be nothing there to take advantage **of**."

"I know," she giggled. "So you don't have to worry about me breaking your 'no physical stuff for now' rule. You need someone here with you, is all." She stripped out of her clothes.

"Speaking of forgetting what a beautiful specimen you are....."

She smiled at him, and slipped the nightgown on. Then she went to his stereo and turned on some music. "Book?" she asked him.

"Yeah, give me that Vonnegut on my desk, please." She did, and pulled one of her own out of the duffel bag. She sat in the chair at his desk, and they read silently for a while.

"Warren?" she said suddenly.

"Hmmp?" The pain pills had started to kick in.

"I love you."

"Love you too, Pookie. Whassat for?"

"No reason." She looked down. "Maybe if I say it enough, you'll start to believe it again."

"Ah, fuckit. 'Sokay, Sophie. You don't have to prove it. I was just hurt, is all."

"I know. I do love you, though. And I like saying it."

"I like hearing it." He thought for a minute. "I got a problem."

"What's that?"

"I really really gotta pee."

Sophie giggled, and got up out of the chair. She grabbed Warren's crutch and handed it to him. "Sit up in the bed. Now, one hand on the crutch, one hand on my shoulder, and up." He managed.

With his ankle and with the grogginess of the pain pills, getting to the bathroom was an adventure. They were halfway there, and Sophia was already in stitches at their halting efforts.

"Shit, I should just **carry** you," she laughed.

"You carry me, huh? Who the hell do you think you are, Marina Anissina?"

She laughed louder. "I don't think so. You'd have to grow your hair a hell of a lot to be Gwendal Peizerat, there, Snugglebear."

"Too true." They reached the bathroom. Sophia opened the door. "This is a men's bathroom, sweetie."

"I know. Is there anyone else in here? Then shut up." She helped him over to the urinals and waited until he was done, then helped him back in the room.

After she got him back in bed, she went and fetched herself a coke from his fridge. "You know what, Warren?"

"What?"

"It feels very, very good to be able to help **you** out for a change."

"You want I should vomit so you can clean me up?"

She cracked up. "Thanks, but I think I'll pass."

"C'mere," he waggled his finger at her. Smiling, she sat down next to him on the bed. He reached around her shoulders, leaned in, and kissed her.

"Oh, I needed that," she whispered after they broke the kiss.

"I could tell," he teased. "I did, too." He brought his arms from around her shoulders, and grabbed his head. "I am definitely loopy. I need to lie down."

"Fine, get me all hot and bothered with that kiss, then pass out on me. Fine."

"Consider it an IOU."

"I'll hold you to that." She climbed over him, and lie down behind him, getting under the covers.

"These beds are too small for two people, you know that?" Sophia said.

"Snuggle in closer, Pookie, I don't bite."

She laughed, and wrapped her arms around his chest, snuggling into his back.

"I love you, Warren."

"You just keep saying that. I love you, too."

They were asleep in no time.

### **MULTIPLE EXPLOSIONS (Chapter 64)**

Sophia stayed with Warren all day Tuesday, and spent the night again. It wasn't easy. Warren alternated between being zonked out on the painkillers, and being cranky and insufferable. Sophia grinned and beared it, knowing that being stuck in bed and in pain was no picnic.

By the time Wednesday rolled around Warren was a bit more mobile, but not very. He was still a complete bear, and Sophia still stayed with him and took care of him. She went to her appointment with Mary in the late afternoon, and then went to the pizza place and got one for them for supper.

When she got back to Warren's floor, she saw him hobbling down the hall, back from the bathroom, without his crutch.

"Jesus, Warren, what are you doing? You should at least be using your crutch."

"Yes, Mother."

"Oh, cut it out. C'mere, let me take your hand."

"I'm FINE, dammit, Sophia! Get out of my way!" She just sighed and opened the door for him.

He settled back on the bed, and she doled out the pizza. They ate in silence.

After they were done, she sat next to him on the bed. "So, what do you want to do tonight?"

"Nothing. Nothing at all," he barked.

"Jesus Christ, Warren, do you know you're a bitch when you're hurt?" Sophia said.

"Of course I am! I'm cooped up, and I've been in pain for two days."

"Oh, is that why you took my head off at Mary's office on Monday?"

'Oh, you richly deserved that, Sophia. You took my head off, too, remember?"

They were really going at it now.

"Warren, I'm a girl, remember? You're supposed to cut me a little slack when I have PMS."

"PMS?" Warren snorted. "Come on, Sophia, I've known you for almost four years, and I have **never** heard you complain about PMS! What, did you just get it now all of a sudden?"

"NO, you asshole! It didn't used to bother me, because the pressure was off because I was GETTING LAID regularly!"

"IS THAT YOUR BIG FUCKING PROBLEM?"

"YES, IT IS, GODDAMMIT!!!"

"FINE! I CAN FIX THAT!" And with that, Warren grabbed her, pulled her on top of him, and kissed her, hard.

At first, she was surprised, then she relaxed and responded to his urgent, demanding kiss with an urgency of her own. Her sweater and bra were off in a flash, and his hands went to her breasts, as they continued their kiss. Then she felt his hands at the snap to her jeans. She lifted up to help him, and the jeans and her panties were in a heap besides the bed in no time. She reached for Warren's jeans. As she slipped them off of him, she felt his finger slide into her pussy. She couldn't believe how wet she was. She let out a low moan into his lips as he fingered her, still engaged in a hot, demanding kiss. Sophia reached down and grabbed his cock, as his fingers continued plowing into her pussy. Suddenly, he rolled her off of him, and climbed on top of her. She spread her legs, and he was at her entrance, and then suddenly, he was **in**, all the way, in one stroke.

"AAAAHHGGGGGG!!!! OH GOD FUCK ME, WARREN! FUCK ME!" He rammed in and out of her with a wild urgency. He was over her, holding himself up with his arms, but she was having none of that. She reached up around his back and pulled him down, so that he ended up on his elbows practically on top of her, his shirt grinding into her tits. She wrapped her arms tightly around his back, and wrapped her legs around his hips, hanging on for dear life as he pumped in and out of her, hard and fast.

"FUCK! FUCK! FUCK! OH GOD WARREN, HARDER! HARDER! FUCK! FUCK! OH FUCK I'M CUMMING!!!" Sophia was out of her mind, screaming at the top of her

lungs, as she came, hard, all over his cock. A few more hard strokes and he was there, filling her pussy with his cum as he let out a roar.

He barely had the presence of mind to slip off of her so he didn't crush her when he collapsed.

It was quite a few minutes before Sophia spoke. "Oh. My. God. What got into you?"

"Blind lust, I do think," Warren laughed. "I don't think I have ever wanted it that bad in my life."

"I could tell," she smiled. "I think you almost wanted it as much as I did. Snugglebear, we need to fight more often." Warren cracked up at that. "So, what happened to holding off on the physical stuff until we sorted everything else out?"

"Oops. I did say that, didn't I? Ah well."

"Fuck it. I feel so much better, I can't tell you." She smiled at him. "Everything's going to work out, you know."

"I know. Listen, I know I'm a bear when I'm sick. I'm sorry."

"It's OK. You needed me, and you needed to let it out."

"I have my own problems, you know. Chief among them is a very, very bad case of claustrophobia."

"I never knew that. That's why you've been so bitchy. You've been stuck in this room for three days, you must feel like the walls are closing in."

"You got it. And I took it out on you. I am sorry."

"Hey. How many times have I taken my shit out on you? Come on. It's nice to be needed, instead of being needy. I learned a lot about myself the past couple of days, because you've been a right bastard, and I stayed, and I took it, because I knew you were hurt and needed me. It feels nice."

"It feels nice to be yelled at?"

"It feels nice that you felt you could. It feels nice that I understood, instead of getting wrapped up in my own anxieties. It even felt nice to have it out with you instead of going into a shell and panicking. And, I must say, fucking and making up felt very, very nice."

Warren cracked up. "That **did** feel nice, didn't it?"

"And how."

"Now that we have satiated our wild animal lust, I would dearly like to make love to you properly."

"I would like that very much myself."

They were lying on his bed, on their sides, facing one another. He reached up and started tracing her jawline with his finger, then moved up to her lips, and then down to her neck.

"HMMMMM....oh, that feels good.....still turns me on when you do that....." she smiled.

His other hand moved down and started lightly touching the outside of her breast. He worked his hands all over her face, neck, and breasts until she was softly sighing contentedly.

"I am complete putty in your hands, you know," she said.

"You just remember that." He brought both hands to her breasts, and started kissing her face and neck, little tiny kisses planted all over. Then he kissed down her neck, down her shoulders, until he got to her breasts.

He planted kisses all over her breasts, around the whole area of them, until he got to her nipples. He zeroed in on them, massaging them with his tongue, slowly and gently.

Suddenly, he pulled away. He sat up, and pulled off his shirt, which had never come off. She looked up at him, and realized something. She had seen it the past couple of nights, while he was dressing for bed, but hadn't really noticed it.

"Your pendant," she whispered, "You never took it off."

Warren didn't say anything in response, just smiled. "Flip over, Sophie. On your stomach."

She did so, but said, "What?"

"Trust me." He got up out of bed and walked over to his desk, withdrawing a bottle from it plus a few other things. He put the other things on the bed, out of Sophia's sight, but showed her the bottle.

"Massage oil. I told you I was going to make love to you properly." He poured a bit of the oil on her back, capped the bottle, and started rubbing it in.

"Oh, this feels delicious. Where'd you get this idea?"

"Reading, where else?" He kneaded her back and shoulders, as she sighed happily beneath him. "Warren, this is **great**. I feel so relaxed."

"Good." He finished with her back.



"Keep going."

"I plan to," he laughed. He reached and grabbed one of the other things he had brought. "Sophie, lift your head a bit off the pillow." She did so, and felt something brush against her neck. Then she felt his hands at the back of her neck. She felt her breath catch in her throat. It was **her** pendant, the one she had returned to him.

"Now your left hand, Pookie." She held it up to him, and felt the claddagh ring slip back on.

"Feel better?"

"More than you could possibly know," she told him. "I've spent six weeks reaching up for that pendant. Every time I didn't find it, it was another reminder....."

"It's over," he interrupted her. "Tomorrow, when you wake up, it will be there, right where it's supposed to be. Now, back to that massage." He put a drop of the oil on her ass, making her giggle, and started massaging it in. He worked the oil into her ass, and right down her legs.

"The only problem with this massage is that I might fall asleep."

"I doubt it. Flip over, you're only half done."

"Oh Goody!" She flipped over, and he took some of the oil and dribbled it onto her breasts. She giggled, and then sighed as he began massaging it in. "Oh, Warren, this is so great."

"Thought you'd like it."

He lingered on her breasts for a while, then continued on down, rubbing the oil into her stomach. He then continued down, massaging her hips and the outsides of her legs. He dripped a little more oil, and came back up the insides of her legs, slowly working his way up as he massaged her inner things. When he got to the top, he suddenly slipped one oil-coated finger gently into her pussy.

"OHHHH!" Sophia yelped, arching her back at this unexpected stimulation. She was so relaxed because of the massage, that his intrusion into her pussy was even more explosive than usual. She yelped again as he brought his other hand down and went straight for her clit.

"We can't let these wonderful body parts not get massaged, can we?"

"OH GODDDDD!!!!" She had been so relaxed and content that it did not take long for her to go into orgasm.

After she came back down, Warren asked her, "Like the massage?"

"It was wonderful. Especially that last bit," she giggled. "Wow, that was **quick**."

"You were relaxed."

"Relaxed and very turned on, all at once." She reached for the massage oil. "I want to do **you** now."

"I was kind of hoping you might."

She did it the same way he did--back first, all the way down, and then flipped him over, doing his torso and down his legs. As she approached his cock, he was very relaxed, with his eyes closed. She rubbed a bit of the oil on his cock, getting him completely hard--then she abruptly straddled him, lowering herself onto his cock.

His eyes flew open. "Surprise!" she squealed from on top of him.

"Oooh, I always did like surprises."

"Hey, I had to pay you back for that stealth finger attack when you were doing me." She moved deliberately up and down on his cock.

"If this is payback, you'll get more stealth attacks."

"Oh, goody!" She continued up and down on his cock. "Oh.....God....." she moaned.

"Come here," he said, and reached up and pulled her down on top of him. He held her tight as her pelvis bounced up and down on his cock.

"Oh...this is so fucking good...." She moved up and down on top of him a few more times, then stiffened, as she let out a squeal, her orgasm overtaking her. She stopped moving and collapsed into him, breathing heavy, but still impaled on him.

"You still haven't cum," she said after a couple of minutes.

"I already had one, remember? You know number two always takes longer."

"Yeah, and I love it," she giggled. "Far be it for me to leave you hanging," she said, as she started moving on top of him again, alternating her up and down movements with circular grinding movements.

"Unnnngggg....oh Jesus Sophia....." It didn't take much of that, and he came into her.

She climbed off of him, lying next to him, and, the next thing she knew, he had crawled down and put his head between her legs.

"My God. You just can't get enough tonight, can you?" She giggled.

He stopped and looked up at her. "Are you complaining?"

"Not even a tiny little bit. MMMMmmmmmmmm...." She relished his tongue working up and down her pussy. It had been too long. He brought her to a couple more orgasms.

"Oh my, oh my, oh my...", she whispered, as he climbed up next to her. He pulled her close to him, so that they were lying on their sides, he behind her, in spoon position. Next thing she knew, he picked up her top leg, put it on top of his, and entered her.

"You are insatiable! Hmmm, this is new.....Oooooohhhhhhh....."

"Tell me if your leg gets tired."

"All of me is tired, and I don't care. We have not had a night like this in a very long time." She pressed back to him on every stroke, as he gently and slowly fucked her.

"I love you to pieces, Warren. You know every inch of me. Even after all this time. It's just perfect."

"It always was, you know."

"I know that now. Believe me, I know that now. And not just because of this, either."

Warren chuckled. "Not that this **hurts**, mind you."

"It sure doesn't!"

They continued fucking for quite a long time, until they both reached orgasm. He quietly slipped out of her, finally spent, and moved his legs so she could drop hers, but didn't move otherwise, still cuddling her from behind.

"Warren?"

"Hmmm?"

"Thanks."

"For what?"

"For this. I know you wanted to wait. And I really was not trying to goad you into this with that PMS comment, you know."

"Sure you were, but only in a moment of frustration."

She laughed. "OK. Yeah, that was a moment of frustration. But I wasn't consciously trying to goad you into this."

"I know. I needed it as much as you did." He sighed. His voice dropped almost to a whisper. "It just wasn't nearly the same with anyone else."

"I know the feeling."

"We've still got work to do, though," he pointed out.

"I know."

"Notice I said **we**. We're in this together. Remember that."

"Keep reminding me when I need it, Snugglebear."

"What, you want me to sprain my ankle again?"

"Not on your fucking life! Boy are you a miserable SOB when you're not feeling well."

"You're a wonderful nurse, though."

They both fell asleep quickly.

## **HAPPY THANKSGIVING (Chapter 65)**

Sophia awoke in the morning, realizing quickly she was alone.

She stretched, and looked at the foot of the bed and saw Warren at his desk, headphones on his head, typing away at his computer. Sophia crawled to the end of the bed, so he could see her. He took the headphones off.

"Good morning, Pookie. Sleep well?"

"Best I've slept in months. What time is it?"

"8:30."

"Whatcha doin'?"

"Sending some emails. Jack, Christine, Liz, Evan and Shawna, a few others. Basically, I'm telling them we hit a rough spot but we're OK, and we'll see them at Nationals."

"Good." She got out of bed and stretched. She had slept nude. Warren looked at her with an appreciative eye.

"What a great view."

"You like?" She smiled coquettishly at him.

"I definitely like. Unfortunately, I have to finish these e-mails and then we need to think about getting ready." They had been invited to Elise's for Thanksgiving dinner.

"I know," she sighed. "Ah well. Oh, I didn't tell you this. I talked to Elise on the phone yesterday. Alexa is going to be there."

"Wow. Sounds like they're an item."

"Yup. Her parents, luckily, know about her and they're cool with it."

"That's good. Not to mention rare."

"Yup." She was slipping back into the clothes she wore yesterday. "I don't want to spoil my appetite, but I'm going to the café to get a cup of coffee. You want?"

"Love one. Can you get me a bagel or somesuch, too?"

"Sure." She kissed him and left. She returned a bit later, with the coffee and bagel, and they chatted a bit. Then, they both went to shower and change. At about 11:00, they were ready to go.

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"Hand me that spoon, would you?" Elise was in the kitchen helping her mother fix the dinner. Alexa was there.

"Here you go." Alexa handed the spoon over. "So, Warren and Sophia are coming?"

Elise sighed. "If they haven't killed each other by now. They had a huge fight in the psychiatrist's office on Monday. And, I talked to Sophia yesterday and Warren is driving her up a wall. You know he sprained his ankle? Well, Sophia has been taking care of him, and apparently he is **not** a model patient. She practically wanted to kill him. Considering the place they are in their relationship, this is not a good thing."

"Oh, goody," Alexa sighed. "So we might have fireworks?"

"Not here, both of them are too classy to do that here. However, I'm anticipating a lot of forced smiles and tense glares. Jesus Christ, I hope they don't fall apart again. I don't need Morose Sophia back.

"Tell me about it. Those two belong together. Maybe someday **they** will realize that."

They worked a while on the meal, and then the doorbell rang. "I got it, Mom!" Elise yelled. She opened the door to find Warren and Sophia, smiling and holding hands.

"Happy Thanksgiving!" Greetings were exchanged all around. Elise took their coats and hung them up.

"Any trouble finding the place?" Elise asked.

"None at all," Warren told her. "Your directions were top-notch, and I'm blessed with the world's best navigator." He gave Sophia's arm a squeeze.

"We love driving," Sophia told them. "I've been the navigator since he got his license, which was months **after** I got mine, but he likes to drive, I like to navigate. Of course, I had to yell directions so I could be heard over the stereo. He always turns it up too loud."

"Yeah, riiiiiggghhhhtttt. Who cranked 'Born to Run' and screamed along?"

"You were the one that started it, with 'Caddilac Ranch'."

"Hey, it's that line. 'Driving alone through the Wisconsin night'."

"It's daytime, and you weren't alone."

"Yeah, but we're in Wisconsin, aren't we?"

She kissed him on the nose. "You're so cute when you're being pedantic." She turned to Elise and Alexa. "He blasted that song when we first entered Wisconsin on the way here at the beginning of the year, too."

"Wait until we ever drive through Jersey, it'll be 'Fourth Of July, Asbury Park'."

Alexa and Elise looked at each other. This wasn't fighting, this was banter, and they still were locked arm-in-arm. And Sophia was glowing. What happened?

Elise just shrugged, and turned back to Warren and Sophia. "Come on in the living room, meet the folks."

They went in and met Elise's parents. They had just exchanged pleasantries when a girl of about 13 came bounding down the stairs into the living room.

"Hey, squirt. This is my roomie Sophia, and her boyfriend Warren. Guys, this is Sonya, my little sister."

Sonya bounded into the room, looked up at Warren and Sophia, and stopped dead in her tracks.

"OhmyGod. You're Sophia Daniels and Warren Kelleher!!!!!"

Sophia couldn't help but smile. "Yes, we are." She took the dumbstruck girl's hand, and Warren followed suit.

"I don't believe it! Daniels and Kelleher, in my living room! Elise, you didn't tell me who your roommate **was**!!!!" Elise just shrugged.

"Are you two famous, or something?" Mrs. Davenport asked.

Warren grinned. "Sonya here must be a serious figure skating fan."

"We're skaters," Sophia added. "Ice dancers, to be precise."

"They're **fantastic** ice dancers who won the silver medal at Nationals last year and me and a bunch of my skating friends thought they should have won the gold," Sonya gushed. "I have it all on tape."

"You skate?" Warren asked her.

"Yeah, singles, but I'm not all that good."

"As long as you have fun, that's all that counts," Sophia told her. "We started this just to have fun. Even if we had never won anything, it would still be fun."

Elise had ducked into the kitchen, and ducked back out. "Hey, Mom, come check this bird. I think it's done."

It was, and they all piled into the dining room.

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"This is superb, Mrs. Davenport, Elise. You guys are in my Mom's league. And that, believe me, is a compliment," Warren said.

"It is. His Mom can **cook**," Sophie agreed. "And he's right, this is delicious."

"So," Mr. Davenport began, "We got a chance to meet Alexa, because she was here early helping, but not you two. You're from Massachusetts, Elise tells me?"

"Right," Sophia said. "Oceanview. It's about a half hour north of Boston."

"Right next to Salem, as in Witch Trials," Warren added.

"What made you guys come out to Wisconsin?" Mrs. Davenport asked.

"Well, we wanted to get away," Warren said.

"Yeah, and it's a good school, and has good programs in both our majors," Sophia added.

"Plus, we both got scholarships," Warren said.

"What are you majoring in?" Mr. Davenport asked.

"He's a pre-med like Elise. I'm majoring in meteorology."

"And you guys are dating?" Mrs. Davenport asked.

"Yeah," Sophia smiled. "It'll be four years in March."

"Wow." Mrs. Davenport said.

"Not without its rough spots, mind you, but we do love each other," Warren said.

"The internet said you guys had broken up," Sonya interjected.

"We had a bit of a rough spot this fall. And we were off the ice. But everything's fine now," Sophia told her.

"So, do you guys know lots of skaters?" Sonya asked.

"Sure," Warren told her. "Jack Garrison, Liz Cushman, Christine Arsenault....."

"He flirts shamelessly with Christine Arsenault on line all the time, and in person every time we see her," Sophia laughed. "Evan Pogdar and Shawna Vickers, Andrea Wallach and Brett Tomlinson. We know lots of skaters, but those are our best skating friends."

"We went to Jack Garrison's wedding the summer before last. That was a trip."

"You're friends with Elizabeth Cushman **and** Christine Arsenault?" Sophia asked. "Don't they hate each other?"

"All a media concoction," Warren told her. "They're actually good friends. In fact, both of them were at our table at Jack's wedding."

"What are they like?"

"Now, now, Sonya, I'm sure Sophia and Warren don't want to talk about skating all day," Mrs. Davenport said.

"We don't mind. Really," Sophia said. "It's kind of fun. Most of our friends are either in the skating community or, like Elise and Alexa, don't care one whit."

"That's not really true," Elise protested. "I knew you before I knew you were a skater, that's all. You were 'Sophie, my roomie,' before you were 'Sophia Daniels, skater.' Because of that, I never felt comfortable asking you anything."



"Oh. You can ask, you know." Sophia smiled. "To answer your question, Sonya, let me see.....Jack Garrison is just a hunk."

"I **knew** that," Sonya giggled.

"Yeah, but that's his personality, too. Strong, silent type. Shawna Vickers is a nutcase, always has a sarcastic remark or a good joke to tell. Evan, her partner, is logical and analytical. He's the guy who always has the standings figured out before all the marks are even posted."

Warren picked up from there. "Liz Cushman is just a sweetheart, I don't know how else to describe her. Her skating reflects her personality. She's a beautiful person. Never heard her say a bad word about anyone. Chrissy Arsenault is a boisterous, loud, shameless flirt. I've known Christine forever, we became friends online long before either of us got anywhere in skating. The fact that we've gotten some success at the same time is just wonderful. I consider her one of my closest friends. She's great."

"So, you guys finished second in the country?" Mrs. Davenport asked.

"In their first try at senior Nationals," Sonya supplied.

"How did that feel?" Mrs. Davenport continued.

Sophia and Warren both cracked up laughing. "Watch the tape," Warren said. "You'll see. 'Flabbergasted' would be far too mild a word."

"I've never seen that tape," Elise said. Alexa nodded her agreement. "We've both seen them practice, but I've never seen that Nationals tape."

"I know where it is," said Sonya.

"I'd like to see that myself," Mrs. Davenport said. "As long as Warren and Sophia don't mind."

"Not at all," Sophia said.

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Elise cleared off the dishes, and Sophia helped her.

"So, what's going on?" Elise asked her. "You and Warren? You seem like you're, you know, back to normal, almost. I didn't expect that."

"We settled a lot of things last night."

"I notice you have your pendant and ring back on."

"Yeah," Sophia smiled. "We also had one of the great nights of sex a girl could ever hope for."

"Sophia! I thought you guys were going to wait!"

"So did I," she giggled. She described the basics of the previous night to Elise.

"Well, it seems to have helped."

"Yeah."

They went back in the living room, where Sonya was setting up the tape.

"Ah. This is our original dance, the Tango," Warren supplied.

They watched for a while. "Wow, is that **hot**," Elise said after a while.

"Elise!" her mother mock-scolded her.

"Well, it's a **tango**. If it's not hot, we're not doing it right," laughed Sophia.

"That was really good," Mr. Davenport said when it was over. "I don't know much about ice dancing, but it certainly was entertaining."

"That's nothing," Sonya said. "Wait until you see their free dance," She changed the tapes, and then found the right spot.

"We've never watched this with other people," Warren commented. "It's kind of weird."

Sophia laughed. "Not to mention slightly embarrassing."

"Why?" Alexa asked.

"I'm not quite sure. It just is," Sophia smiled.

Sonya had found the right spot on the tape. "This is probably our favorite program we've ever done. It's all Glenn Miller big band stuff," Warren told them.

"What's the free dance this year?" Sonya asked him.

"Sinatra."

The familiar music started playing from the TV set. Warren and Sophia watched themselves swing around the ice.

"Look how quick your feet move!" Alexa enthused at one point.

"I like the way you guys look like you're having so much fun," Mrs. Davenport said. "I watch skating with Sonya sometimes, and so many of the skaters look like their constipated." Everyone laughed at that.

"Especially the other ice dancers," Sonya agreed. "That's one of the reasons they are so popular. Plus, they really **dance**, they don't act, and they're so romantic."

"Funny, I thought we had some popularity because my partner is gorgeous," Warren quipped, to general laughter.

"Actually, I've seen a lot of posts like that. 'I never liked ice dance until I saw Sophia Daniels. Va va voom.' Always signed by a guy." Sonya smiled at Sophia, who was at this point turning bright red.

"She's the photogenic one," Warren agreed. "I'm just the slug that presents her."

"Will you guys cut it out!" Sophia complained. "You're gonna give me a complex!"

It was the end of the program. "Look at Sophia swing her hips," Elise quipped.

"Hey, it's **swing** music, right? Anyhow, now Warren gets to be embarrassed, in the kiss and cry."

"Why?" Elise asked.

"Just wait." They watched their ecstatic reactions in the kiss and cry, until the ordinals were posted and Warren let out that blood-curdling scream.

"**That** is why!" Sophia grinned at Warren, who was trying to crawl under the couch.

"That was great," Mrs. Davenport said. "Is that it, Sonya?"

"One more--their exhibition. It's on the same tape." She fast-forwarded to the spot.

"Warning. Watching this may make one of us disgustingly emotional," Sophia said.

"Make that both of us," Warren said, as he gripped Sophia's hand. She looked at him gratefully.

"Why so?" Mrs. Davenport asked.

"Well, most people who fall in love don't make a public declaration of it in front of 18,000 fans and a TV audience. And they certainly don't have to watch it again months later," Warren told them. "We've actually never watched this."

"Public declaration of love?" Elise asked.

"You'll see," Sophia said. "You'll Be In My Heart" started up on the TV.

The people in the room watched the program unfold on TV in stunned silence. When it was over, a few sniffles could be heard in the room.

"My God, we almost lost that," Sophia whispered so only Warren could hear. He just squeezed her hand tighter.

"So, what are you going to do for an exhibition this year to top that?" Sonya finally asked.

"We don't know yet," Warren smiled at her.

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They had a wonderful rest of the day, watching football, chatting, and eating pie. When Sophia and Warren got back into Warren's van to drive back to campus in the early evening, their mood got somber again.

"I didn't realize watching the exhibition would be so.....hard," Sophia said to him.

"Do you still feel the same way about me as you did when we skated that?"

"Yes, of course."

"Then what's so hard about watching it?"

"Well, lots of things. Let's face it, our skating sucks. Part of it was all three programs, seeing how well we skated then."

"I know, Pookie, but we'll get it back."

"Yeah. But it wasn't just that." Sophia sighed. "I think I'm going to be dealing with what I did to us for longer than either of us would like. I felt like I had a pile of bricks on my chest watching that program."

"Maybe we should skate it again this year."

"I thought of that. However, I don't think I want to do that. I think we need to purge what happened to us. And we need to do it on the ice. We need an exhibition that helps us-- helps **me**--deal with what happened."

"What did you have in mind?"

"I'm not sure. Think about it?"

"Of course. I'll play some music, see what I can come up with." He took a deep breath. "Sophie? I understand why you want a catharsis, and a program that helps with that. But, outside of that...." He took another deep breath. "Stop feeling guilty."

"Easier said than done, Snugglebear."

"I forgave you, the minute you asked. Please forgive yourself, OK?"

Sophia thought for a minute. "Forgive myself. I never thought of it that way." She took a breath. "Listen, I think I need to see Mary alone tomorrow. We'll reschedule the two of us."

"That's fine. Whatever you need, Pookie, you know that."

She reached over for his hand, and smiled. "I **do** know that."

## KISS ME BABY (Chapter 66)

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Author's note: The song "Kiss Me Baby" is written by Brian Wilson and Mike Love and is copyright 1965 Sea of Tunes.

All the music I allude to in this novel is stuff I like. If I make you go find it, good. For this particular tune, I emphasize it. If you have never heard "Kiss Me Baby," either by the Beach Boys on the Today album or in the live version talked about in this chapter, STOP READING AND GO BUY IT RIGHT NOW!!!!!! <G>

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"Forgive myself. I hadn't thought of it in those terms before," Sophia was saying to Mary.

"What do you mean?"

"I think I was trying to purge it, get rid of it, get to a point where I could pretend it never happened." Sophia sighed. "Which is, of course, impossible. After we watched the tape, I was **really** beating myself up. I guess I was waiting for a miracle, that, if we got back together, everything would just be....I don't know. Back to normal. Bad stuff gone, stupid mistakes gone, poof. And I almost believed it, until I watched that tape, and thought, 'look what I almost destroyed'. And it all came back."

"And, so what happened then?"

"Actually, it slipped away for a while, there with all those people. I had fun. Back in the car, with Warren, driving back, it all resurfaced. And, that's when he said what he said. That he forgave me, and I should forgive myself."

"Does that make sense to you?"

"Yeah, it does." She paused. "I haven't told you yet what else happened."

"Well?"

"Wednesday. Before this. We made love."

"I thought you guys were going to wait?"

Sophia giggled. "You know what they say about the best laid plans.....well, the only thing that got laid, was **me**." Mary burst out in laughter. Sophia described what had happened.

"You guys made love in anger?" Mary asked, a bit worried.

"No. I wasn't really angry, and I'm pretty sure he wasn't either. We **were** needy and desperate, both of us. Sometimes I forget that I'm not the only one in this relationship that can get needy. Trying to wait for a while was as much of a strain on Warren as it was on me, even though he proposed it. The dam just broke, is all. Look, sex was an important part of our relationship from the beginning. And it had been three months, almost."

"Do you think the prominence of sex in your relationship, starting at such a young age, has been a problem?"

"To a point. I see where you're coming from. But it's also a **good** thing. I mean, after that first desperate one the other night, we went back at it, but took our time. He touched me all over. Gave me a full body massage, and I gave him one. And we fondled, and made love, and it was just delicious. There are times when getting in bed and doing whatever is the **best** way to show someone you love them. I felt so completely loved the other night, and it wasn't because of any hangups, it was because of what he was doing."

"Well, how do you feel about everything?"

"Confused," Sophia laughed. "I feel like we're back together, considering we had sex and that he put my pendant and ring back on." She explained to Mary the significance of them. "But I also feel.....I don't know, apprehensive."

"Why?"

"I don't know. Because I'm still unsure of myself."

"After the first few days this week, you shouldn't be. When I had you in this office Wednesday, you were so mad at Warren, and so frustrated, that I thought you would be in here today crying that you panicked again. But you didn't. You stayed, you had it out with him, and then you guys made love to make up."

"Hmmm."

"The only reason you're apprehensive is because of what happened yesterday--seeing your skating, and having a flashback. You are getting **better**, Sophia. It is time you realized that. And, Warren's right, it's time you forgave yourself."

-----

They had picked up extra ice time, since most of the campus was empty for Thanksgiving weekend, and the Wisconsin hockey team was on a road trip.

"I was thinking about what you said for an exhibition." Warren said.

"Actually, I had an idea. 'Crucify', by Tori Amos."

"I know the tune. I like the tune." He thought for a minute. "I don't know. Too bleak, not danceable enough, and too much Sophia taking all the blame again."

She grinned despite herself. "You have a better idea?"

"As a matter of fact, I do." He skated over to the boombox on the boards. "This is a Beach Boys song, but this version is actually from Brian Wilson's Live At The Roxy solo album." He pressed play.

Please don't let me argue anymore  
I won't make you worry like before  
Can't remember what we fought about  
Late late last night we said it was over  
But I remember when we thought it out  
We both had a broken heart

Kiss me baby  
Love to hold you  
Kiss me baby  
Love to hold you

As I drove away I felt a tear  
It hit me I was losing someone dear  
Told my folks I would be all right  
Tossed and I turned my head was so heavy  
Then I wondered as it got light  
Were you still awake like me?

Kiss me baby  
Love to hold you  
Kiss me baby  
Love to hold you tight

Kiss me baby  
Love to hold you  
Kiss me baby  
Love to hold you  
Kiss me baby  
Love to hold you  
Kiss me baby  
Love to hold you tight

When the song was done playing, Sophia silently reached over and repeated the song. She listened again, her eyes closed, her hands folded, leaning her head on them as she sat in a seat by the boards. She let the stunningly gorgeous music wash over her, let the words envelop her. Then, she got up, played the song again, and took Warren's hand. They started to move, bit by bit, finding their steps together, speaking through gesture and touch more than words. They played the song three more times, and in just those three passes, they had about 75% of a program.

After the third pass, Sophia looked up and Warren, smiled, and said one word. "Yes."

-----

They went out to eat afterwards, to a Chinese place on campus. "You're limping," Sophia said as they walked there.

"A little. That was the first time on skates since I sprained my ankle, so it's still sore."

"You need help?"

"No." She gave him a look. "Really. I'm all right, I'm not being obstinate. I need to walk it out, anyway."

"OK."

They got to the restaurant and ordered.

"That song," Sophia said. "'Kiss Me Baby.' Is it what I think it is?"

"What do you think it is?"

"Sounds like the verses are the break up, but the chorus is the reconciliation."



"Yup."

"It's perfect." She looked at him. "I had an interesting session with Mary today."

"Really?"

"Yeah. She agrees with you. I have to say it. I think I'm ready to say it."

"Say what?"

She looked at him, smiled, and then took a deep breath. "I forgive myself."

"Good. How do you feel?"

"Great. The past three days have fixed a lot of things in my mind." She looked intently at him. "Are we fixed?"

"Yeah, we're fixed. I love you, Sophia, forever and always."

"And I love you, Warren, forever and always. And I am so relieved!"

"I don't want to say 'forget it, it's over', because I don't know how possible that is, but I do think we can put it where it belongs, in the past."

"I agree. I feel like now I can **enjoy** college--like I planned, with **you**."

"And mend the tattered remnants of our ice dancing career while we're at it."

"One of us should call June, and book as much ice time as we can while we're home for Christmas break. We're gonna need it."

"Good idea. I'll call her."

"Cool."

-----

An hour or so later, they were in Sophia's room, listening to music and doing a little studying.

The phone rang. "Hello? Hi, Mom! Happy thanksgiving!"

"Happy thanksgiving, honey. How are you?"

"Great. Couldn't be better."

Ellen wondered if she was putting up a front. "Good. Did you have fun at Elise's?"

"Yeah. Turns out Elise's little sister is a huge figure skating fan, so it was like having a fan club."

"That's funny. So, how's Warren?"

"MOTHER!" She said, giving Warren a wink. "You ask me about Warren every time you call here! It really gets annoying!"

"I'm sorry honey....."

"Anyway, Warren is fine. He sends his love." She and Warren were grinning at each other. "In fact, we were just about to start making out when we were so rudely interrupted by the phone."

Dead silence at the other end of the phone. "Sophia, are you telling me that Warren is... .."

"Here? Sure he is. Say hi, Warren." She held up the phone "HI. MOM!" Warren yelled from across the room. Sophia went back to the phone. "I mean, come on, Mom. Where **else** would my boyfriend be?"

"Boyfriend???? SOPHIA! You're back together?"

Sophia cracked up laughing. "Yup! Now you can stop grilling me about him every damn time you call!"

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Sunday morning, Elise was coming back to campus. Alexa had driven them to Elise's house, but had had to come back Saturday, and Elise's car was still on campus, so her parents drove her back. Sophia called her on Saturday, and said, "Bring Sonya with you. Warren and I will give her a real treat."

Sonya was thrilled when Elise led her and their parents into the ice rink, and she saw Warren and Sophia on the ice already.

"Thought you might like a little preview of our programs," Sophia smiled at her.

"OH BOY WOULD I!!!"

They did the Sinatra first--Sonya loved it--and then Warren said, "We came up with an exhibition. We had a rough fall--we **did**, actually, break up for a while--so we wanted to do an exhibition about that. This is an old Beach Boys song that has been one of my favorites forever, anyway."

With that, they launched into "Kiss Me Baby," which had had the finishing touches put on the previous night. After debating it, they decided that, yes, it was only fitting that it should end with a kiss.

When they were done, Sonya said, "Wow. I can not **wait** to see that at Nationals!"

### **THE WAITING IS THE HARDEST PART (Chapter 67)**

It was the Thursday after Thanksgiving. Dave was in his room, doing some studying. He was waiting to call Kate. She had been in the middle of a canvas, but told him to call about eight.

He had just found something out. He knew his parents were going away for the weekend, and he knew his older brother was staying at college at BC instead of coming home like he did most weekends. However, his parents had just told him today that they were indeed giving him a break and sending his younger sister to stay with their grandparents instead of leaving her with Dave.

In other words, the house was his for the weekend. And Kate's and his desperate search for a time and place where they could finally be together was over. Since he had been sick during their golden opportunity back during Labor Day, they hadn't had another chance. He was getting his license in a couple months, but didn't want his--and especially Kate's--first time to be in the back of a car. Sophia had promised help when she came home for Christmas, but who knew if that was going to work out. But now was their chance. They already had a date planned for tomorrow night--all they had to do was skip the movie and come here instead. It would work. It was perfect. He had to call Kate and tell her.

He looked at the clock. Three past eight. He picked up the phone and dialed it.

"Good evening, my lady Katherine."

"Good evening, sir David. How's my love tonight?"

"Wonderful. Guess what? I have an empty house starting tomorrow at five o'clock."

"What? You're kidding!!"

"Nope." He explained the details. They decided he would come pick her up at 5:30 as planned, they'd get food, as planned, but they weren't going to any movie.

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Kate was waiting for him at 5:15. She had had an absolutely endless day at school. She couldn't wait for it to be over--and she usually liked school.

She had to be honest with herself. She had wanted this for quite a long time--but she was scared. Scared it would hurt. Scared she wouldn't enjoy it or know what to do. Scared that this was all he wanted from her--and wasn't that a bit of an irrational fear? He stuck around for over a year when this was all he wanted? It made no sense, but she couldn't stop it creeping into her head.

They hadn't talked about it much, what it would mean. They had just decided that they wanted to do it, and since then it had been all about an until-now-fruitless search for a time and a place to do it.

While this part of her reverie hung in her mind, the doorbell rang.

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It was a big night. The menu **had** to be Chinese--it was both of their favorite. They had been to this particular restaurant so many times, he didn't even have to ask her what she wanted. He already knew. This time, they took take-out.

He grabbed some plates and utensils, and they took the food up to his room. Kate had been here often. It was the one place where they could, occasionally, grab a little privacy, though not enough or for a long enough time to do **that**. Until tonight.

They ate, sitting on the floor. They found their favorite thing to watch on TV--college basketball. They kept the conversation light.

"Look who's playing--Wisconsin," Dave said with a chuckle.

Kate laughed. "Wonder if Sophie is there. Oh, I forgot to tell you--she and Warren got back together."

"That is **damn** good news," Dave said. "I had been hoping."

"I think we all had." They got silent after that, eating and watching the game.

When they were both done, Dave went downstairs to throw the plates and stuff in the dishwasher, and put the leftover food in the fridge. He came back up. Kate was still on the floor, watching the game. He sat next to her. She was staring straight ahead, at the TV. He reached out and put a hand on her arm. He pulled the hand away, abruptly. She was **shaking**.

"Kate? Are you all right?"

"I don't know."

He took a deep breath. "Do you still want to do this?"

"I don't know."

He was a little confused. It had been her, even more than he, who had been relentless the past three months about her desire to find a place to do it. Now they had one, and she was....backing out? Unsure?

That's not what he said. He said, "It's all right, you know."

She looked at him. "What's all right?"

"That you don't know."

"I feel like an ass. I've been dying for this for months. Now, we've got the opportunity... .."

"It's OK. Really."

"I want it. I've wanted it." She looked away from him. "I thought I wanted it. Now, I'm so scared."

He laughed. She whipped her head toward him, about to angrily question what he was laughing at, when he said, "You're scared? Thank God. I thought I was the only terrified virgin in the room."

"You are?" she asked, amazed. "Guys get scared? I figured all guys just cared about....."

"Katherine, how long have we been going out? Come on. You know me better than that. I'm not your typical guy. I never have been. And you would have never gone out with me if I had been."

She sighed. "You're right, and it was unfair of me to say that." She took a breath. "What are **you** scared of?"

"Lots of things, some of which are embarrassing to talk to you about," he said with a half-smile.

She smiled. "If we're going to have sex, I think we should be able to **talk** about embarrassing things."

"Fine," he sighed. "I'm scared that I'll hurt you. I'm scared that I won't be good enough. I'm scared that something will happen to our relationship because of it. I'm scared that this is a big step that we can't take back."

She looked into his eyes. "We're scared of exactly the same things, you know."

"Kate, do you love me?"

"Of course, you know that."

"And I love you. Do you want me to be your first?"

"Yes. Absolutely. No doubt in my mind." She paused. "Now or later is the only question."

"OK."

She suddenly stood up. She reached out her hand to him, and he stood up with her. She wrapped her arms around him and kissed him, long and deep. They broke the kiss, and sort of led each other to the bed. They sat down on the edge next to each other.

"Half the problem is we're calmly discussing this instead of making each other horny," Kate giggled.

"You mean, we should go with the flow, that kind of thing?"

"Exactly," she laughed. "Look, we've fooled around before. We've gotten right to that point and stopped. We can still stop, if **either** one of us decides to."

"Right."

"And if we don't decide to stop....." she grinned impishly. Knowing he was as scared as she was had actually come as a great relief.

"Good plan," he agreed, and reached in to kiss her again.

It was very quickly that they weren't wearing many clothes between them, and Dave had his lips on one of her breasts and his hand between her legs, stroking her pussy. They had done this many times, and greatly enjoyed pleasuring one another. Suddenly, however, Kate sat up and pushed his mouth and hand away.

"Something wrong, Katherine?"

"Not at all. I just want to do this first tonight," she said, as she reached down and took his cock into her mouth.

She devoured him. She was as eager as he had ever seen her. "Oh, God, Katherine..." he moaned as she bobbed up and down on his cock, taking him deep in her throat. He ran his fingers through her hair as she sucked on him. She was relentless, and it didn't take long.

"Oh....fuck....Kate....CUMMING!" She didn't pull off, which was fairly unusual. He came right into her throat. She swallowed every drop.

"Wow....," was all he could say. He looked down at his member, which was rapidly softening. She looked at it, too, and looked up into his face, and giggled.

"Don't worry about it. You haven't barely touched me yet, so you've got lots of recovery time." He laughed, and pushed her back down on the bed, and went back at her breasts with his mouth, and her pussy with his fingers. A little while of this, and her breath was ragged, and he moved down to her pussy with his mouth.

"Oh God do I love this," she said. "Oh, yeahhhh.....getting the empty house was worth it just for **this**.....ungggggghhhh....."

He stuck his finger in her while his mouth attacked her clit. "Ahyeaaaahhhhh....," she bellowed. Something came to him that he knew, but had never taken note of before--he never got much of his finger in. She still had her hymen. He was most likely going to hurt her, no matter what he did, if they did it. Luckily, that thought slipped away as she arched her back and exploded in orgasm, her pussy grinding against his face.

He paused, and then started in again, but she sat up and grabbed his shoulders, pulling him up. "Dave, I'm ready. I'm turned on, and I'm wet, and I want you to do it."

Oh Jesus, he thought. The moment of truth. His brain agonized about it. His cock, however, had a mind of its own, and was completely recovered and very ready.

The good thing, he thought, was that he had thought to have a talk with his brother, Joe. Joe was cool, smooth with the ladies, and had plenty of experience. He was also very close to Dave, despite their different personalities. He had taken a couple of girls' virginity, and had given Dave some good advice.

One of those was, "Lube. Even if she's wet, better safe than sorry. Makes it easier." Dave grabbed the tube, and spread a little on his dick. Then he crawled up on top of Kate.

"You sure?" he asked.

"Yes. Oh God yes. Put it in me, David, please." Seeing his girlfriend like this, ready, spread out beneath him, eyes shining, stiffened his resolve. Something else had been stiffened for some time, now--and that something else was **there**, at her opening, being guided by his hand.

"Ooooffff!!!" She let out as the tip pushed ever-so-slightly through her lips. "Nnnnggghhh!!!" as he slowly moved forward. And then the whole tip slipped through, and her mouth opened into an O and she let out a little squeak. He felt the tip bump against her barrier.

"You OK?"

"So far," she gasped. "I feel so stretched."

"This is the hard part."

"I **know** that's the hard part. If you weren't hard, this wouldn't work," she joked with a gleam in her eye. He just looked at her.

"That was a funny, sweetheart," she said. "I know what you meant. Do it."

Still shaking his head at her joke, he pulled back a little, and pushed, feeling her membrane give way underneath his thrust.

"AAAYYYYIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIII!" she screamed. "Oh SHIT that HURT!!!!"

Damn, he thought. He looked at her with concern as she grimaced.

"It's OK, love," she said. "To be expected....owww...just stop a minute, OK?"

He stopped, worried, as he saw the tears rolling down her cheeks. Was it supposed to hurt **that** much?

Her breathing settled down, and the tears stopped. "That's better," she said. "Go slow, OK?"

He did, moving into her millimeter by millimeter. "Oh!" she let out, followed by a "Nnnngggggghhhhh."

"OK?" he asked.

"Yes," she smiled up at him. "Keep going." He did, slowly. She let out little moans and squeaks as he filled her up. Suddenly, she felt his pubic bone bump hers, and she let out a huge puff of air.

"All...the way...in?" she asked.

"Yes. How do you feel?"

"I'm not quite sure," she managed to giggle. "Full and stretched. Beyond that....give me a minute....."

"Pain?"

"Very little. There was just that one big sharp one. How do **you** feel?"

"Umm...desperately trying not to go off too soon. Besides that, just fine."

She laughed. "Hey, if you go off too soon.....you know, it's OK."

"I think I can hold it."

She smiled at him. "This is really starting to feel **very** good, you know."



"Ready?"

She nodded, and whispered, "Easy at first, OK?" He nodded, and slowly pulled himself almost all the way out, then just as slowly slid back in. "Oooooohhh!!" she said. He did it again, building up a slow but steady pace, concentrating on what he was doing and on her in an effort to hold back his orgasm--another tip from Joe. So far, so good. And Kate was grunting and squeaking with every stroke.

"Oh....GAAWWDDDD.....oh I think I like **this**!" she squealed.

He kept going, even longer than he thought he'd be able, and she felt that familiar tightening in her stomach.

"Darling," she gasped, "you can go faster now."

"If I do that.....it won't take long...."

"I'll go right with you, love," she smiled at him. He picked up the pace.

"OH FUCK! OH FUCK! OH FUCK!" she screamed as he plummeted in and out of her. She felt it building up, and so did he. He held off as long as he could, but went first. Luckily, the last couple of grinding strokes as he drained himself into her were enough to send her to her own climax, which she reached with a hearty scream.

He slipped out of her as he softened, and flopped next to her, exhausted. She leaned over to him and kissed him gently on the cheek. "Oh, David, that was wonderful."

"For me, too, Katherine. I love you."

"I love you too." She sighed. "I can't believe we finally did it!"

He took a glance down between her legs, and then looked up at her, concerned. "Are you sure you're OK?"

"Wonderful. Fantastic."

"No pain?"

"Oh, a little. I'm a bit sore. That's to be expected. I couldn't care less. It wasn't bad at all, really, just a minute when you took my hymen."

"You sure? Positive?"

"Yes, really, David. It really wasn't bad."

"Hmmm. Because there is a whole lot of blood on my sheet, between your legs." She looked down.

"Wow. There **is** a lot, isn't there? Wow. It really didn't hurt that bad."

"I do believe I will be doing some serious laundry this weekend." They both giggled.

"Let me go clean up, and I'll help you get this sheet off." She ran to the bathroom, and was back quickly. Dave watched her come back in. God, she was so beautiful--never more so than she was right now.

"C'mon, sexy, let's get this sheet off," she said. "You want to throw it in before the blood dries, or it will stain, and your mother will freak." They got it off, and both took it down to the laundry room. They came back up and replaced it, and settled down, cuddling and half-watching the TV.

After about an hour, Kate reached down between Dave's legs. "Oh, Sir David, it seems your gallant steed is ready for round two," she giggled.

He cracked up laughing. "Yes, but is my Lady Katherine?"

"Oh you BETCHA!" She pulled him on top of her.

It was even better the second time.

-----

Sunday evening, Kate was glad to get a phone call from Sophia.

"So, what did you do this weekend?" Sophia asked her.

"Oh, let's see. Got Chinese with Dave on Friday, got Italian with Dave on Saturday, went to brunch with the folks this morning, worked on a canvas, read some, lost my virginity, did some homework, went shopp...."

"WAITAMINNIT!" Sophia interrupted. "Did you say 'lost your virginity'?"

"Oh, you caught that, huh?" Kate giggled. "Dave got the house all to himself this weekend, so we took advantage."

"When did it happen?"

"Friday night. Then again Friday night, then Saturday night, then again Saturday night....."

Sophia cracked up laughing. "Wow, you don't hold back, do you? It was all right, then?"

"Oh, Sophia, it was more than all right. It was fantastic. I'm still in the clouds."

"No regrets?"

"None. Except for the fact that now I'm hooked and we still have the same no-place-to-do-it problem."

"Did you tell my Mom?"

"No. I don't know about her lately, Sophia, without you here she takes my Dad's side a lot. I don't think I can tell her."

"I'll be home soon, Kate, we'll work something out."

"It's OK. He gets his license in a couple months. I've had my 'special first time', so I don't mind doing it in a car, as long as I get to **do** it."

"Cars can be fun."

"You would know, Big Sis."

"Yes I would, Little Sis. How's David?"

"The most wonderful guy in the world, that's how he is!"

"I'd argue on behalf of Warren, but I'll leave you to your delusions."

Kate giggled. "Fine, be that way. Seriously, I really love the guy. He was so tender and gentle. It really was special."

"He loves you, you know."

"I know. He tells me enough!" They both broke up laughing.

### **TRUTH OR DARE (Chapter 68)**

The second floor had one of their parties the first Saturday in December.

They did this about once of month. There was alcohol around, but their parties were casual. At the beginning of the party, most of the guys on the floor would leave their doors open, and everyone would roam around, chatting and mingling. There was food around, munchies and stuff. Later in the night, some groups of friends would gather in a particular room.

This is what had happened, in Warren and Tim's room. Besides Warren and Sophia, and Tim and his girlfriend Heidi, also present were Papa Bear and Caitlin, and Alexa and

Elise. They were chatting and drinking a bit. Caitlin had just come back from the coop store with some sodas.

"Jesus, the Watson squad was out again. Two of them accosted me on the way out of the coop."

"The Watson squad?" Sophia asked.

"That preacher, Adam Watson. Some of his acolytes," Caitlin spat out.

"Oh, isn't that the guy who preaches hatred against just about everything, gays and non-white people at the top of the list?" Sophia asked.

"Yeah," said Alexa. "Charming fellow. He's got a following on campus, disgusting as that sounds. I just love hate-mongers disguised as religious people. And I should know, considering I've got two for parents."

"Your parents buy into that crap?" Warren asked.

"Yeah. They would wish me a painful death and an eternity in hell if they knew I was bisexual," Alexa sighed. "And probably if they knew I had slept my way through Colorado Springs High School. Now you know why I went to school a thousand miles away. I don't even want to go home for Christmas."

"Sophia, remind me to call my parents tomorrow and tell them I love them, would you?" Elise asked.

"Your parents are a dream." Alexa said. "They know she's bisexual," she told the rest of the room, "and they don't care. 'We love you, dear, whatever makes you happy.' She brought me home for Thanksgiving, and her parents **knew** that we have been sleeping together, and they were just 'Nice to meet you, welcome, make yourself at home.' I'd give my left tit for parents like hers. Instead, I got the Holy Roller Kooks. It has left me pretty predisposed for despising 'Preacher' Watson and others of his misbegotten ilk."

The conversation lagged a bit after that, until Papa Bear lightened the mood by quoting from Monty Python skits. Warren, a PythonManiac himself, joined in until everyone was laughing again.

"Hey, I got an idea," said Heidi. "Let's play Truth or Dare!"

"Interesting," Warren said.

"Very," agreed Alexa.

"I'm game," said Tim. Everyone agreed.

"How down and dirty are we going to get this?" asked Caitlin.

"Very," grinned Heidi, "if I have anything to say about it. No holds barred. Well, not too many holds barred."

"Well, just kind of respect who you're giving the truth or dare to," said Warren. "We must protect Caitlin's virgin sensibilities, mustn't we?" he grinned at her.

"Ummm.....well....." Caitlin blushed. "Let's just call them 'sensibilities'."

"I think we have a truth waiting to be told!" Warren said.

"Fine, War, you start." Heidi smiled at him.

"Great! Caitlin, truth or dare?"

"It's going to come out anyway. Go for the truth, Warren."

"When did you lose your virginity?"

She blushed crimson. "Thanksgiving night."

"YOU DIDN'T TELL ME!" Alexa yelled.

"You're right, I didn't," Caitlin grinned at her. "So now you know."

"And look at ol' Papa Bear, grinning like the cat that ate the canary," teased Warren.

"Who, me?"

"Go around the room," Heidi said. "Your turn, Sophia."

"OK. Alexa, truth or dare?"

"Truth."

"How many people have you had sex with?"

"Hmmm. About twenty-five guys, about half that many girls."

"JESUS!" said Heidi.

"What can I say, I like sex." Alexa grinned.

"My turn," said Papa Bear. "Warren, ol' pal, truth or dare?"

"Dare."

"Adventurous, eh? OK, we'll start slow. I need you to sing something, and it has to be a song where your voice gets really high. I'll judge if it's high enough."

"Oh, that's easy." Warren belted out a rendition of "Big Girls Don't Cry" by the Four Seasons that had the room laughing and applauding before he was done. "High enough, big guy?"

"Damn straight! Tighten that underwear!" Papa Bear replied.

Caitlin giggled. "My turn. Tim, truth or dare?"

"I'll go with the truth."

"OK. Is there anyone in this room you would like to sleep with that you haven't?"

"Oooh, nasty. All right--Alexa." Heidi hit him. "Hey, I'm just answering the question!"

"My turn," Elise said. "Warren, truth or dare?"

"I did dare last time, I'll do truth this time."

"What was your most outrageous sexual experience?"

Warren grinned at her. "Clever, Elise. I know you know the answer to that question."

"Right. Now you get to tell everyone else," Elise grinned.

Warren sighed. "Fine. Fucking Sophia's best friend, while she was getting fucked by **my** best friend, in the same bed. Oh, and my best friend and her best friend are dating each other. And the partner-swap also evolved into the odd threesome. I suppose the single most outrageous thing was getting a blowjob from Sophia while my best friend was boinking her. Unless it was getting straddled by her best friend while she was sitting on my face."

"You **are** kidding," Caitlin said, open-mouthed.

"No he is not," grinned Sophia. "And you can all forget asking me that question, because the answer is the same."

"When I proposed this game, I didn't realize that some people in this room had such.... interesting sex lives," quipped Heidi.

"All that and a bag of chips," agreed Sophia.

"My turn," Alexa said. "Tim, truth or dare?"

"Dare."

"Give a kiss, of at least twenty seconds, to someone in this room besides Heidi."

"You trying to get me in trouble?" Tim grinned at her.

"This game was your girlfriend's idea," Alexa pointed out.

"True," agreed Heidi. "Hey, it was."

"Fine," Tim grinned at her. He went over to Alexa and kissed her, long and deep. Warren kept time to twenty seconds. Tim broke away with a grin.

"Wow," Alexa gasped. "Heidi, do **not** let a kisser that good get loose!"

"Don't plan to!"

"Hey, it's my turn," said Tim. "Papa Bear?"

"Truth."

"When did you lose **your** virginity?"

Paul looked at him. "Do you know the answer to this question?"

"No."

Paul sighed. "That's right, I think only Warren knows. Caitlin doesn't even know." He took a deep breath. "I lost my virginity on Thanksgiving night."

Caitlin looked at him wide-eyed. "You did?"

"Yeah."

"Don't blame me," Alexa quipped. "Before he met you, Cait, I propositioned the big lug more than once." Everyone broke up at that.

"Was waiting for the right girl, is all," admitted Paul. Caitlin beamed at him.

"My turn," Heidi said. "Caitlin, truth or dare?"

"Oh, what the hell. Dare."

"You have to let someone in this room feel you up for twenty seconds. Under your shirt."

"Anyone?"

"Anyone."

"Fine, I pick Paul then." He grinned at her, and then did it. She blushed deeply again, and panted a little bit.

"Twenty seconds!" yelled Warren.

"Damn! That was too quick!" said Caitlin with a giggle.

"My turn," Warren said. "Alexa?"

"Truth."

"How many people in this room have you had sex with?"

"Three," she said with an impish grin.

"Three?" Warren said. "Who's the third?"

"Who's the **second**?" asked Heidi.

"I am the second," Warren told her. "I still don't know who the third is."

"I'll never tell," grinned Alexa.

"You'd better be picking dare every time you get called then," Warren teased her.

"My turn. Snugglebear?" said Sophia.

"Dare, Pookie."

She giggled. "You will hate me forever. You have to get on your knees and recite Romeo's lines from the balcony scene, with as much passion and conviction as you can muster.....to Papa Bear."

Warren broke up laughing, and walked over and got off the bed and knelt in front of Papa Bear. "Hark, what light through yonder window breaks! It is the east, and Papa Bear is the sun." By the time he finished, the whole room was in stitches.

"Very creative, Soph," Papa Bear said.

"I like to think so. We've had sex dares, we needed a humor dare."

"You should be on stage with that, Warren," giggled Caitlin.

"My turn," said Paul. "OK. Alexa, truth or dare?"



"Truth."

"Who's the third person?"

"Oh, shit, I shouldn't have said truth. Oh damn. Paul, I can't answer that."

"Come on, Alexa!"

"I can't. I don't think the person wants it known."

"It's OK," said Caitlin quietly from behind Paul. "It was me." She was **really** blushing.

"HUH?" said Paul.

"Before I met you. It was an.....experiment....." Her face was beet red and she was looking at her hands. "Just once....you know....."

"Oh. It's OK, you know," Papa Bear said. Caitlin smiled at him. "It's just that I thought she was going to say Tim!"

"Moi? I'm a monogamous kind of guy," said Tim.

"And don't you forget it, buster," quipped Heidi.

"My turn," said Caitlin. "Elise, truth or dare?"

"Dare."

"Fine. You must let a **guy** in this room feel you up under your shirt for twenty seconds."

"A guy, huh? You really know how to hurt a girl. All right, Warren, get your ass over here." He did, and slipped his hands under her shirt. She was quite flushed when he was done.

"OK, Sophia, I admit it. You weren't kidding about his talented hands," Elise said with a little smile.

"Told ya!"

"All right, Heidi. Truth or dare?" Elise asked.

"Truth."

"How many sex partners have you had?"

"Hmmm.....three if you count going all the way, four if you count everything but."

"Caitlin?" asked Alexa.

"Dare."

"OK," grinned Alexa, "How nasty should I be? OK, I've got one. Cait, you must walk up and down the hall.....wearing only your bra and panties."

"ALEXA! You wouldn't!" said Cait.

"Hey, that's pretty mild compared to some things that crossed my mind."

Caitlin was in full blush again. "Oh, I don't know if I can do this."

"This one might be a bit extreme, Lex," said Warren.

"OK. You want another one?" Alexa asked.

"No. I'll do it," Caitlin said. She kicked her shoes off, and pulled off her shirt. Then, she slipped out of her jeans. Warren hooted and whistled when he saw that her panties and bra were both black.

"Looking good, Cait," Warren teased. Paul was looking at her in undisguised awe.

"All right, if I'm going to do this, I want you guys out in the hall."

"Wouldn't miss it for the world," teased Alexa. She opened the door and stepped out in the hall, followed by Elise, and then Caitlin. The rest of the room followed behind.

Caitlin turned and walked down the hall. The party was still going on, and plenty of people were in the hall. They all parted to let Caitlin walk by. "Truth or Dare game, guys, be kind," Warren hollered, and the people in the hall gave her a wide berth, but hooted and whistled good-naturedly. Caitlin was blushing from head to toe, but had a huge smile as she walked to the end of the hall and pirouetted, coming back towards the room. Warren and Papa Bear started chanting "I'm too sexy for my clothes, too sexy for my clothes..." as she walked back towards them, which made her giggle but also blush harder. She got back to the room and practically ran back in the door with a giggle. Everyone else followed her back in.

"You **enjoyed** that!" Papa Bear said to her.

"I guess I did, a little bit," she grinned, as she put her clothes back on.

"I'm dating an exhibitionist," Paul joked.

"Fine, next dare I'll make her boink you in the middle of the quad," Warren said.

"WARREN!"

"Just kidding, Cait."

"My turn," said Tim. "Sophia , truth or dare?"

"Truth."

"How many sex partners have you had?"

"Hmm.." she thought. "Five, then Warren, then Jason, and four.....eleven."

"All guys, unfortunately," Elise quipped.

"Paul?" Heidi asked.

"Dare."

"You have to put your hand down Cait's pants for twenty seconds."

"What is this, embarrass Cait night?" Caitlin asked.

"Fine, I'll change it," said Heidi. "You can do it to any girl in the room, then, Papa Bear."

"OH NO HE DOESN'T!" Caitlin yelled, to laughter in the room. "The first option is just fine."

"I would have picked you, anyway," Paul said. "Let's preserve a little decorum, however." He and Cait were on Warren's bed, next to Warren and Sophia, and he grabbed a blanket and covered Cait's lap with it. Then, he reached under the blanket, undid her jeans, and slipped his hand it.

"MMMmmmmmm....." Caitlin hummed. "Could we make this sixty seconds?"

"No, just twenty," Heidi laughed. Caitlin let out a little gasp, just as Warren said, "Time's up!"

"Damn," said Caitlin.

"I think somebody's getting very turned on by all this exhibitionism and fondling," Papa Bear grinned.

"Who, me?" said Cait.

"Little miss demure and innocent? Perish the thought," cracked Alexa.

"My turn," said Warren. "Sophie, truth or dare?"

"I dare you, Snugglebear."

"Fine. Same dare as Cait had earlier, walking the hall--however: you can keep your pants on, but you have to go completely topless."

"You're a beast, you know that? OK." She quickly shed her sweater and bra..

"Oh my God in heaven," stared Tim. Heidi hit him.

Sophia just giggled at him, and opened the door to the room. The rest of the gang followed her out.

"More truth or dare?" yelled Ed, one of their floormates.

"That's right, and this one's mine, so HANDS OFF!" laughed Warren. Sophia giggled, and walked up the hall, her tits bouncing as she walked.

"This is your girlfriend?" asked Ed. "You lucky guy, you!" Sophia just giggled again, and turned and made it back down the hall in record time, her blush increasing with each step.

"That was fun!" she said as she got back in the room. "And now it's my turn. Heidi, truth or dare?"

"Dare."

"Your hand down Tim's pants, for the obligatory twenty seconds."

"I **like** that one," Tim quipped.

"Fine," Heidi said, a twinkle in her eye. "I'll use the blanket cover, however." They were on Tim's bed. She covered him with a blanket, and put her hand down his sweatpants. Just as his breathing deepened, Warren called "Time!"

"Damn," Tim said, "We really need to adjust this twenty second thing."

"All right. Alexa, truth or dare?" Paul asked.

"Dare."

"The male hand down your pants trick. Any male in the room. We'll go thirty seconds this time."

"Oh, Waaaaah--rennnnnn!!" she called, laughing. She was sitting at Warren's desk, but Sophia got off the bed so she could crawl up and be covered by the blanket. She was actually wearing a skirt, so Warren went up that way.

"Oh God," she gasped. It was way too soon when Paul yelled, "Time's up!"

"Oh shit," Alexa gasped., as she shakily got off the bed.

"Sophia, truth or dare?" Caitlin said.

"It seems to be the dare round. I'll take one."

"Same thing, male hand up your skirt, but it **can't** be Warren."

"Fine. Paul?"

"Hey, waitaminnit!" complained Caitlin.

"Your dare," Sophia grinned at her. She covered herself with the blanket, and Papa Bear slipped his hand up her skirt. When the thirty seconds were up, Sophia, flushed and panting, looked at Cait and said, "Oh, Cait, he's good,"

"I know," she blushed.

"Alexa, truth or dare?" Elise said.

"Dare."

"How about this one. **Your** hand down a girl's pants, and it can't be me."

"Oh, you're evil." She got up and walked over to the bed, waving Papa Bear off of it. She sat next to Sophia. "Ready, Soph?"

"YOU? ME?"

"Uh-huh." Alexa grinned at her. Sophia still had the blanket over her. Alexa reached up under it. She was already quite wet with what had already gone one, and Alexa went right to work. "Oh my....." Sophia gasped, as Alexa worked on her clit with her hands. "Oh..... oh.....oh.....oh....." Sophia said, surprised at how much she enjoyed Alexa's touches. When Warren yelled, "Thirty seconds!" Sophia was beet red and had her eyes closed and her mouth parted.

Alexa said, "OK, Warren, truth or dare."

"Dare."

"Fine, let's finish the poor girl off, shall we?" she said with a mischievous gleam in her eye. "I dare you to make Sophia orgasm in five minutes or less."

Warren looked at Sophia, who just grinned at him, still flushed. "Come on, Snugglebear, you think you can't do it in five minutes with those hands of yours? Especially since my engine's already been started."

"You know better, and I am **not** going to just use my hands. Papa Bear, Cait, off the bed." They got off. Warren made Sophia lie down, grabbed a blanket, covered Sophia with it from the neck down, and then crawled under it. He raised her skirt, pulled down her panties, and buried his head in her crotch.

"He's going to.....wow.....I thought he'd use his hands!" Cait said in shock.

"This is the quickest way to get me off, and he knows it," said Sophia. "Oh, God, Warren!" Even with six other people in the room, Sophia found herself building up to orgasm quickly. "Oh SHIT he is so fucking good at this!" The rest of the room looked on, amazed, as Sophia's breathing quickened and deepened, and she started wheezing. Warren, under the blanket, was going after her clit full-bore with his tongue as he slipped two fingers into her. "AYEEEE!" she yelped. "UNGGHH! UNGGGH! UNNGGGH!" she moaned, her wide-eyed audience completely forgotten. "FUCK! FUCK! FUCK! OH GOD YEESSSSSSSSSSSSS!!!!!!!!!!!!!!" She stiffened and spasmed on the bed. After she recovered, and opened her eyes, she saw six stunned people looking at her. She just grinned.

"Well?" said Warren as he emerged from under the blanket.

"Three minutes forty-seven seconds. Unbelievable," said Papa Bear.

"When I've played this at home, we always go until we get a dare that can't be topped." Heidi said. "I think we've reached that point," she grinned. Everyone laughed in agreement, except for Sophia, who said, "What? I was waiting for one of you to dare me to straddle him!"

"Glad to know I'm not the only sex maniac in the room," grinned Alexa.

The sexual tension having hit everyone in the room, it was mere minutes before the room had emptied out, all the couples looking for a place to be alone. The door had barely closed before Sophia pulled her panties all the way down, pulled Warren's pants down, and went to straddle him.

"Fine. Nobody's going to dare me, I'll do it anyway!" Sophia said as she hit bottom.

"That's got to be the most interesting foreplay I've ever had," Warren quipped.

## **HOMECOMING (Chapter 69)**

Warren and Sophia pulled out of the campus at 8am on a Saturday morning, heading home for Christmas break.

"Springsteen, again?" Sophia asked as he started the CD player.

"It's good driving music, Pookie. Besides, you **like** Springsteen."

"Yeah, but you always put him on when we're in the car. It's so....**predictable**." She giggled.

"We're going to be on the road for two days, we'll have time to listen to a whole bunch of stuff. I need Bruce to help me wake up."

"Well, OK then."

They found some coffee, and hit the highway.

-----

It was midmorning, and they were well on their way.

"Warren," Sophia began, "There's something I've been meaning to talk to you about. Mary says I should. But it's difficult."

"What, Pookie?"

"Well.....it's about our sex life."

"Uh-oh. The last thing a guy wants to hear from his girlfriend."

"Don't worry," she laughed. "I love it with you, you know that. However, we were talking about the whole Eduardo thing, and why I was attracted to him in the first place."

"I know. You like it rough sometimes."

"It's not so much **rough**. It's just that.....I don't know....." Her voice got quieter. "I guess I have a submissive streak."

"OK. And I'm not satisfying it."

"Warren, don't put it that way. Most of the time I love your gentle touch. It's just every once in a while....." She took a deep breath. "It's not that I want you to be rough. The couple times that has happened, it's been natural. I wouldn't want you to force it--that's not in your nature. Oh shit, I don't know **what** I want."

"You want to be dominated."

"Yeah. Just once in a while. I don't know if you can do that, though. If you can't, it's all right. But I wanted to talk about it."

"You're right, I really have to be in the mood to be rough. Hmmmm. Being rough is not the same as being dominating, though."

"Not necessarily, true."

Suddenly, Warren grinned. "You know what? I have an idea."

"What?"

"I'm not going to tell you. I'm going to surprise you."

"Aww, that's no fair! Tell me!"

"Nope. You'll just have to wait until we get home."

"Fine." She paused. "Will I like it?"

"We'll find out, won't we?"

-----

The homecoming was happy. Everyone was glad to see them, and everyone was especially glad to see them **together**. They got home late Sunday night, and spent most of Monday going around and saying 'hi' to people. Crash had flown home on Saturday, so they saw he and Jess for lunch on Monday.

Tuesday they spent in the rink, most of it. And June recognized that they had a problem, one they had started to realize the past month.

"You know what? That original dance sucks." June told them.

"We know," said Sophia.

"So change it!"

"We need an idea first."

"Listen. You're using boring, traditional, march music. Open it up. You guys are musically aware, Warren in particular. Read the music requirements, but be creative."

"Hmmmmm."

"We have time to choreograph a new OD, but we have to do it right away," June said.

-----

That night, Warren listened to some music. He got a great idea, read the music requirements for the March OD and found it would **just** make it. He made a cut to the proper length, and burned it onto a CD.



He walked into practice the next day. "I think I've got it. It qualifies as a march, although just barely."

"Play it," Sophia said.

He did. It was an early-nineties girlpop confection by Sam Phillips, called "I Don't Know How To Say Goodbye To You." It was perfect. By that afternoon, they had most of it choreographed.

-----

They decided to do something different on Christmas eve--they had a little party, with the two of them, Jessie and Crash, Dave and Kate, Nick and Karen, and Mo Kenney and her boyfriend Larry. They ordered out Chinese and spread out in Sophia's room. Ellen had bought them a couple bottles of wine.

"So you still thinking of transferring?" Warren asked Jessie.

"Um-hm," she said through a mouthful off Moo Shi shrimp. "Northern Illinois or Wisconsin-Milwaukee are the current frontrunners. Cheap enough, good nursing programs, and closer to a certain guy."

"At least you guys are the same age," Kate said. "If Dave goes away year after next, I'll still be in high school."

"Don't worry, Lady Katherine. I won't be going far, I don't think."

"You going to study art?" Sophia asked him.

"Actually, I want to study computers. I want to be an animator. I can do the art half on my own."

"Cool!" said Warren.

"I'm leaning towards Northeastern or BU. Plenty close enough."

"Whew, that's a relief," Kate said, to general laughter.

"But what about you?" Sophia asked her. "What if you decide to go away the year after that?"

"Naah," Kate said. "I want to be an art teacher, actually. I can do that around here."

"Art teacher? That's very cool," Mo said. "My major is in English, with an education minor. I want to be an English teacher."

"We can't all be weathergirls, or doctors," quipped Jessie.

"Or ice dancers," added Crash.

"Or lawyers, either, Attorney Kowalski," Warren countered. "And as for you, Jess, be nice to me or I won't hire you to be my ace nurse when I start my practice."

"Promises, promises."

"If the two of them think about working together, I'd best concentrate on malpractice law," Jason quipped, earning a swat on the arm from Jessie.

"All you college pukes. You're making ol' Sophomore-in-high-school me feel like the baby of the group," grumbled Kate.

"You **are** the baby of the group," Warren pointed out.

"Thanks, Warren. You're all heart."

"Don't mention it," he grinned.

-----

Warren and Sophia spent Christmas together, as usual, and had a wonderful time. After dinner, they went back over to Sophia's house to spend some time there.

"I was thinking something," Warren said to Sophia when they were alone.

"What's that, sweetie?"

"I haven't punished you yet."

"Huh?"

"You need to be punished for thinking you could leave me."

"What are you talking about?"

He grinned at her. "You just do as I say. I will be here at seven PM tomorrow. Kate is going out with David, your parents are going out, and your brother and sister are with their dad. So, I will be here. You will be wearing a skirt, a blouse that buttons down the front, and a pair of panties you don't care about. No bra."

"Warren, what are you talking about?"

"You just do as I say. You'll see. Tomorrow is my night, you'll do exactly as I say."

Realization dawned on her. This must be his big idea. "OK, sweetie, I will."

### **MASTER AND SERVANT (Chapter 70)**

He walked into her room. He had a bag with him. He put it next to him as he sat on the bed.

"Hi, Snugglebear. What's in the bag?"

"All in good time, Pookie. Sit." He pointed to the bed, right in front of him. She sat.

"So, Pookie," he began, "You've been a bad girl. Should you be punished?"

"Yes," she said very very softly.

"OK. Do you love me?"

"With all my heart."

"Do you trust me?"

"With my life."

"Do you believe that I would never hurt you physically?"

"Of course."

"Good. You remember that. Face forward, now, do not look back at me."

She sat, apprehensive, as she heard him rustling in the bag. He gently pulled her right hand back, then her left hand, holding them both with his right hand. Then she felt the bindings.

"Warren?" she asked, as she tried to pull her hand away.

"Trust me, remember?" She relaxed, and he tied her hands together behind her back, tight enough to create a firm bind, but loose enough so that her arms would not pull out of the sockets.

"Hurt?"

"No," she replied. "It's a little uncomfortable."

"It's supposed to be a little uncomfortable," he chuckled. The next thing Sophia knew, she couldn't see. He was tying the blindfold behind her head.

“Warren, you’re starting to worry me.”

“Don’t be.” Suddenly, there was a ball in her mouth. She gasped, as he tightened the ball gag around in back.

“Can you breathe?” She nodded yes. “Are you scared?” She nodded yes, vigorously. “Why?” She shrugged her shoulders. “Nothing to be scared about, Pookie. Never hurt you, remember? Trust me, remember?” She nodded. “That gag may make your jaw sore, so I won’t keep it in all the time. I just want you to know I have it. Besides, it’ll come in handy...later....when you do your air raid siren imitation.” She even chuckled a bit through the gag at that one. “OK, up on the bed, now.” He helped her lift her legs up on the bed, then dragged them down so that he could reach the bedposts with the last piece of rope. She felt the rope wrapping around her ankles, and felt it tighten—not too much, but she was surely immobile, her legs spread, her feet tied to the bedposts.

“One more thing. I brought a long pillow. We want to adjust this under you, in case you want to lie down, so that it supports you with your hands being tied behind your back. I don’t want your hands or your back to hurt, Pookie.” He adjusted the pillow and lowered her onto it. “Is that semi-comfortable?” She nodded. Actually, it was quite comfortable, considering she was tied up. “Good.”

He lied down next to her, and started speaking, softly, right into her ear. “I’m not going to hurt you. There are no whips or nipple clips in that bag.” She giggled through the gag. “However, you have been a very bad girl, and you need to be punished. This is your punishment. By the time we are done here, I am going to make sure that you **never** stray again. Because I’m going to make sure you never **want** to.”

“You know I’m not into pain, or aggression, or rough sex. I’m still not. That’s not what’s going to happen here. But I’ve actually had a fantasy of doing this to you for a long long time. I’ve never approached you with it, but today, I decided to.”

“Let me tell you what’s going to happen here today, Pookie. You are at my mercy. You are at my mercy for as long as I decide. You are tied up here spread-eagled on my bed, you can’t see, you can’t talk, you can’t move. And I am going to have my way with you in as many ways as I can think up.”

He heard her gasp softly through the gag. “No pain, like I said. But you **will** be tortured. I am going to bring you within an inch of cumming and then stop. And I’m going to do it over and over again. And if you’re a **very** good girl, I may end your punishment and let you cum. When—and if—you have an orgasm today will be decided by **me**. And I know you well enough to know that once you start, you can’t stop, you can be sure that the first one will last a good.....long.....time.”

She listened to his words, getting tingly all over. He continued. “Before we end this today, you are going to understand one thing. You are **mine**. You are mine, for all time. And, today, you are **really** mine. You are my own personal plaything. I can do anything to

you I want. You're helpless. You're completely helpless. You have to just like there and take it." He leaned in closer. "Does that turn you on, Pookie? Does it turn you on knowing that I can do anything I want to you?" She nodded, panting slightly. "Does it turn you on knowing that you can only cum if I say so?" She nodded vigorously. Now he was reaching down and teasing her breast. She tried to arch her back to push it into his hand, but couldn't. "Does it turn you on to be teased like this?" She groaned, but nodded. "Does it turn you on, being my own personal plaything?" She groaned and nodded. He grinned. "Looks like I've got you in a pretty submissive position, wouldn't you say?" She gasped. And realized that Niagara Falls was seemingly gushing out of her pussy.

She was **very** turned on.

He unbuttoned her shirt. "No bra. Good choice." He undid all the buttons, and separated the halves of the shirt to leave her breasts exposed.

He dove right in. She moaned through the gag as his lips covered her nipple, his tongue probing it. Her nipples were as erect as he had ever seen them. He moved onto the other breast, kneading the first one with his hand. She was moaning, and squirming on the bed as much as her binds would allow. Then he stopped, ignoring her moans of protest. She heard him in the bag, and suddenly she felt this extremely light and fluffy touch on her nipple. She jumped at it.

"Oh, look, it's a feather!" He said. "Won't we have fun with this!" He flicked the feather onto her nipples, alternating between the two, as she groaned and tried to raise her tits to get more contact with the wispy object. It was delicious. It was torture.

He lowered his hands under her skirt, and rubbed a finger into her panties. She groaned and bucked, as he lightly pushed her pussy through her panties. "Oh, good, you're running like a river. We want to get these adorable purple panties of yours drenched." She tried to increase the contact with his finger, but he was having none of it.

"These things are a little in the way," he said. He reached into the bag. "Don't move, sweetie, I have a scissors in my hand." She felt the metal up against her leg, as Warren cut her panties. Then, on the other leg. He pulled her ruined panties out from in between her legs. "Even cut open, I have to keep these." Warren said. "They'll smell like Sophia for months." He was idling rubbing his finger all around her pussy, slipping it out and withdrawing, teasing her clit then withdrawing, driving her nuts. He was still using the feather on her nipples. This went on for some time. She was moaning and writhing.

"Frustrated?" She nodded. "Want to cum?" She nodded vigorously. "Not yet." She groaned. He leaned down into her ear and said, "Imagine what it will feel like when I **do** let you come."

Suddenly, she felt the feather lightly brush her clit. She squealed. He took the feather and traced it up and down her pussy lips. The light touches all around her sex made her squeeze out little "mew! mew! mew!" sounds through her gag. Then he pushed his finger

into her sex, as he drummed her clit with his thumb. She gasped, and tried to arch her back towards his hand. He got her to where she was gasping and whining, and then he withdrew his fingers.

“That’s enough cunny play for a while, I think.” She moaned deeply. “Let’s see what else we got in this bag.” She heard it rustle, and then she heard some sort of shaking sound. The next thing she knew, something very cold and very wet was on her left nipple. She gasped and mewled. She felt the cold wetness cover her left breast. Then, on her right nipple, and then covering her right breast. And a little trail, down her breasts and onto her stomach.

“Whipped cream,” Warren said finally. “With two cherries on top, one for each tit. It’s been forever since I’ve had a Sophie Sundae.” He started with the trail down her stomach, and worked his way up to a breast. He lapped the whipped cream off of her breast, lingering on the nipple, making sure to clean it thoroughly. It drove her **crazy**.

When he had cleaned up every last drop, his tongue went to her pussy. He went right for her clit, nibbling and suckling on it, until he sensed she was close. Then he stopped. She groaned and gasped and wheezed, flushed and straining against her bonds. He checked the clock. He had been doing this for over an hour.

“Your jaw hurt?” She nodded yes. He reached behind and took off the gag, and pulled her blindfold off as well.

Free from the gag, she groaned. “Arrrrgggghhhhhhh. Ohrrhghdihrhhf. Warren I am going insane. Please. Please. It’s torture.”

“But Sophie, you’ve been a very bad girl. Do you think you deserve an orgasm?”

“Please.”

“You need to be a good girl.” He started flicking his finger onto her clit every couple of seconds as he talked. “Do you think you can be a good girl?”

“HRRMMM...please....yes....I can be a....OOFFF....good girl.....please.....”

“Maybe you can. What are you?”

“YIII....I.....don’t understand.....”

“I’m playing with you, right? What do people play with? What are you?”

“I’m.....NGGGGGHH....a toy....”

“Right. What kind of toy.”

“NYIIIIIEE.....a.....a.....sex toy.....OHHH.....please.....”

“Right again. And who do you belong to?”

“YUFFFF....Warren...I’m.....NGGGG.....Warren’s sex toy.....NYIIIIIEEE.....”

“Right. And how long will you be Warren’s sex toy?”

She actually smiled, even through her grunting. “RRRGGGHH....Forever.....and always.....”

“And how do you feel about being Warren’s sex toy forever and always.”

“NGGGhhhhh....I love it....I love you.....GGRRNNN....so good.....please.....”

“Very good. You’re a very good girl. Now tell me what you want.”

“NGGGHHHHH...I want....YRRR.....I want to cum.....please.....OYYIIIEEEE....  
please let me cum....YAARRRGGG....Oh please.....please let me cum.....  
NYOOOORRRR...please.....”

“OK. I’ll let you cum, because you’ve been such a good girl. Got to put this gag back on, though, we wouldn’t want you to wake up Vermont.....”

She giggled as he reattached the gag. Then he lowered his head and aimed his tongue straight at her pussy, and relentlessly massaged her clit.

It didn’t take long. And he gave thanks for the gag because she was completely over the edge. An hour and a half’s worth of slow torture was released in one keening, wailing orgasm that seemed to last fifteen minutes. And he kept up his pressure on her clit, and she came a second time....and then a third. He finally stopped, and removed the gag, to allow her to catch her breath.

She was flushed from head to toe. Her nipples were very erect, her pussy was gushing, and she was squirming on the bed as much as her bonds would allow. With the gag now off, she was taking wheezing, raspy, moaning breaths.

Warren lie down next to her. “So, how’d you like that?”

“I can’t speak. I can’t think. I can’t breathe.”

“Good.” He waited for her to finish catching her breath. “Are you enjoying yourself?”

“Oh MAN. What an orgasm. Or three.”

“Good. My turn.” He crawled up and straddled her face, and plunged his cock into her mouth.

She devoured him. She couldn't control his movements, or use her hands, all she could do was suck as he plunged in and out of her mouth. And suck she did, vigorously. He **was** being as gentle as he could, but, hey, he was fucking her mouth. He occasionally bottomed out in her throat. His pubic bone occasionally bounced off her nose. Her jaw was straining at him. She loved it. He came in a torrent. She swallowed every drop.

He climbed off of her. She still couldn't see, being blindfolded. "Warren, where are you?"

"Over here. Putting my clothes on."

"Huh?"

"I need something to drink. Gonna go upstairs, get us some Cokes, maybe chat with your Mom a bit."

"You're going to leave me like this?!?"

"Hmmm....." He looked at her. "Maybe I should leave you with something to keep you occupied." He went back in the bag. She couldn't see, but she felt something hard and rubber brush up against her pussy--and then she felt it sliding up in her. "Ohhhhhnnngggggg....." she moaned, as she was filled with the toy.

Then, Warren flicked a switch, and she felt it vibrating in her. "OH GOD!" He watched her writhe on the bed, and then the vibe shut off.

"Time setting. Goes off for thirty seconds, then shuts off for about a minute. That ought to keep you occupied." And he left.

He was upstairs for about fifteen minutes. When he came down, Sophia was out of her mind.

"Oh God Oh God Oh God Oh God..." then it turned back on "....oooOOOOOOOOHHHYEEEEEEEEEEIIIII!! AAAAAAH!! AAAAAAAH!!!!!!" and then it turned off again "....Oh God Warren! Is that you? Oh God no more! Oh God! Oh please!"

Warren climbed up in between her legs, withdrew the vibrator, and replaced it with his hard cock.

"AAAAHHHHHH!!!!!!" Sophia screamed. Warren started plunging in and out of her. "WARREN! OH GOD! OH FUCK ME OH GOD FUCK ME!!!" He did, and she screamed in orgasm very quickly. Warren kept pumping her, and she never came completely down, riding one wave after the other. By the time he came into her, she was almost delirious.

As she tried to get control of herself, still panting and moaning, she felt something on the top of her breasts. "What are you doing?" she asked.



"You'll find out." It felt like he was writing on her. Then, she felt the same thing on her stomach.

"Time to untie you." He undid her feet, and then sat her up to undo her hands. She stretched them, trying to wake up her muscles, as he took her blindfold off.

"Oh Warren," she looked at him. "Oh, dear heart, that was unbelievable."

"I'm glad you liked it. You need to look in the mirror. That's body ink I used, it will wash off in three showers or so."

She looked. Across the top of her tits, he had written "WARREN'S". Underneath her tits, on her stomach, he had written "SEX TOY."

She giggled. He said, "Just a little reminder."

"Makes me want to walk around the streets of Oceanview topless," she laughed. "Just to proclaim it to the world."

"You just remember it."

"After tonight, there's no way I forget." She looked at him a little hesitantly. "Could we.....would you.....I mean, you know.....do that again sometime?"

"You like being tied up and tortured!"

"Um, yeah, I think I do," she blushed. "I do believe that you scratched my submissive itch just fine, darling."

## **BACK AT NATIONALS (Chapter 71)**

"Ah, Seattle. Never been here," said Warren.

"Yeah, it's going to be a west coast kind of year, what with Worlds being in San Jose," said Sophia.

They were at Nationals. Their friends in the skating world were very glad to see them, together, and seemingly as happy as ever.

"Hey, Dance King!" Christine Arsenault greeted Warren in the lobby of the hotel. Sophia was off chatting with Jack Garrison and his wife. "How's it hanging, Warren?"

"Fine as always, Chris. You ready to renew the battle with your arch-nemesis Liz Cushman again?"

"Of course. And you and Sophia are ready to go after Nicholas and Coleman?"

"You betcha."

"So, Warren. What happened? Really."

"Sophia and I broke up, in late September. She broke up with me, actually. It was a huge mistake, it's been resolved, but we were apart for almost two months."

"Damn. Well, I'm glad everything worked out."

"So am I."

"Your training must have suffered."

"Yeah, but we're coming along. Thank God we had decided not to do the Grand Prix this year."

"Hey, waitaminnit. You were apart from her for two months and you didn't come out to Colorado and give me what I've been waiting for for five years? You creep!"

"Sorry, Chris."

"Ah, I bet you were celibate, pining away for her, anyway."

"I **was** pining, but I was **not** celibate. If you had been in Wisconsin, you would have gotten your wish. Sorry." He walked away with a grin.

"I HATE YOU!" She shouted after him, laughing.

-----

The practices were fine. A little ragged, but Warren and Sophia felt that they could pull it together for competition.

The compulsory dances were held on Tuesday. Warren and Sophia had spent a lot of time on their original dance, redoing it, and on fine-tuning the Sinatra free dance. The compulsories had been a bit neglected. Nevertheless, the first compulsory was the Tango Romantica, and they handled it fine. They finished third, behind Nicholas/Coleman and Vickers/Pogdar, which was fine.

The compulsory dances are a group of twenty-odd dances, the steps strictly prescribed. Every team does the same steps to the same music. Every year, four of the dances are picked, and two of those four are skated at each competition. A small error can be disastrous. A large error can be fatal--and that's what happened to Warren and Sophia. In the second dance--which was the fairly difficult Golden Waltz--their skates clicked, and the undertrained duo went down, in a heap, completely obliterating the rhythm. They

frantically caught up, but had missed a whole lot of steps by the time they did. Compulsories never draw much of a crowd, but the small audience let out an audible gasp at Warren and Sophia's error.

Amazingly, they left the ice laughing. "When we fuck up, we do it right," said Warren. When the marks were posted, they had finished a disastrous eighth. It left them tied for fifth overall.

When they got backstage, Evan and Shawna were offering condolences.

"Ah, thanks, but fuck it," said Sophia. "We knew we weren't in peak form."

"And you know that's the one damn compulsory that they're going to play on the TV broadcast," Warren laughed.

"I can't believe you guys," Shawna told them. "We'd be devastated."

"What the hell. Ice is slippery," said Warren.

"Besides which, we'll just have to kick your butt in the OD!" added Sophia, as she and Warren walked away, hand-in-hand.

-----

Laughing off a bad skate was very much keeping with their philosophy--that they did this for fun--and they knew that they hadn't trained enough. That didn't mean they planned to give up, as they discussed in their hotel room that night.

"I still wanna go to Worlds," Sophia said.

"We have to win the OD. Not second, not third, we have to win the thing," Warren opined.

"We can do that. I'm so glad we changed OD's. This one can win."

"Yup. Attack, Sophia, we need to skate the thing full-bore."

"Risk disaster by going for it? I agree. We've already had our disaster, right?" They both laughed. "Law of averages, and all that!"

-----

The OD was Wednesday night. Sophia and Warren went after Evan and Shawna, but before Coleman and Nicholas. They had seen most of the OD's in practice. Most of them were traditional marches. They hoped to stand out by skating a march to an up-tempo pop song. But, first of all, they had to **skate** it. Perfectly.

They did. They attacked the program from the start, digging into the ice, executing their steps flawlessly to the pounding beat and soaring wash of vocals. When they were done, Warren pumped his fist and yelled, loud enough for the crowd to hear, "Tied for fifth place my ASS!" provoking laughter from Sophia **and** half the crowd.

The marks came up. They had beaten Evan and Shawna. After Coleman and Nicholas had skated, they discovered that they had beaten them, also. They had won the original dance. It left them right back in contention, in third overall and very close to second.

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Thursday was the free dance. It was time to break out Sinatra: "How Little It Matters (How Little We Know)" and "I've Got You Under My Skin." It was a classy, elegant, steadily-building program. They really had sharpened it up.

They skated first in the final group, and skated near-flawlessly. The crowd ate it up, going nuts when they were done. They were pleased with the way they had skated, and thought the marks were decent, but all the other contenders were yet to go. Nicholas and Coleman went first, and they only defeated Sophia and Warren in the free dance by one judge. That made Sophia and Warren feel more confident. Evan and Shawna couldn't beat them. They finished second in the free and second overall, going home with their second--and very special, considering what had preceded it--silver medal.

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Sunday was the day for exhibitions. Sophia and Warren loved this. All their friends were there, showing off their own exhibitions, and the backstage scene was fun.

The TV network had taped comments from each skater about their exhibitions to play on the broadcast, but they also played those comments on the big screen in the arena before each skater took the ice. Warren and Sophia's was playing as they stepped out by the ice entrance.

Warren: "We hit a rough spot this fall."

Sophia: "Yeah, we actually broke up, on and especially off the ice, for almost two months."

Warren: "We're back together now, and very happy about it, and we kissed and made up a while ago."

Sophia: "But now we need to kiss and make up on the ice!"

They took the ice, to wild applause, both dressed in black flowing costumes with a big red heart on one sleeve. "Kiss Me Baby" began, and they gilded around the ice, renewing and repledging their love for one another, on the ice. Warren steered Sophia around the ice, in a program build on long flowing edges, elegant turns, and close embraces. At the end, they kissed, as the crowd went nuts. The First Couple of American Ice Dance were back.

-----  
They flew home to Boston, then piled back into Warren's van almost immediately for the haul back to Wisconsin. When they arrived there, they were surprised to get recognized a lot around campus.

Their friends had spread the word. They got what was almost a hero's welcome back to campus. They found themselves being recognized more than ever. It was great.

Fame, however, has a dark side.

## **DARKNESS ON THE EDGE OF TOWN (Chapter 72)**

The semester started wonderfully. They planned to take as much of their free time as they could nailing down those compulsories. Warren had turned 18 during Nationals, which led to lots of jokes from Sophia about "being relieved that she wasn't committing statutory rape on poor innocent Warren anymore." They were together, and were happy. School was going to be tough again, but they had better learned how to deal with that. They had their friends, and all the recognition they were getting was a kick.

One night, just a few days after school had started, Warren was walking across campus late at night. Sophia had a pile of work to do, so Warren had gone to get some food. He was headed back to the dorm, walking through a part of campus usually mostly deserted at night.

Four kids were walking in the other direction.

"Hey, you're that figure skater!"

"Yeah, I am," Warren smiled.

"Aren't all figure skaters fags?"

"No. Some are, but not all." Warren said.

"I've heard all figure skaters are fags," another one said. "And all of them with girlfriends and shit, that's just a smokescreen."

"Nah. Believe me, my girlfriend is not a smokescreen."

"Yeah, right. You're all fags. **You** are a fag."

"Believe what you want," Warren said, not wanting to get into it. "Can I get by, please?"

"I don't think so." They moved in closer to him. "Y'see, we've decided you're a fag. And you know what we do to fags?"

"Yeah, what Reverend Watson says we should do to fags?"

Oh shit, Warren thought, they're followers of that gay-bashing scumbag. I think I'm in a heap of trouble.

He never saw the first punch until it was connecting with his eye.

The four kids weakened him up with a couple of punches, then dragged him out of sight, behind one of the buildings. Then they started punching and kicking in earnest. One of them twisted his left wrist until he heard the bones crack. He took a couple kicks in the knee. His face and torso were battered. Waves of pain washed over him. He screamed until he didn't have the energy to scream. He tasted blood, and saw it in his eyes.

Then, one of them said. "You know what we ought to do to this fag? Treat him like a fag!" The next thing Warren knew, his pants were being pulled down. Then, he felt himself being held up by two of the kids, while a third stood behind him. He felt pressure, and then a searing pain, in his anus.

At that moment, he mercifully passed out.

-----

Somehow, he managed to come to some time later, just barely. He was alone, on the grass. His legs weren't working properly. His left wrist was useless. He was having trouble breathing. He couldn't see past his swollen eyes very well. And there was blood everywhere.

He was in big trouble. He managed to remain coherent enough to dig into his pocket for his cell phone. It was cracked, but still worked. He took his good hand and hit Sophia's speed dial number.

"Hello," she said.

"Behind Thompson hall. Send help. Ambulance. **Hurry!**" he managed to squeak out. Then the line went dead.

Sophia, sick with fear, dialed 911. Then she threw on a coat, and with Elise in tow, headed to Thompson Hall. She arrived first, and ran behind the building to find Warren unconscious, badly beaten, in a pool of blood.

"WARREN!!!" she howled, and ran down to hug him. Elise came alongside. "Sophie, move. I'm pre-med, I know first aid." She grabbed his hand. "He's got a pulse. His breathing sucks, though. Damn, where is that ambulance? He's lost a ton of blood." Just then the paramedics ran up and took over.

-----  
It was the next morning before they let Sophia in to see him.

"Are you family?" asked the doctor.

"I'm his girlfriend, I'm the closest thing. Our families are in Massachusetts. How is he?"

"Concussion, broken cheek, multiple facial bruises, broken ribs, broken left wrist, one of his lungs collapsed, and his rectum is a mess. Plus both of his knees are bruised and sprained."

"Oh my God."

"He took a vicious beating."

"Yeah, and from who?" said a voice from behind her. "Hi, I'm Officer Gorman, Madison PD."

"I'm Sophia Daniels, I'm his girlfriend. And his ice skating partner."

"Oh, yeah, you guys are those ice dancers, right?"

"Yeah," she said sadly.

"Sophia," the cop asked, "do you know anyone who would want to do this to Warren?"

"No. Warren's well liked, he really is. If he has any enemies, I don't know about them."

"Pookie?" a voice croaked from behind them.

Sophia turned. "Oh, Snugglebear, you're awake!"

"Barely. God, do I hurt."

"Warren? Can you talk? Officer Gorman, Madison PD. Who did this to you?"

"Four guys. Don't know if they were students, but they were that age. Said they were followers of that asshole preacher, Watson."

"Did you know them? Do you know why they did this to you?"

Warren tried to snort, which was hard with a respirator tube in his nose. "Oh, it was your routine gay-bashing, leaving aside for a moment the little detail that I'm **not** gay. They said that I must be, because I was a figure skater. I tried to get out of there, after the

verbal abuse, but they blocked me, then started punching." He took a breath. "Dragged me behind the building and went to town."

"Lovely. Could you identify them?"

"I think so."

"Good. This ought to be a lovely set of charges. Assault, hate crime, this might even be severe enough for attempted murder."

"No doubt in **my** mind," said the Doctor. "Warren, if you didn't carry a cel phone, you would have bled to death. Oh, and, Officer, don't forget rape."

"What?" said Warren.

"Rape?" said the officer.

"Yeah," the Doctor said. "Warren, you were anally raped."

Sophia recoiled in horror at that. Warren just went ghost-white.

-----  
The Madison PD held a press conference. Word spread like wildfire after that, especially amongst the close-knit skating community, which reacted with horror, shock, and fear.

Many skaters were contacted by the media for their comments. The ones most widely replayed were the astute comments of Evan Pogdar:

"First of all, I **am** gay, so, yeah, I'm scared to death. But, it's bad enough that this was a gay-bashing. What's worse is that it was a witch hunt, with all the blind flailing of possible witches that that implies, because I know for a certain fact that Warren is **not** gay. Now we're bashing maybe-gays on the basis of their profession. It was a gay-bash, and it was a witch-hunt, and it was an attack on the figure skating community. First and foremost, though, it was an attack on Warren Kelleher, one of the finest guys I know. Warren wouldn't hurt a fly. I'm devastated over this. Hey, War, get well, eh?"

-----  
Warren's parents flew in from Boston. Sophia was glad to see them. She needed the help. She still had classes to go to, and she was meeting with Warren's professors.

The figure skating community rallied. She was getting constant messages from friends--even skaters they barely knew--asking if they needed any help, what they could do. Sharon Nicholas and Steve Coleman, who trained in Chicago, even drove up for a day to say hi. And Sophia got a gratifying call from Lisa Jones, the president of the USFSA.



"I've talked to Evan Pogdar and Shawna Vickers about this, Sophia," Lisa told her, "and we're all in agreement. If Warren can skate at Worlds, he skates. If he's physically able, you have your spot, and we are going to wait until the very last **second** to make a change if we have to. Evan and Shawna are going to travel to San Jose if there is any question, but, like I said--very last second. I hope you guys can skate."

-----

There was a letter in the newspaper five days after the attack.

"We do not condone violence, but let's not glorify a young man who is living a deviant lifestyle. He had been judged, and he will be judged, and if he does not renounce his deviancy, he will get only which is coming to him. He has affronted the Lord, and it is only fitting that the Lord's servants have reacted with offense."

The letter was signed by the Reverend Adam Watson.

Sophia was dumbfounded. Luckily, she didn't think Warren had seen it. Deviancy? What deviancy? Being a figure skater?

The madness had affected the whole school. Elise was **terrified**. She never bothered to hide her bisexuality. Sophia spent every day worried.

-----

The next day, at the dining hall, Sophia was met by a frantic Alexa.

"My parents are here. A surprise visit. Boy, am I lucky, or what?" she spat out sarcastically. "They think I've been corrupted by the decadence here, so they are demanding that I go with them to see that Watson asshole after lunch."

"Oh shit."

"I'm a wimp in front of them. I can't confront them, or him."

Sophia got a gleam in her eye. "You want some company?"

She and Alexa went to meet her parents, who were babbling about the "great man and his good works, trying to rid the world of deviancy." Sophia held her tongue. She was going to let it all out with Watson there.

He started in on his screed, with Alexa's parents nodding agreement. Alexa was so incensed that she found herself saying something before Sophia even had a chance to.

"What about the kid that your followers put in the hospital? What about him?"

"My followers were overzealous, but they were doing the Lord's work in trying to rid our world of deviants."

"That 'deviant' has a name. His name is Warren Kelleher. He's one of my best friends. He's maybe the sweetest guy in the universe. He didn't deserve this."

"See, this is why we had to come out here, to save you from this, Alexa," her mother said. "What kind of company are you keeping out here?"

"Why is Warren a deviant?" Alexa persisted.

"You don't think homosexuality is perverted?" her mother asked.

"No, I don't, but that's another story. Warren is **not** gay. Don't you people read the papers? He's not gay."

"That's what they all say," said Watson. "We know homos when we see them."

"BULLSHIT!" yelled Sophia, seeing her cue. "Jesus Christ, you people are **stupid**! Evan Pogdar is right, what a witch-hunt. Warren is completely, indubitably, most emphatically **not** gay. And I think I should bloody know, considering I've been his girlfriend for almost **four** years! Your blind hatred has put the man I **love** in the hospital."

"You're his girlfriend?" Alexa's father asked. "And it's not a cover-up?"

"Yes, I am; and, no, it's not. I have no problems with gay people. Some of my closest friends in skating are gay. Two of my closest friends **here** are bisexual. Warren ain't one of them. This is where we've gotten--we're going to beat up people because we **think** they might be doing something in the privacy of their own damn bedroom that we don't like. It's none of you people's business what anybody does in bed, but the only person in Warren's bed is **me**. And, trust me when I tell you, Warren likes girls."

"Oh, and here's another tidbit for you. This little item hasn't made the papers. Those four goons of yours, Reverend? They didn't just beat Warren up. They raped him. How's that for irony? Your great crusaders of ridding the world of homosexuality, and one of them performed an anal rape on a straight guy."

"WHAT?" Watson and Alexa's father said at once.

"That's right. They beat him, and they raped him, and they left him for dead. He would have died if he hadn't had his cel phone. **This** is the legacy that this madman is trying to leave Madison with. I, for one, plan to fight back with everything I've got. Warren did **not** deserve this, whether or not he's gay." She got up to leave the room.

Alexa got up, too. "Oh, Mom, Dad? I might as well shatter all your illusions. If they wanted to beat up someone who has had sex with someone of the same gender, they should have gotten me." Her parents looked at her in shock. "One of Sophia's friends

that's bisexual is me. In fact, the person I'm dating right now is a girl. Do you hope his goons beat the shit out of me next?" She followed Sophia out of the room.

### AFTERMATH (Chapter 73)

Warren was in the hospital for a week. He was recovering, physically.

Warren and Tim's next door neighbor, John, had a double room but had never had a roommate. They talked it over, and agreed. Tim offered to move in with John, so Sophia could stay with Warren. "He's gonna need you, Soph. I know how shook up he is." Sophia gratefully accepted their kind offer, and helped Tim move his stuff.

When she brought Warren home from the hospital, that's the first thing he noticed.

"Where's all of Tim's shit?"

"He moved in with John, so I could stay with you as much as possible."

"OK."

The next day, the police called. Warren went down to a lineup, and picked out the four guys. They were still attending Watson's campus meetings, and the police had grabbed them there, based on Warren's descriptions. And physical evidence proved that one of them was definitely the one who had raped Warren. Because that was in the papers now, word of the rape got out. One of the effects of that was shock and disgust even among the Watson acolytes, because the irony that Sophia had spoken about was lost on no one.

Sophia was glad that the goons had been caught--although she wasn't looking forward to Warren having to go through a trial--but she had bigger problems: getting Warren back on his feet.

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It wasn't going well. It was a week after he had come home. His parents had flown back a couple days earlier, so it was all up to Sophia, and she wasn't having an easy time of it.

"Warren?"

"Hm?"

"The doctors said you could skate. We have our ice time tomorrow morning. Want to give it a whirl?"

"No."

"We really should, soon, you know. We need to see if you can get to the point where we can go to Worlds. It's only a month and a half away."

"I'm not going to Worlds."

"We might be able to. If your wrist can handle it, we might be able to."

"No."

"OK, we'll talk about this later." She took a breath. "Hey, you want to go out? Get some food, hit a movie? Might be fun."

"No."

"Warren, you can't just sit in this room, except for going to class!"

"Sure I can. Watch me."

"Oh, Warren." She went to touch him on the shoulder. He flinched. She backed away, trying to hide how upset she was. "Oh, by the way, Christine Arsenault wants you to call her. I've got her number."

"Oh."

"You should call her. A good flirt might be what you need," she said playfully.

"No."

Sophia sighed. "Warren, you and Chris have been friends for a long time."

"Yeah, but she's a skater. I don't want to have anything to do with skaters and skating."

Sophia just sighed, and went back to reading her book.

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A couple days later, Sophia was on Warren's computer, checking her e-mail.

"Hey, Snugglebear. You should see the lovely e-mail I got from Anya Malekova. She's such a sweetheart."

"Hmmm."

"She even offered to fly out here, at her own expense, and help us get up to snuff for Worlds if we need it. Might be a good idea."

"I told you, no Worlds."

"Come on, Snugglebear. You're healing. Your ribs are better, your legs are fine, and they are going to change that cast on your wrist to a splint. We just have to rechoreograph around your wrist a bit. I think you can skate. We should try."

"I have no desire to skate."

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The next day:

"Hey, Warren? Papa Bear and Cait want us to double-date some night this weekend."

"Tell 'em thanks, but no."

"Come on, Warren. Might be fun." She giggled. "We could play Truth or Dare."

That earned her the smallest of smiles, but it disappeared in a hurry. "I just don't feel like going out."

"I know, but you should."

Warren just sighed. Sophia walked over to him, and leaned down to kiss him. He flinched, and didn't return the kiss. Sophia stood up, trying not to get too upset at his rejection of her, but she said something.

"Warren, you need help."

"What do you mean?"

"Professional help. You need to talk to Mary."

"No way."

"I went when you asked **me** to."

"That was different."

"How so?"

"Because you needed it. I don't need it. I'm perfectly fine."

"Perfectly fine? You won't go out. You won't skate. You flinch when I go to **kiss** you, Warren! This is your definition of perfectly fine?"

"I just need a little time, is all."

"OK. Anything you say."

She walked out of the room, needing someone to talk to. She went up to Alexa's.

"Hey, Sophia? What's up? How's Warren?"

"Not good. Not good at all." She detailed to Alexa some of what had been going on.

"Oh, shit. You want I should go talk to him?" Alexa asked.

"I don't know if he would even let you in."

"Maybe he's right. Maybe he just needs time."

"Maybe. But I'd have an easier time believing that if I saw **some** sign he was getting better. I don't. Except for class, he just sits in bed. And I can't even touch him without him flinching--that's the toughest part. It's just about breaking my heart."

"You need to be patient with him."

"I'm trying. I really am." She sighed. "I am **not** the strong one in this relationship, you know. I never have been. I'm the one that needs to be taken care of, the one who breaks into pieces that need to be put back together. Not him. I'm not used to this. I don't know what to do."

"You're doing fine, you know. You're there for him."

"True. But it is becoming increasingly clear that it's not enough." She sighed. "Enough about me. How are you doing?"

"My parents still aren't speaking to me. They sent me a note saying that they will continue to pay for college, because that was a promise they had made. But they won't talk to me, and they 'suggested' I find somewhere else to spend the summer."

"Oh, Jesus, Alexa."

"You know what? Fuck 'em. Their attitude makes me sick. And Elise already told me that I could spend the summer there if I want. I might go home anyway, I can stay with my grandmother. I've talked to her, and she's pissed at my parents for doing this."

"Hopefully, they'll come around."

"I don't care anymore. Let them stew in their own hatred."

"It's still tough. All the shit I've done in my life, and my Mom still stands behind me."

"Yeah."

"She can't help me with this, though."

### SOPHIA'S DILEMMA (Chapter 74)

"I don't know how much longer I can do this."

Sophia had requested a meeting with Mary. It was almost three weeks after Warren had come home, about a month after the attack, and he wasn't getting any better.

"He's not getting better?" Mary asked.

"He's completely withdrawn. He goes to class, and he studies, and that's it--and keeping up with his schoolwork is almost on autopilot for him. Outside of that, he just sits in the bed. He won't touch me, he won't let me touch him. His roommate moved out so that I could be with him and we sleep in separate beds. He won't skate. He shows no emotion about anything. I take messages for him, support from our skating friends, people that want to help--and he ignores them. I tell him I love him and I get nothing."

"OK, first of all, Sophia, I have to ask you. Have you had any of your panic attacks?"

She laughed humorlessly. "Every single fucking day. Sometimes it takes all my strength of will to keep from running out of that room forever. I feel like my life is on hold. I know he's been through hell. That's why I stay. I just don't know how much longer I can stand to look into the eyes of the shell of a man I used to love and still keep coming back for more."

"You've tried to get him to see somebody? Me, anybody?"

"Of course. No dice."

"OK. You want to help him?"

"More than anything."

"OK. First of all, I need to tell you that your strength impresses **me**. You're doing a fabulous job on **yourself**, and it is showing, and you need to know that."

"Thanks. It's nice to hear. Our friend Alexa said the same thing."

"It's true. However, you have to get stronger. You have to do something that you will find very difficult. To truly help him--you have to stop helping him."

"Huh?"

"You have to step back. Stop taking his messages--make **him** answer the phone. Stop coddling him. Make him know how difficult this is for you. Make him deal with the world, stop doing it for him. I understand why you have been, but the best thing for you to do **now** is stop. Force him to deal with things."

"Why?"

"Because he's avoiding anything emotional, and he can't continue to do this. He goes to class and studies, but that's because that's purely intellectual--like you said, he's on autopilot as far as that goes. But he's avoiding skating, because that is an emotional experience. He's avoiding any closeness with you for the same reason. His friends, his skating friends, going out and enjoying a movie--all of it. He's trying to shut down emotionally so he won't feel the pain. I don't think I have to tell you how unhealthy that is."

"No, you don't."

"I'm warning you, Sophia, this will **not** be easy. You might have to goad him. Get him mad, get him unhappy, get him amorous, but you probably will have to **force** the issue. And, when it all comes out, it is not going to be pretty. I'm warning you. But if you want even the possibility of getting the old Warren back, it's the only way. He has to deal with the pain--and he has to deal with something he is **completely** repressing, the anger. He must be very angry, but he's not allowing himself to deal with it. It may come out at you."

Sophia sighed. "I can take that. I can deal with that. Anything to get him out of this."

"And you need to keep on him to see me, or somebody. You're not a professional, Sophie. You can only do so much."

"I know. But I've got to do **something**. And I have you as an adviser!"

-----

She was in his room that night. The phone rang. And rang. And rang.

"Sophia?" Warren asked.

"It's your phone, you answer it. What am I, your secretary?" Sophia spat out, feeling horrible.

Warren just looked at her in disbelief, then answered the phone. Sophia could only hear one half of the conversation.

"Hello? Hi Christine. No, I'm OK. I'm healing. Yeah, they caught the guys. No, I'm fine. Well, I don't think we're going to make it to Worlds, I'm still pretty beat up. Yeah, we'll see. Yeah, I love you too, skate babe. Talk to you later." He hung up the phone. "That was Christine Arsenault. How did she get my number?"



"I gave it to her," Sophia told him.

"What? Why?"

"Because she wanted to talk to you."

"Well, I didn't want to talk to her. That was difficult."

"She wanted to talk to you. You don't want to talk to her, **you** tell her. Explain to her why you're hiding from all your friends. Oh, by the way, I also gave your number to Jack, Evan, Shawna, Andrea, and Liz. They all want to talk to you, and I'm not taking your phone calls anymore."

Warren just looked at her in disbelief, then shook his head and went back to his studying.

A couple hours later, Sophia got up and turned on the TV.

"Whatcha doing, Soph?" Warren asked.

"Something I want to watch," she replied simply.

It was one of those newsmagazine shows. The announcer intoned. "A beating in Wisconsin. A popular figure skater badly hurt, and a controversial preacher in the firestorm. Tonight, on NewsWatch."

"Soph, **why** are we watching this?"

"It should be good. Evan, Jack, and Liz are going to be on."

They watched the beginning, as the announcer, Rick Morris, talked about the basis of the story. He told about the beating, and showed pictures of Warren before and after. Sophia cringed, and looked at Warren--who was cringing, too. They showed the four thugs, and then Adam Watson. They talked about the firestorm around Watson, and about how revelations about the beating and rape of Warren had turned a lot of his former supporters against him.

"We contacted Reverend Watson, but he refused to appear on this program. However, we do have three of the leading lights of the figure skating world here with us to talk about how this attack has affected the skating community, and about Warren Kelleher, whom they all know. Please welcome world champion Elizabeth Cushman, national champion John Garrison, and national medallist ice dancer Evan Pogdar. Welcome." The camera showed the three, sitting side-by-side. "First off, how has this attack affected the skating community?"

"Not well," Jack said. "There's a fear around. Let's face it, Warren got attacked for what he does for a living. It doesn't make me comfortable, I can tell you that."

"Absolutely," Evan added. "For those that don't know, I **am** gay, and I'm out of the closet about it, and, yeah, I feel like a target. If they could do this to Warren, who isn't gay, just because he's a skater, what would they have done to **me**? I've never enjoyed hiding in closets, but, yeah, I'm scared."

"You can feel it in the rink," Liz added. "There's a tense atmosphere. We all feel it."

"Are figure skaters friends with each other? How has this affected that?" Rick asked them.

"Some are, some aren't," Evan said. "Strangely, I think it's brought the community closer. I got a call from Steve Coleman, who is half of the national champion ice dance team. In other words, he's a competitor, and Shawna and I and Warren and Sophia are the ones nipping at he and Sharon's heels. But he called me, offering support, asking if I needed anything, and I know he and Sharon drove to Wisconsin to visit with Warren. There's been a lot of that. Even from overseas, the European skaters. I know a lot of them have been in touch with Warren, and with others of us, offering support. That's been the one good thing to come out of this."

"One thing you have to understand," Liz told Rick, "is that the two people with the most friendships in the skating community are Warren and Sophia. Everybody likes them, even their competitors."

"True," added Evan. "We've been battling it out on the ice for three years now, but Shawna and I both consider Warren and Sophia close friends. They're almost impossible to dislike."

"I was friends with Warren on the internet long before I met him, as was Jack," Liz pointed out. "I think part of the horror is that this happened to **him**. I can't imagine anyone disliking Warren. That makes it worse. They beat the crap out of one of the nicest guys I know. America should know that, and those supporters of that preacher should know that. This was one of the **good** guys, folks."

"Jack, you're not gay, are you?"

"If I am, my wife is in for a rude awakening!" Everyone chuckled at that. "No, I'm hetero."

"In fact, there have been some accusations leveled at you about being homophobic, haven't there?"

"Yeah," Jack sighed. "I don't know if I ever was. Aggressive about pointing out my heterosexuality, would be more accurate. Look, the whole 'you figure skate, you must be gay' thing gets tiring after a while. I got overly aggressive at trying to fend that off, I suppose. I guess what happened to Warren has shown me how futile that is. I can't fight the stereotype. I'm married, my wife is pregnant, but people are going to believe what

they want to believe. **Everybody** in the skating community has known that Warren is straight. But it didn't seem to matter. And, after Warren got beat up, the whole revulsion at the stereotype came roaring back at me. Then I thought, if Warren **was** gay, would this be any, I don't know, more acceptable? And then I thought, would it be any more acceptable if it had happened to Evan, who's a friend of mine? No, it wouldn't. The problem isn't the figure skater equals gay stereotype. The problem is hate. Just took me a while to realize that."

"Warren never had a problem with the stereotype," Liz said.

"Yeah, and **he's** the one that gets beat up over it," Jack sighed. "Although I have found from experience that it is an easier stereotype to deal with when you've found the love of your life already. People thinking I'm gay cost me dates when I was younger." Everybody laughed at that, even Evan. "Warren never had to worry about that," Jack continued with a smile. "He's been with Sophia since he was barely old enough to shave."

"Sophia is his partner?" Rick asked.

"His partner, and his girlfriend, and I expect to be invited to a wedding at some time in the future," Evan said with a chuckle. "And everybody in skating knows it. They are a couple, completely, in every sense of the word. Which makes the whole thing even more nonsensical. Those goons, and that preacher that fanned the flames, have obviously never seen them skate. There's no secret how they feel about one another, and nobody is that good an actor. Shawna and I talk about it all the time, like 'how can we compete with **that?**'" Everyone laughed at that.

"I was friends with Warren on the internet when he met Sophia," Liz added. "They have been through a lot together, and they're still together. It's inspiring, actually," she smiled. "I just hope they can get through this. Warren, Sophia, if you guys are watching, we love you, OK? Get better, Warren!"

"Damn straight," said Jack. "I wanna see you guys at Worlds."

"Heck, **I** even want to see them at Worlds, even though we only get to skate there if they can't," Evan quipped to laughter. "We don't want to make it on a World team this way. Warren, Sophia, I hope you guys can skate. And get three spots for next year so I can go to the damn Olympics!" Everyone cracked up at that.

Sophia looked at Warren watching this on the TV. He looked impassive--until Sophia noticed him surreptitiously wiping his eyes.

The show ended, and a few minutes went by. Sophia heard Warren say, very quietly, "I suppose if one of those guys calls to say hi, it would be OK."

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The next night Sophia upped the ante. She walked into Warren's room with a videotape.

"What's that?"

"Oh, something I wanted to review." She popped it in. It was their performances at Nationals, all of them. The compulsories were first.

"Why are we watching **this**?" Warren complained.

"I want to see a few things. I want to see what we need to tighten up before Worlds. And I want to see what went wrong in the Golden Waltz, so we don't do that again in San Jose."

"I don't know what you're talking about. We're not going to Worlds."

"Yes we are. Now, shut up." He looked at her dumbfounded. She grabbed the remote, and sat next to him in his bed. "Move over, Snugglebear. Now, watch."

"I can't watch this. I don't want to watch this."

"I thought I told you to shut up." Sophia said, cringing inwardly as she did. Warren looked at her in surprise. "You'll get off your ass, and damn quick, or I'm going to go to San Jose and skate with Evan Pogdar."

"You wouldn't!"

"You think I'm going to sit here forever waiting for you to get a grip on yourself?" She cursed inwardly. Mary, she thought, you'd better be right about this. "Now, shut up and watch."

The tape started. The Tango Romantica compulsory was first. "Nothing at all wrong with that. You always could tango up a storm, sweetie," Sophia said. Warren even cracked a bit of a smile. She grabbed his arm. He didn't flinch.

"Now for the waltz." They watched, and got to the point where they went down. Sophia rewound over the spot a few times and rewatched it. "Well, Snugglebear, I think it's apparent that the mistake was all my fault."

"Ah, you slipped off an edge."

Good! She was getting him engaged in this. "Yeah, but it was my mistake. You were spot-on."

"Yeah, but it's an easy mistake to fix," he told her.

"I agree," she said, smiling to herself. "Now, the OD." They watched the program.

"Shit," said Warren, halfway through. "We were on **fire**."

"Damn straight. Mired in fifth place, our backs against the wall, that's when we're at our best. We're fighters, we always have been." Please, please, please, pick up the hint, Warren, she thought.

"Hmmm," was all he said.

"Well, nothing to critique about **that** program," Sophia said. "For something we threw together in a month, it was damn good, wasn't it?"

Warren actually laughed. "That it was."

The Sinatra free dance was next. "There's a few glitches here," Warren said.

"True. Not too many. But I see a few."

"Overall, it was good, though," Warren said.

It ended. The exhibition, "Kiss me Baby," came on next.

Sophia watched it, glancing out of the corner of her eye at Warren. He wasn't saying anything. He was just staring at the screen. The program unfolded on the TV screen. She was still holding his arm, and she felt him squeeze it a little tighter. The program ended, and the tape ran out. She looked at him. There was definitely a tear in his eye.

"You ok, sweetie?"

"Yeah." He wiped his eyes quickly. "Would you mind if I said I'd like to be alone for a little while?"

"Not at all," she lied. "I need to go to my room for a while, anyway."

"OK. I'll see you tomorrow, OK?"

Well, there was a dismissal. He didn't even want her there tonight. "OK, Warren," was all she said.

When she got back to her room, she called Mary, arranging to meet her the next day.

### **SOPHIA'S GAMBLE (Chapter 75)**

"You're on the right track, you know," Mary told Sophia.

"Too bad it doesn't feel that way. Being dismissed out of hand did **not** strike me as a step in the right direction."

"It was. Because he reacted to you as the embodiment of an emotional attraction, and not as his handmaiden, which is what you've been for three weeks. He's letting you take care of him, because that's easier, but he's not reacting to you as **Sophia**, his girlfriend. Last night, you forced him to. " She grinned. "No doubt about it; I've seen that exhibition."

Sophia allowed herself a grin back. "Too true. However, reacting to me as his girlfriend in a **positive** way was more what I was going for. The name of the damn program is 'Kiss Me, Baby.' Warren, this is a fucking **hint**!" she said, exasperatedly to the air.

Mary laughed. "Uh-huh." Then she got serious. "I have to warn you, Sophia, if you're waiting for the big kiss scene, you might be waiting for a while. Since you are the one trying to yank him back into reality, your relationship might get worse before it gets better."

"Oh, great. Then why am I doing this?"

"Because you love him. Because you know he needs to snap out of this."

Sophia sighed. "You're right. But I'd be lying if I said I didn't have a stake in this, too. My life is tied to his. And my need for him is almost overpowering at this point. I'd cut off my left arm if he'd just **touch** me."

"I know."

Sophia laughed. "Now I know what Warren used to talk about. Whenever he'd do something for my benefit, I'd call him Saint Warren. He used to shrug it off, and tell me that I was forgetting about his healthy dose of enlightened self-interest. Now I know what he meant. Yeah, I want him to get better for him, but I must admit that I want him to get better for **me**, too."

"That's OK, Sophia. It really is. You are correct when you say your lives are bound together. And if calling on that enlightened self-interest helps you to remain strong for his sake, then you just keep doing it."

"It would be easier if there was light at the end of the tunnel."

"There **is**," Mary insisted. "No doubt about it. All I'm saying is, expect some hefty bumps before you get out of the tunnel."

"Hmmm."

"And push the issue. You hit a nerve last night. You need to keep hammering it."

"I hope you're right."

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She marched into his room in midafternoon, after they both finished class.

"OK, Snugglebear, up and at 'em."

"Huh?"

"Get up. Get out of bed. Get your skates. We've got ice time."

"I'm not skating."

"Fuck you, you're not skating." She went to his bed and ripped the covers off. "UP!" She went over to his closet, and dug out his skates. "Where are your practice outfits?"

"Dammit, Sophia, I am **not** ready to go back on the ice!"

"The doctor said you could go back on the ice two weeks ago." He was still lying on the bed. "I thought I told you to get up. Come on, Warren, MOVE IT! Worlds are a month away, for Chrissakes. Time's a-wasting."

"I don't want to go to Worlds anyway."

"Fine. You don't want to go to Worlds. You'd rather sit here and lick your wounds. I DON'T CARE ANYMORE! You keep forgetting this is **my** life, too. My life, my career, and my boyfriend, all being flushed down the drain. WE ARE SKATING. TODAY. The longer you put it off, the harder it's going to be."

"Dammit, Sophia, I can't **handle** this right now! Have a little sympathy. You have no idea what I'm going through."

This time her anger wasn't forced, it was genuine. "I **don't**???? YOU HAVE A VERY SHORT FUCKING MEMORY, WARREN!!!!"

"Oh, I know you've been beaten up, but you've never been raped."

"Yes, I have. I skirt around the issue, but I have. One of the guys in between Dirk and Scott. I was definitely unwilling, and he did it anyhow. And you know what the worst part of it was, Warren? After a while, my body started **enjoying** it. My mind was repulsed, but my body got into it. No, I didn't cum--you know you were the first--but I came awfully close. From a rape. And you have **no** clue how dirty that made me feel. I have no idea what you're going through, my ass."

"All right. I'm sorry. But I helped you by loving you, not by yelling at you."

"You didn't yell, but you told me a few truths I probably didn't want to hear. And I've **tried** being the patient, supporting girlfriend. It's not working. Warren, you need a kick in the ass."

"Can't I just heal this in my own way?"

"If there was the slightest indication you were healing, maybe. You're not, Warren, dammit, you're not. You're slipping away from me, bit by bit."

"Well, maybe I need to slip away from you, then."

"FINE!" Sophia blew up. "Slip away from me, slip away from skating, slip away from your friends! Yeah, that will **really** help! Everything you care about! HOW is this getting better, Warren?"

"Because all this shit just causes me pain! If I weren't a fucking skater, I wouldn't have gotten beat up! Don't you see that?"

"And I'm included in that, right?" Sophia said. "Don't answer, Warren, I can see it in your eyes."

"No, Sophia, it's not that....."

"Sure it is," she said sadly. "You skate with me. Your friends are in skating. If we all go away, you can sweep this whole thing under the rug, right? You don't have to think about it. You don't have to feel it. You don't have to feel anything, anymore. Is that what you want?"

He didn't say anything.

"Fine. You know what, Warren? I can't do this anymore. I can't. So, I'm going to leave. You won't have to be reminded anymore." Her heart was breaking as she said it. She looked at him, and he looked like he was going to start to cry. "But, before I go, let me tell you one thing. You used to love skating. You used to love your skating friends. You used to love **life**." She looked down, and a little more softly, said, "And you used to love me." She looked back up at him. "You want to throw that away? Fine. I'm not strong enough to stop you, God knows I've tried. But you need to remember one thing--you know what happens if you throw that all away?"

"What?" he whispered.

"**They** win. The goons that beat you up, that asshole preacher, the people who spread hatred? They win. And love loses, and **you** lose, and the skating world loses.....and I lose more than I can bear." With that, she ran out of the room.

Warren sank down on his bed, in tears. They didn't stop for a long, long time.

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Sophia went up and cried on Elise's shoulder for a while. She called Mary, who gave her encouraging words, but she was still disconsolate.

"I think I went too far," she told Mary.

"You had to. And you know it was an idle threat."

"Maybe. I don't know. I don't know if I can go back there, not with him like he is. Oh, Jesus, I keep trying and failing, don't I?"

"You're doing as much as your able, Sophia. That's all anyone can ask."

-----

She studied for a while, then prepared to go to bed early. She was exhausted. It was about ten o'clock. She was sitting at her desk, trying to get the energy to change into her nightclothes, when the phone rang.

"Hello?"

"It's me," said Warren.

"Hi."

"Can we talk? Please?" he said.

"Sure."

"Can you come down?"

"Be right there." She hung up the phone, looked at Elise and said, "Cross your fingers," and ran to the elevator.

She entered his room to find him sitting at his desk.

"Hi," he said.

"Hi."

"I do love you, you know," he said with a slight smile.

"I know. I love you, too."

Warren took a deep breath. "Sophia, I need help. Please."

"I know, Warren, but you need professional help."

"I need **you**."

She laughed. She sat on the bed. "Well, that's nice to **hear**, anyway, but you need more than me. Please, Warren. I've done all I can." She smiled at him. "I think we both know I've never been the pillar of strength in this relationship."

He moved to sit next to her on the bed. "You've done fine," Warren smiled at her. "You took a hell of a chance the past couple of days."

"Mary's advice."

"Yeah, but **you** did it. It could have backfired."

"Until you called me, I thought it **did**."

"Well, I cried after you left. I hadn't cried you know, after.....well, I hadn't. And then I got mad. I was sitting at the desk because I had to put it back together, because I threw everything that was on it all over the room. First I was mad at you. Then, I realized you weren't the one I should be mad at."

"I know. It's all right. Warren, **please** talk to Mary. You like her. You know she helped me."

He took a deep breath. "OK. It certainly can't hurt."

"Thanks."

"I still don't know how I feel about skating."

"That's understandable. But you'll always have something missing if you don't."

"Yeah." He looked at her. "Would you stay here tonight with me?"

"Sure. I've still got some bedclothes around here." She found a flannel nightie and changed. She started to climb into Tim's bed.

"Sophia?" he called to her. She picked up on his meaning, and walked from Tim's bed to Warren's. She climbed in next to him. He kissed her, long and deep, on the lips.

"Oh, that's so much better," Sophia smiled. They cuddled into one another and fell asleep.

## **GETTING BETTER ALL THE TIME (Chapter 76)**

Warren went to see Mary the next day. Sophia was waiting for him in his room when he got done.

"How'd it go?" she asked.

Warren sighed. "Difficult. You know I've always been pretty well in touch with my emotions--well, for a guy, anyway." They both grinned at that. "And I've shut down since....it happened. And when I try, all I feel is pain, and humiliation, and anger. I feel weak, and abused, and all kinds of horrific things I'm not used to feeling. I never thought of myself as weak, Soph. I can't help it, now."

"I used to think of myself as weak. Then I met this fabulous guy who convinced me otherwise." That got a hint of a smile. "Nobody can be strong all the time, Warren. There were four of them. You had no chance."

"I know. Mary asked me if I thought this would have happened if there was only one of them, and I told her, no fucking way. I'm an athlete. I might not look like a football player, but I can lift **you** off the ground while gliding around on skates. Four of them were just too much. I **know** that, intellectually, but...."

"Been there, done that, could write a book."

"True." He grinned at her. "How's it feel, being the strong stable one for a change?"

"HORRIBLE!" she mock-yelled. They both cracked up laughing. "Warren, if there's anything I've learned, it's this--I love you. Whatever you need, if I can give it, I will."

"Thanks, Pookie. It means a lot."

"And, you can't just resign yourself to feeling bad things. Change your attitude. I know what happened is hard to deal with, but you can't make it your life. Deal with it, sure--that's what Mary is for--but try to get your **life** back, too."

"That's what Mary said. She says I'm avoiding the things that make me feel good, and that I can't if I want to be able to deal with the bad things."

"Right." She reached under his desk and withdrew a bag. "I got us some ice time, starting in twenty minutes."

He looked at his skate bag, and at Sophia. "OK," he said, smiling, taking the bag.

-----

They had an hour. The limbered up some, then ran through the Golden Waltz and the Sinatra. He handled it fairly well, all things considered, Sophia thought. When they were done, she turned to him and said, "How do you feel?"

"Tired and sore all over," he smiled. "I'm still healing physically. My ribs ache, and my wrist is screaming at me. Outside of that? I feel OK."

"Good."

"And I was very glad to see that you didn't fuck up the Golden Waltz again, Pookie," he grinned at her.

"Oh, thanks," she stuck out her tongue at him. "You hungry?"

"Famished."

"Dorm slop?"

"Actually, I'm in the mood for some shrimp with cashews, a little fried rice, maybe an egg roll....."

She beamed at him. "You got yourself a date."

They went to the Chinese restaurant, and grabbed a table. They ordered.

"By the way," Warren said, "I don't think I've said 'thank you.'"

"What for?"

He took a deep breath. "You threatening to leave is the main thing that snapped me out of it. It's probably the only thing that could have. Now, I know why you did it **this** time, but it made me flash back to what happened last semester. And I realized that that was, in some ways, worse than what I'm going through now." He smiled at her. "Even though I thought you might be bluffing this time."

"I probably was," she smiled back. "I **was** at my wits' end, though."

"I know you were. I tell you all the time that I love you. I probably don't make it clear enough how much I need you."

"I know," she smiled. "So, you've seen Mary, you've skated. How do you feel?"

"Shaky. I still feel like I could either burst into tears or go on a murderous rampage in an instant. I also feel very grateful to you, and very much in love with you. So I suppose that's a fair trade."

"Don't be too grateful. Enlightened self-interest, don't you know."

Warren burst into laughter. "Oh, so that's **your** line now? Should I start calling you Saint Sophia?"

"Well....if you **must**....," she teased.

"Hey!" a voice approaching called out. It was Papa Bear and Caitlin.

"Hi guys!" Sophia said.

"Yo, you two. Just walk in?" Warren asked.

"Yup," Caitlin answered.

"Join us, we just ordered," Warren said. Sophia looked at him in happy surprise.

"Don't mind if we do, Lobster-Breath," Papa Bear smiled.

The four friends enjoyed their meal together.

-----

Back in Warren's room, they had studied a bit, and were now getting ready for bed.

"That was nice, seeing Paul and Cait in the Chinese place," Sophia said.

"Yeah, it was. It was blessedly normal." Warren laughed. Then he turned somber. "Now, if I can only get through tonight without a nightmare," he said very softly.

"I know," Sophia said. Warren looked up at her, startled. "Yes, I heard you, and, yes, I know you've been having them. You wake me up more nights than not."

"I'm sorry."

"Warren, don't be sorry for **that**. I just wish there was something I could do."

"Mary says they're normal, and they'll go away when I come to better terms with what happened. You can help by getting in this bed, though. I didn't have one last night, not that I remember, anyway. I know the bed's too small....."

"I don't care. I've only been sleeping in Tim's bed because you were flinching every time I touched you."

"I know. I'm not flinching now, Pookie." They climbed into the bed together. Sophia leaned above Warren and gave him a kiss, and, suddenly he pulled her down on top of him, kissing her with a furious passion.

"Oh, wow, what did I do to deserve that?" Sophia said after they had just broken the kiss.

"Just for being you," Warren said. He kissed her again. "God, I love you so much."

"I love you to, Warren. Everything's going to be OK, you know. You're a strong person."

"So are you, you know." He kissed her again. Then he kissed down her neck. She felt a hand move up under her nightgown and grab hold of her breast. He tugged on the hem of her nightgown with his free hand, and she helped him get it over her head. Her panties were gone in a flash. He stripped off his sweatpants and underwear, and was hovering over her, his hand back on her breast.

"Sophie....I need.....I need....."

"Whatever you need, sweetheart, you know that," she smiled up at him. She felt him, she felt his cock at her entrance. Before she knew it, he was in.

"Oh God!" she screamed. He was pistoning in and out of her like a man possessed. He **did** need this, she thought. That was OK. It was even OK when he came **very** quickly. It didn't matter, she realized. This was for him. It was all right.

And then she realized that it **really** didn't matter, because he was so full of pent-up frustration and lust that he stayed hard. And, then, he was moving in her again, a bit slower and more deliberate this time.

"Twice in a row, Snugglebear? You stud!" she playfully whispered in his ear, and he was rewarded with a huge grin and a noticeable relaxation in his tense back muscles, which she was holding on to. He wasn't wildly flailing to a desperate orgasm this time, he was deliberately rocking back and forth within her, bringing her along with him. "Oh God Warren that's so good, you're so good, oh yeah.....," she whispered in his ear. "Oh YEAH Warren fuck me, fuck me good, make me cum, I need it so bad, oh yeah, fuck me, fuck me...." He kept moving inside her, wanting to bring her along with him. "Oh Warren, oh honey, so close, so close.....uh! uh! uh! uh! UNGGGGYEEEEAAHHHH!!!"

She came down from her orgasm, and he was still pounding away at her. "Oh Warren, baby, you **are** a stud tonight!" she gasped. "Oh, yeah, keep that up and I'll be going again...oh GOD!"

"You like being fucked, Sophie?" he growled in her ear.

"Oh YEAH Warren...OhGod....OhGod....Fuck! Fuck!"

"You want it harder, Sophie!"

"Harder! Harder! Fuck me harder, Warren! Oh please!" He picked up the pace. "OH YEAH!" she screamed.

"You ready to cum again?" he asked her.

"Close....real close....." He slammed into her, and she arched her back and came again, just as he poured his seed into her.

They collapsed on the bed. After a couple minutes, Warren spoke.

"My...ribs....HURT!"

Sophia couldn't help but giggle. "Between the skating and **that**, you might've overexerted yourself a bit, sweetie."

"It wasn't the skating," he said. Sophia cracked up laughing.

"You needed that in any case," she said simply.

"True. It's just that I'm too sore to do my usual thorough job on you."

"That's OK. I came twice, what else can a girl ask for?"

"You're right, though, I needed that. I'd apologize for being a bit rough at first if it weren't for the fact that you **like** it that way."

Sophia giggled. "You're right, but tonight was for you in any case."

"Thanks, Pookie."

"Thank **you**. It's been a while."

"You've been patient."

"Horny, but patient," she giggled. "Good night, my love."

"Good night, ruler of my heart."

-----

They got back on the ice in earnest, and word spread throughout the skating world. The messages of support and encouragement poured in.

Warren, with Mary's help and Sophia's support, slowly got better. The nightmares came much less frequently. And, he decided to fight back. Preacher Watson held a rally on campus, hoping that the ruckus had died down. Warren, and his friends, made sure it didn't. They made up a pamphlet, entitled "This is what 'Reverend' Watson's hateful words can do," detailing what had happened to Warren, and he and his friends handed it out at the rally. The crowd thinned considerably.

The University community as a whole was very supportive. Their practices started to fill up with people supporting and encouraging them. Sophia joked they should start charging admission.

Shortly, it was time for Worlds.

## SOMETHING TO GRAB FOR (Chapter 77)

They landed in San Jose on a Saturday afternoon for their second World Championships. Their practices started on a Sunday, and their competition was Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday.

They were not in their room an hour, when there was a knock at the door. "Hi, Liz!" Sophia greeted her.

"Hiya, Soph. Hi, Warren!" She ran over to him and wrapped him in a bear hug. "I'm so happy you're here."

"So am I," he grinned at her.

"We're all getting together in the hotel restaurant for supper, a whole bunch of us. Six o'clock. Everyone starts practice tomorrow, so we unwind a little tonight. And you guys **have** to be there," Liz informed them.

"Sounds great!" Sophia agreed.

-----

They walked in to be greeted by an impressive array of skating talent. Evan Pogdar was the first to greet them as they walked in.

"Ev. Thanks for all the support. It was appreciated more than you know," Warren told him.

"Aah, it's nothing."

"It wasn't nothing, trust me. Too bad you don't get to skate."

"I'm **glad** I don't get to skate. You earned the spot. Remember what I said, though--three spots next year!"

"Aye aye sir."

They continued into the room, being waylaid by well wishers at every turn. They finally grabbed a table with Jack Garrison and his wife, Chris Arsenault, and Liz Cushman.

"Varren, Dahling!" It was world champion Olga Bradochkina.

"Olga! Dobriy vyecher! Kak Dela?"

"Ochen khorosho, moy drug, a tyi?"



"Ni plokho, maya podrug Olga, spacibo."(\*)

"Ah, Warren," Olga switched to her accented English, "is good to see you here. After that horrible thing....."

"It's over, Olga. I'm here."

"Is good thing. You feel good?"

"Yes, I do. Pretty much all healed. Ready to go and kick your ass!"

Olga cracked up laughing. "Tenth to first, Warren? You dream big like Siberia, yes?"

"Yes! Nope, it's just good to be here. I just want to skate."

"Good. I will be vatching."

"Nice to see you, Olga."

"You also, dahling. Do svidanya."

"She is a trip and a half, that lady," Jack opined.

"That she is. The phrase 'her bark is worse than her bite' should have been invented for her," Warren agreed. "Underneath the bluster that the TV audience sees, she's a dear."

They greeted other friends, and chatted with the folks at their table into the night.

-----

"I hate early morning practices," Warren grumbled, as they stepped onto the ice at 7am.

"You never were a morning person, Snugglebear," Sophia said.

"Well, yeah."

"It's not that early, though, you know. It's 9am in Wisconsin."

"True. Still too damn early." Warren looked up in the stands. "There's a lot of people here for an early morning, early week ice dance practice, isn't there?"

"Yeah. The French are on this practice though." Sophia was talking about Nicole Borisina and Michel Dravouche, fourth in the world last year and poised to move up. "They've been attracting a lot of attention. And Steve and Sharon are here, too, and they're the National Champions."

It was a free dance practice. Sophia and Warren watched the other couples run through their free dance. They were second-to-last to skate. The French, Nicholas and Coleman, and some other teams skated before them. They noticed that, if the crowd were here to see the French, or Steve and Sharon, they didn't seem to pay much attention when they were skating.

"How you feel?" Sophia asked him as they prepared to run through their program.

"Ask me **after** I've had about three more cups of coffee."

"No time for that, sweetie, we're on," Sophia giggled at him.

"Next to skate, representing the United States of America, Sophia Daniels and Warren Kelleher," the rink announcer intoned.

Sophia noticed it first. The applause. The cheering. A group of teenage girls yelled "WE LOVE YOU WARREN!!!"

"Oh my God," Sophia realized. "They're here for **us**."

Warren couldn't speak. All he could do was grin and blush.

"Can you skate in the face of all this adoration, my dear?" Sophia smirked.

That brought him back down to the ice. "I think I can manage," he grinned. The music for their Sinatra program started, and they flew through it almost perfectly. They never stopped smiling, and the folks in the stands never stopped cheering.

-----

It was like that all week. Every practice, there was more people there, apparently to support Warren and Sophia. There was even a decent crowd for the compulsory dances, which is unheard of.

"You see what I told you?" Sophia told him in their room one night after they had discussed it. "You chose love over hate. You chose hope over despair. And you're getting it all back."

"And then some," Warren agreed, a little teary-eyed at the thought. "I'm so glad you kicked my ass into getting back on the ice, Pookie."

"You just remember that," she smiled at him.

-----

Politics is an ever-present reality in ice dance. It reared its head in the compulsories.

At Worlds, there are three different judging panels. One for the first compulsory, a completely different one for the second compulsory, and a third one--drawn from the first two--for the original dance and free dance.

The first compulsory went almost to form. The first seven places were exactly where they had been at last years' Worlds: the two Russian pairs one and two, the Canadians third, the French fourth, the Germans fifth, Nicholas and Coleman sixth, and the Italians seventh. Warren and Sophia finished eighth, and were thrilled.

However, there was some maneuvering with the judges for the second compulsory. This panel included the Russian, French, Italian, and German judges, and they found a fifth to work with to control the panel. The two Russian teams were still one-two in the second compulsory, but the Italians and Germans were three-four, with the Canadians down to fifth. The Italians were put in sixth, with Nicholas and Coleman dumped down to eighth. The unwitting beneficiaries of this skullduggery were Sophia and Warren, who were placed seventh, above the perceived "greater threat" of Nicholas and Coleman.

This irony was not lost on either Sophia or Warren. Neither was another--this was the Golden Waltz. "From eighth at Nationals to seventh at Worlds. Nice thing, this bloc judging, eh?" Warren laughed.

"Good thing I didn't fall down!" Sophia cracked.

-----

The judging panel for the original dance and free dance must have disappointed the conspirators. Only the French and the Italians were drawn for the third panel. Both the Americans and Canadians were on it, plus a bunch of judges representing nations with no big stake in the outcome. It was rumored that strong efforts by the French to form a coalition fell on deaf ears.

Sophia and Warren were in the middle of the pack, in terms of skate order, for the OD. They were after the second Russians and the Germans, but before all the rest of the teams above them. They knew that mattered, but not as much as some fans seemed to think it did. They just wanted to skate well. They knew the program was a winner, especially after seeing the parade of typical march music that most of the other teams were skating to. They knew their upbeat pop song would grab the crowd, at least.

Little did they know, until they stepped on the ice, that there was no need to grab the crowd. The house was packed, and when their names were announced, it erupted.

"Oh my God," said Warren, looking incredulously into the stands, disbelieving.

"It really is something," Sophia. The loud applause and cheering didn't let up until they had maneuvered into their starting position.

"Let's give 'em something to cheer about," Warren said.

"Damn straight," Sophia agreed.

The music started. If they had attacked this program at Nationals--well, then, here, they grabbed it by the throat and strangled it until it surrendered. They went at the program like two people possessed. It was intense, and furious, and altogether fantastic. The crowd hammered their hands together on every beat, spurring them on. Their usual smiles were replaced by expressions of furious intensity--especially for Warren, who was seemingly trying to use the power of the adoring crowd to purge himself of two months of pain with two and a half minutes of skating. It worked. When they finished, the crowd went nuts--but the loudest scream came from down on the ice, from Warren, who let out a bellow as he raised his hands above his head in a moment of glorious triumph. The crowd roared its approval.

They took their bows with even wider than usual smiles on their faces. The crowd sent them off with a standing ovation, and a hailstorm of flowers and teddy bears. Warren grabbed one, which he had seen thrown on the ice by a girl in the front row who was no more than eight years old. It was a teddy bear, embroidered to say "Get Well Soon Warren." He threw a kiss at the little girl as he carried the teddy off into the kiss and cry.

"I'm dumbstruck," June, their coach, said.

"I'm exhausted!" admitted Warren with a laugh.

Their marks came up. They were very high. "And we earned every damn five-eight," Sophia quipped. When the ordinals came up, they realized something. They were in first place in the OD.

"Hey, wait a minute!" Warren realized. "Yatserova and Vaglach already skated. We beat them! They were second in the world last year and WE FUCKING BEAT THEM!!!!"

By the time the evening had ended, they had beaten everyone except for Bradochkina and Zhargov. They had finished second in the OD, and were fourth overall. "Hey, we get to skate in the last group in the free dance!" Sophia realized excitedly.

They did what they always did on the night after an OD--they made love. It was playful and joyous--the perfect end to a perfect day.

-----

It wasn't until the next day that they really realized where they were. They were eating breakfast, when Sophia said the M word.

"You know, Warren, we have a chance to win a medal tonight."

"No way. The French are right behind us. They'll pass us, we'll finish fifth. Which would be an astounding outcome."

"I agree with that part, but you never know. The panel is all over the place. We got ordinals in the OD from first to seventh. With this set of judges, anything's possible."

"I don't even want to **think** about it," Warren stated.

"Don't want to get nervous?" Sophia teased him.

"I'm **already** nervous! Skating in the last group makes me nervous!"

"Not just that--remember, sweetie, we're skating dead last."

"That's right. Thanks for reminding me. Now I'm **really** nervous! Look, you don't win a medal in your second World Championships, not in ice dance, not unless you're Russian."

"We'll see."

-----

They took their warm-up that night, then grabbed a seat near a TV backstage, so they could watch the proceedings.

Nicholas and Coleman were first. "They were great," said Warren. The French came next, and beat Steve and Sharon handily.

"I'm not much impressed," said Sophia. "More overacting to bad movie music."

"I agree, but they beat Sharon and Steve."

The Canadians were next. Renee Damphier and Christian Gaudler were fan favorites, especially in North America, and their program this year really danced.

"You know, they're my favorite dance team that isn't us," Warren joked. "And, look, the judges did the right thing. They're in first. They beat the French."

The second Russian team was next. They had a rough go, falling once and stumbling another time. "And I am distinctly unimpressed by that program," Sophia said. They fell behind the Canadians and French, but ahead of Nicholas and Coleman.

"They're setting us up. They're going to slot us right in between the French and the Russians, because that's the only way the French get on the podium."

"You're a cynic." Sophia teased him. They were walking towards the ice, preparing to skate their program. Bradochkina and Zhargov were skating now--their winning was a foregone conclusion, they were so far ahead. Sophia and Warren barely watched them.

"You know how my sister Kate is a huge college hoops fan?" Sophia asked Warren. He nodded. "She's got a quote on her wall. It's from the late Jim Valvano, and it's something he said at halftime of the national championship game, the one where his North Carolina State team won in an upset. The quote says, 'All that's left to do is to go out and win the whole damn thing. There's no reason not to, now.'" She looked up at Warren. "Warren, my sweet Snugglebear, let's go out and win a damn medal. There's no reason not to."

He smiled at her, and took her hand. Olga and Nikolai were ending their program. They skated off the ice, and Sophia and Warren, greeted them with handshakes. Olga shouted, "Good luck, Warren and Sophia!" as they stepped onto the ice. They waited at the end of the rink, until their names were announced.

The place absolutely exploded. A standing ovation, before they had even skated a step.

"I don't believe this, I really don't believe this." Warren said. He was trying desperately not to cry. He swiped at his eyes. He didn't want to wave at the crowd to shut up, but this was overwhelming--and he had to **skate**, and soon.

Sophia realized what was going on. She looked into his eyes, with a twinkle in her own, and said to him, "Just think, Snugglebear, if we win a medal, this place is going to go into **orbit!**"

Warren cracked up laughing. That was all it took. He composed himself, and he and Sophia took their starting positions. Frank Sinatra filled the arena, and they were off.

It wasn't like the OD--this wasn't an attacking program, except a little near the end, so they didn't attack. They glided, gracefully and surely, staying right on beat, dancing around the ice. It also, unlike the OD, wasn't perfect--there was one little bobble, and one place where they almost missed a handhold but covered up well. Who knows what the judges saw. But it was good, **damn** good, and they finished up happy with how they had skated. The crowd was insane. More screams, more flowers and teddy bears. Warren and Sophia ate it up.

"I done all I can, I canna do no more!" Warren said to June and Sophia as he climbed off the ice. He wasn't kidding. It had all caught up to him, and he was exhausted and in pain.

"How you feeling?" Sophia asked him.

"Who, me? Besides the fact that it feels like I just rebroke my ribs, I feel just ducky. Oh SHIT this hurts. It hurt last night after the OD, but this is worse. I was skating on pure adrenaline at the end."

"Oh, poor baby," Sophia said, wrapping her arm in his. "We'll get you back to the hotel room and I'll rub something on it."

"Just have Garrison get me something that I'm too young to buy, and I'll be fine," Warren quipped.

The marks came up. They were good. "You're definitely in there," said June. It was close. They waited, looking at the scoreboard, for the final standings to be posted.

First--Bradochkina and Zhargov. Second--Damphier and Gaudler. Third--Daniels and Kelleher.

The crowd went absolutely bonkers.

"I TOLD YOU! I TOLD YOU!" Sophia screamed. "WE WON A MEDAL, I TOLD YOU!"

"That you did, Pookie," Warren said with a broad smile. "I'm not quite sure I believe it yet."

They may have been the happiest bronze medal winners ever.

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(\*)Translation? You want a translation? Nobody speaks Russian? Sigh.....

"Olga! Good evening! How are you?"

"Very well, my friend, and you?"

"Not bad, my dear Olga, thank you."

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### **GLORY DAYS (Chapter 78)**

Sandra Willis, the television ice dance expert (and former dancer herself) later said it was perhaps the most delightful interview she had ever conducted.

"It is only your second Worlds," she began, "and you win a bronze medal, the first medal by an American Ice Dance team in almost twenty years. How does it feel?"

"I think I'm still in shock," Warren laughed.

"After all we've been through this year, it's a miracle," Sophia said. They were sitting on a bench in the kiss and cry for the interview, arms wrapped around one another, with Sharon next to them.

"Yes, it has been a difficult couple of months for you, especially you, Warren. How are you?"

"Well, physically, I'm a little under the weather," he chuckled. "My ribs are sore. But who cares at this point? Other than physically? I'm getting there. The support we've gotten, both in the skating world and back at Wisconsin, has been a big help. Thanks, folks, you know who you are."

"Not to mention the crowds here. What a trip!" Sophia smiled.

"Absolutely," Warren agreed. "Anyone who was here in San Jose but taped the broadcast for later viewing, this is for you. Thank you, from the bottom of our hearts."

"Did the crowd make a difference in your skating?" Sandra asked.

"Oh, you bet it did!" Sophia said. "When we took the ice for the free dance, and they went nuts, I turned to Warren and said, 'Let's give these people a medal.' I don't think we win anything without the crowd frenzy."

"Warren, there have been reports that you almost quit skating after what happened," Sandra said.

"True. I had trouble getting back on the ice. Let's face it, I got beat up **because** I'm a skater. But what happened here made it all worth it, it really did. And I don't mean winning a medal, either."

"You guys will go into an Olympic year as the reigning world bronze medallists. Have you thought of that?" Sandra asked.

"NO!" Warren laughed.

"We just want to go. Luckily, we and Steve and Sharon nailed down that third spot, so it'll be easier," said Sophia.

"Yeah, and hopefully our friends Evan and Shawna will be there, too," Warren added.

"Thank you both, and congratulations." Sandra ended the interview.

-----  
They watched the rest of the World Championships. Unfortunately, their friends didn't do very well. Jack Garrison fell to fourth place, behind two young Russians in first and third and Canadian veteran Mickey Kivyanich in second. The ladies' battle between Liz



Cushman and Christine Arsenault was pre-empted by Olga Privolchina, from Russia. Liz was second and Christine third. Andrea and Brett had hoped to move into the medals in pairs, but finished fifth. Again, Russians won--in this case, Natalya Zhailenya and Igor Stanskiy won their third straight world title, but were pushed by a new Canadian pair, Jennie Sellers and Denis Poulin.

Warren and Sophia actually thought Sellers and Poulin should have won. "Russians get overmarked in this sport, in every discipline, it drives me nuts," Warren said. Sellers and Poulin had previously competed with other partners, and had some success, but it didn't really come together until they joined up with each other. This was only their second season together. Warren and Sophia took to them immediately. They were great to watch.

Sophia thought she spotted something about them, and, when she was introduced to Jennie Sellers at the competitors' party, she asked her. "Are you guys together off the ice."

"Why, yes," Jennie said, "but not too many people know that. How did you?"

"I watched you skate," Sophia smiled. "You reminded me of **us**, Warren and me."

"Ah," Jennie smiled.

As an added bonus, they got to do the exhibition, so they got to skate "Kiss Me Baby" again, in front of a still-rapturous crowd.

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Back on campus, they found themselves more recognized than before. Warren was a little wary at first, but eventually loosened up. The four goons who beat him were in jail, the trial would probably start sometime in the fall. The list of charges was enormous.

A couple of days after they had come back, they were studying together in Warren's room.

"Oh, I forgot to tell you. Elise has a new girlfriend. Her name is Donna. I think it's serious."

"What about Alexa?"

"I don't know. Elise didn't talk about that."

"I haven't seen Alexa since I've been back, come to think of it. I wonder how she took this."

"Hmmm....take a study break, Snugglegear, go up there and see how she's doing."

"Good idea." He kissed Sophia, and went to the elevators, and up to 15. He knocked on her door.

"Who is it?"

"Warren." She opened the door for him. She didn't look particularly good, but she offered Warren a weak smile.

"Hiya, Prep Stud. Sorry I haven't had a chance to come see you. That was a hell of a performance, I watched the whole thing."

"Thanks, Lex. Listen, are you OK?"

"Just ducky. Why do you ask?"

"I heard you and Elise ended."

Alexa sighed. "I always knew it was temporary. I like Elise, a lot, but I wasn't in love with her, and I **do** prefer guys. It is just getting depressing going from one temporary thing to another. I knew you were temporary, too. But now you're back with Sophia, Elise has Donna, Cait has Papa Bear.....It's just getting a little depressing."

"Hey, you'll find someone. You have a lot to offer."

"Yeah, like a sexual history that reads like a porn actress."

"Huh? This doesn't sound like you, Lex."

"I know. I was thinking about it, though, hearing about Cait and Paul, and how happy they are that they waited for one another, and I think, who's going to have me? What guy wants a girl who's been as active as I have for any kind of long-term thing? I am what I am, I suppose."

"Hey. Sophia had a history when I met her, you know. Considering how young she was at the time, it probably should have been more of an obstacle. It wasn't."

Alexa smiled at him. "You, my dear Warren, are not an ordinary kind of guy." The smile faded. "I guess one of the problems is that I don't know if I'm capable of truly falling in love. I never really have been in love, you know."

"Well, Lex, only you can answer that."

"It's weird. I see what, for instance, you and Sophia have. I desperately want it for myself with someone, **and** it scares me to death, all at the same time."

"I can see that."

"You **can**?"

"Yeah. It's the most wonderful thing in the world, but it **can** be scary. I lived without her for two months, not knowing whether or not I'd ever get her back again. Just the slightest, tiniest **thought** of the chance of that ever happening again is terrifying."

Alexa thought about what she wanted to say to that. "Warren, if it was going to happen again, it would have already done so--during the last two months. You don't know what it took Sophia to keep going back to your room every day, the way you were. It broke her heart. Hell, it broke **my** heart, and I don't feel about you the way she does. You want to talk about terrified? She was."

"I know. But I wasn't in my right mind, and for a pretty damn good reason."

"I know that, and she knows that. But, if you two can make it through **that, and** the breakup before it, you can make it through absolutely anything. I think she knows that, and I **know** you know that."

"You're right. You understand True Love better than you let on sometimes, you know."

Alexa laughed. "From the outside looking in!"

Warren thought for a minute. "So, what are you going to do?"

"Same as I've always done. Keep looking for True Love--and, in the meantime, enjoy Good Sex."

Warren cracked up. "You're something else, Alexa."

"Yes, I am." She looked at him appraisingly. "You think Sophia would let me borrow you, for old times' sake?"

"Uh, well, you'd have to take that up with **her**."

She grinned at him. "I might."

"Oh shit!"

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"Elise is moving out." Sophia told Warren a week later.

"Really?"

"Donna has a double that she's living in alone, so Elise is going to move in. Nothing against me, no hard feelings, and we're still friends. I'm happy for her."

"So, now we both have singles."

"Well, mine might not last. I'm thinking about asking Caitlin if she wants to move in with me next year. Her roommate is a real bitch, and Cait is not happy about it."

"Good idea. Hey, if Tim lives with John next year, I'm going to need a new roommate. They'll probably assign me one in any case, so I might ask Papa Bear, because he doesn't get along with his, either."

"That would work. We can just switch back and forth," Sophia grinned.

They talked to Caitlin and Papa Bear, and it was decided.

### **NEVER SAY NEVER (Chapter 79)**

"Yeah, I told him I was going to ask you to loan him out." Alexa said with a smile.

Sophia cracked up. They were hanging out in Alexa's room. Warren was studying. Finals were in about two weeks, and he was still playing catch-up a bit after Worlds, so Sophia and Alexa were just hanging out.

"Sure," Sophia said.

"I was just kidding, you know," Alexa said.

"That's OK. I'm not all that possessive about sex. I was upset that you were sleeping with him when we broke up, but that's because we were broken up. Now? I really wouldn't care, as long as he asked and didn't sneak around about it."

"Wow. That's an amazing attitude. Do you think he would say the same thing?"

"Probably. We really haven't talked about it. But I know you know about Jason and Jessie."

"True, but that was different. It was a trade."

"Yeah. But Warren is distinctly unpossessive about sex. Love, yes, sex, no. In fact, when we got back together after our breakup, he told me that if the big problem had been how Eduardo was turning me on, then the problem would have been easily solved."

"Warren would have told you to go for it."

"Right."

Alexa sat for a minute, wanting to ask Sophia something, but not quite sure how to go about it. "Sophia, when you and Warren and Jason and Jessie were doing that swapping and the threesomes and whatever.....did you and Jess do anything?"

Sophia giggled. "No. In fact we seemed to go out of our way to avoid it."

"Not something you're interested in?"

"No. Well I suppose not. **Definitely** not with Jessie, that would be way too heavy."

"Well, not with Jessie then. Have you ever been curious?"

"I suppose, maybe, once in a while. Elise used to kid me about it being too bad I was straight, and I'd occasionally have a little flash. Y'know, maybe.....but I never acted on it. Why do you ask?"

"Why do you think? I'm bisexual, I'm horny, and you're sexy as hell."

Sophia cracked up laughing. "Alexa, you're more direct than most guys I know."

"I've been told that." She looked at Sophia. "You're thinking about it, aren't you?"

Sophia laughed. "Naaaah. Warren would have kittens."

"You're wrong about that, and I think you know it." She leaned closer in to Sophia. Sophia's eyes got wide. Alexa's face was an inch away from hers. "Sophia, you say stop, I stop. You tell me you're not curious, I stop. If you really think that Warren would have a problem with this, you say so, and I stop."

Alexa waited a minute. Sophia just stared at her, but didn't say anything. Alexa lowered her head, and their lips met. Sophia was startled for a moment, but then began returning the kiss. When she did, Alexa reached over with a hand and started massaging Sophia's breast. Sophia felt her breath catch in her throat.

A million different things were running through her mind. She couldn't believe she was being kissed and felt up by another woman--and she really couldn't believe that it felt **good**. She knew Alexa would stop if she said to. She should. She should stop this now. She didn't want to.

And, the next thing she knew, Alexa was undoing the buttons on her blouse and reaching behind her to unclasp her bra. Alexa went to Sophia's bare tit with her hand, massaging it and playing with her erect nipple. Then she reached out and took Sophia's shirt and bra all the way off. She broke the kiss, and started kissing her way down, down Sophia's neck and shoulders, until she settled her lips on Sophia's nipple.

Oh my God, thought Sophia. She's doing this. I'm actually letting her do this, and I **like** it! As Alexa devoured her tit, Sophia flushed and her breathing became more labored. Alexa

pushed Sophia back so that she was lying on the bed, and Sophia complied. The next thing she knew, she felt Alexa's hands on the outside of her legs, up underneath her skirt, tugging on her panties.

Sophia's mind raced. If I am going to stop this, I need to stop this **now**. It is about to go too far. I need to stop this. Or, I could just raise my ass up, and let her get them off.....

Sophia raised her ass up. Her panties were off in a flash. Alexa was still working on her tits with her mouth, but Sophia felt Alexa's fingers rubbing gently up and down her pussy lips, tentatively, just tracing them up and down. Sophia felt chills running up and down her. Alexa, satisfied that Sophia was good and wet, ended the gentle tracing and slipped two fingers up into Sophia's pussy.

"AAAHH!!!" Sophia groaned at the intrusion. Alexa started moving her fingers in and out. "Oh Jesus," moaned Sophia, her arousal increasing with every second. Alexa had small, dainty fingers, and her touch was gentle, but she knew how to move those fingers around inside a girl's pussy. She traced circles, separated them, wiggled them around, and then made a beeline with them to Sophia's G-spot. "OOOH!" Sophia gasped, as Alexa went to work on her G-spot. It wasn't long before Sophia was gasping for air, desperate for release. Alexa obliged-she brought her other hand down and zeroed in on Sophia's clit, rubbing and pinching it. Sophia let out a few high-pitched whines and then screamed, her orgasm taking her over.

Alexa didn't let up. She paused for a second while Sophia came down, but immediately started back up again with the fingers in Sophia's pussy. Sophia groaned deeply. Then, Alexa took the hand away from Sophia's clit, moved down, and replaced it with her tongue. "AAYEEEEIII!!!" Sophia screamed, as Alexa's tongue hammered away at Sophia's clit. Sophia was out of this world by now, writing around on the bed, building up to a second climax. To help her on her way, Alexa took her free hand, rubbed two fingers in Sophia's pussy juices to lubricate them, and reached around and slipped the two fingers into Sophia's ass.

"OHFUCK!!!" Sophia screamed, followed by a long, keening siren wail. Her back arched, and her hips involuntarily rocked back and forth, as her pussy spasmed around Alexa's fingers. "OHGODOHGODOHGOD!!!!" she howled, lost in her orgasm. Finally, she relaxed and settled back on the bed, trying to catch her breath.

Alexa crawled up from between her legs, and sat next to her on the bed, smiling. Sophia caught her breath, and opened her eyes. She smiled back at Alexa. "Wow," was all she said.

"I told you you'd like it," Alexa said.

Sophia thought for a minute. Alexa still had all her clothes on. All this had been for Sophia's pleasure, so far, anyway. It was Alexa's turn. Sophia was about to make love to another girl. Could she do that? Did she **want** to do that? She looked up at Alexa smiling at her and decided, yeah, she did.

"Your turn," Sophia said, and reached for Alexa's shirt to pull it off of her. Alexa wasn't wearing a bra. Sophia pushed her back on the bed, and went to work on her tits with her mouth. It was.....interesting, Sophia thought. Not to mention kind of fun. And, she had to admit, more than a little bit arousing. She felt herself getting turned on again, just from sucking on Alexa's tit. And she must be doing **something** right, because Alexa was making delightful little noises.

She moved her hands down to the snap on Alexa's jeans, and undid them. Alexa helped Sophia shrug her jeans and panties off. Sophia moved her hands down, and went to work on Alexa's pussy, two fingers up inside her, the other hand on her clit. This was fun, but, then again, Sophia knew what she was doing--she had done herself enough times with her fingers. But, this was her first time with her hands on another girl's pussy, and she enjoyed watching Alexa build up, and then stiffen and spasm in her orgasm.

"Wow," Alexa said to her. "You sure you've never done that before?"

"Well, of course I have. To myself." They both cracked up laughing. "The **other** thing you did to me, however....." Sophia trailed off. Alexa knew what she was talking about.

"Completely up to you, Sophia." Alexa told her.

Sophia thought about it, and then slipped down on the bed, and aimed her face in at Alexa's pussy. She tentatively licked up and down Alexa's labia, causing Alexa to shudder. Then, she moved her tongue to Alexa's opening, and slowly stuck it in.

Sophia was a little surprised. Warren had always told her that he **liked** the taste and texture of a pussy on his tongue, but she had never quite believed him. She thought he had just been saying that because he liked doing it to her. But, she realized, he wasn't lying. It was pleasant--she liked it, too.

She moved her tongue in and out of Alexa's opening for a bit, delighting at her groans as she did so. Then she moved up Alexa's pussy with her tongue, and approached her clit. She licked in circles around it, getting close but not making direct contact, and then started making occasional swipes at it, as she still circled around it. Alexa yelped every time Sophia grazed over it. Sophia continued to tease her for a while, and then zeroed in, relentlessly pounding Alexa's clit with her tongue. "OH! OH! OH! OH! OH!" Alexa yelped. Sophia felt her get close, then slipped two fingers up into her pussy. "OH SHIT!" Alexa screamed, and climaxed, long and hard.

Alexa opened her eyes to see Sophia grinning at her. "You are a **quick** learner," Alexa gasped.

"I had a good teacher," Sophia said, still grinning. Alexa looked at her questioningly. "You forget," Sophia continued, "I have my pussy eaten by a certified expert on a regular basis. A girl is bound to pick up a few things."

Alexa cracked up laughing. "You're right." Her laughter stopped, but she was still smiling. "So, Sophia," she asked, "Did you have fun? Did you enjoy yourself?"

Sophia smiled and nodded. Alexa reached for her, and they embraced, kissing deeply, their tits grinding together. Alexa moved a leg in between Sophia's legs and ground her thigh into Sophia's pussy. Sophia groaned, and moved her leg to return the favor. They clung together for a bit, bodies grinding into one another. Alexa reached around and undid Sophia's skirt, which was still on, and pulled it off and threw it on the floor. Then Alexa gently pushed Sophia off of her, and maneuvered herself so that she had flipped herself on the bed, her feet where her head was and vice-versa. Sophia giggled as Alexa reached out and pulled her back down, Sophia's pussy aiming right for Alexa's mouth. Sophia got the idea, and aimed her own mouth at Alexa's pussy. Sophia was six inches taller than Alexa, but it must have been mostly in the legs, because she fit just fine.

They 69'ed each other to a couple more orgasms each, and then snuggled in next to one another in blissful, contented sleep.

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Sophia woke up first, slightly disoriented. Then she realized where she was. She smiled, and woke Alexa up with a kiss. Alexa woke up surprised, then returned the kiss.

"Morning," Sophia said.

"Morning yourself." She looked at Sophia. "So, how do you feel?"

"About what happened?" Sophia asked. Alexa nodded. "Well, I enjoyed it. It was fun. Part of me is glad I did it. But I do feel a little guilty."

"Why?"

"Because I did it behind Warren's back."

"Sophia, it just kind of happened. If you **tell** him, now, it will be all right."

"Probably. I guess I'm also feeling guilty at how much enjoyed it. Hell, I've **never** had a lesbian impulse in my **life** before the past year. I had a thought, once or twice, when Elise propositioned me--but I thought that that was just because Warren and I were apart at the time. But we're **not** apart, anymore, and you propositioned me, and I actually went through with it. And enjoyed myself. It's rather disconcerting."

"Let me ask you a question. Did you prefer it to sex with men?"

"No. It was a lot of fun, but I prefer men. And I **definitely** prefer men if men means Warren. No offense intended."



"None taken," Alexa smiled. "You forget, I've been to bed with the Prep Stud a time or two myself." They both giggled. "I prefer men myself. But I **like** women, and there's no man around in my case. In your case, it was curiosity, I know that. You're not going to dump Warren for me, or any woman, I know that."

"True."

"In fact, you'd probably be content if you never did it again."

"Well, I'm not so sure about **that**," Sophia laughed. "I think I have discovered I like the feel of a pussy on my tongue. Just one more thing I have in common with my boyfriend, I guess." Alexa howled at that one.

"Well, you know, Sophia, you're still here, and we're still naked, so.....don't let me stop you."

Sophia cracked up laughing, and then decided, what the hell. She moved down and buried her face between Alexa's legs, licking up and down her pussy.

Just then, there was a knock on the door.

"Hey, Alexa, you up? It's Warren. I'm looking for breakfast company, and my girlfriend seems to have disappeared off the face of the earth."

Alexa grinned wickedly at Sophia, and said, "She's right here, Warren."

"What are you doing?" Sophia whispered at her.

"This early?" Warren was saying.

"Hi honey!" Sophia yelled.

"Hi Pookie. You guys want to go to breakfast?"

"Um.....well.....we're not dressed yet, why don't you go to your room and we'll come down, OK?" Sophia said in a very nervous voice.

"I can wait here. Heck, I've seen you both undressed, anyhow. And **why** are you undressed? Did you leave your room without any clothes on, Pookie?"

"Uh....well.....oh shit....." Sophia said. "Well, I kind of fell asleep in Alexa's room last night."

"Undressed? Sophia, what is going on in there? Do you two have a guy in there or something?"

"NO! Of course not, Warren." Sophia said. "Oh, shit. I was going to tell you this anyway. You have to believe me that I was going to tell you what happened last night."

"What happened last night, Pookie?"

Sophia sighed. "Open the door, Warren. And please don't kill me."

Warren opened the door, to be greeted by the site of Alexa, stark naked on the bed, her legs spread wide open.....and Sophia, also stark naked, with her head perched in between Alexa's legs. It was obvious what he had interrupted.

His eyes bulged out of his head in surprise, as Sophia looked up at him apologetically. And then he started..... **laughing!**

"Now I have seen **everything**," he said.

Sophia looked up at him in amazement. He was **laughing**? "You're not mad?"

"Well, is this permanent? Has she totally sucked you over to the 'dark side' and you're going to swear off males for all time?"

"NO! Of course not! Not the slightest hint of a chance." Sophia said.

"I didn't think so. In that case, then I'm not mad." Warren said. He was still smiling. "I think I'll let you two.....uh.....carry on, I'll find another breakfast partner." Still laughing and shaking his head, he left the room.

"I am the luckiest girl in the world, you know that?" Sophia said after he had left.

"Yes, I do know that," Alexa said, smiling at her.

Sophia smiled back. "Now, where was I?" she said, and moved her face back in between Alexa's legs.

## MY BEAUTIFUL REWARD (Chapter 80)

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\*\*\*\*\*Author's note: this is now the fourth chapter of this epic that has a title that is taken from the title of a Bruce Springsteen song. And that's not including Santa Claus is Coming To Town. Of course, I also have chapters with titles that were taken from titles of Tom Petty songs, Romeo Void songs, Ric Ocasek songs, the Beatles **and** Paul McCartney songs, and a few others, not to mention whoever it was that did "Just Like Romeo and Juliet." Not that any of this fascinating information is at all relevant to anything important, you understand.  
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Warren went down to breakfast, and found Caitlin and Papa Bear.

"So, did you ever find Sophia?" Caitlin asked him.

"Yeah." Warren smiled.

"Is she coming down?"

"No, she's kind of busy."

"What about Alexa?" Caitlin asked.

Warren was grinning widely. "Well, she's kind of busy, too."

Papa Bear looked at him. "All right, Warren, **what** is going on?"

"It seems that Sophia spent the night with Alexa last night."

Caitlin's eyes opened wide. "They **didn't**."

"They did," said Warren. "In fact, I just got a little look. They let me in the room, and Sophia had her head buried between Alexa's legs."

"MY GOD!" Papa Bear howled. "And you're not **mad**?"

"Naaah. What's to be mad about? She discovered a bit of a lesbian itch. That's one I can't help her with, you know."

"True," Papa Bear said. "I'm the only one of our little group who **hasn't** been with Alexa."

Caitlin blushed. "True."

"I'm sure Alexa would fix that, Paul," Warren teased.

"Oh no she won't!" said Caitlin.

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Warren spent all day studying. He went down to supper at about 5:30, and then returned. He was kind of studied out for the day. He had tried to call Sophia, but there had been no answer. He was assuming she was still with Alexa.

He wondered what was going on there. He had to admit to a bit of worry. How much **did** Sophia enjoy it?

While he was mulling that over, the phone rang.

"Hello, Snugglebear!"

"Hi, Pookie."

"Could you come up to Alexa's room? I think the three of us need to have a little talk."

"Sure," he said with feigned cheer. "Be right up." He hung up the phone, and sighed. He was definitely worried. He trudged to the elevator, and took it to the fifteenth floor. He trudged to Alexa's door, and knocked.

"Come in if your name is Warren!" he heard Sophia giggle from behind the door. He walked in, and saw Sophia and Alexa both sitting on the bed. Thankfully, they were sitting on opposite ends of the bed, and they were fully clothed.

"C'mere, sweetheart," Sophia said, patting the bed in between them. "Honey, you look like you just lost your best friend," she said, seeing the expression on his face. "What's wrong?"

"Well, you said you wanted to have a little talk. You spent last night with Alexa. You, from what I saw this morning, enjoyed it. I'm just waiting for the other shoe to drop."

Sophia looked at him disbelievingly. "Huh? Oh, God, **no**, Warren! Not even a little bit." She looked at him. "Snugglebear, I never thought I would say this to **you**, but I should have seen some signs. How well we did at Worlds cancelled it out a little bit, but I've seen it other ways. Honey, your self-confidence is shot."

"Well, it's been beaten down in more ways than I can count in the last year."

"Yeah. Partially from me. Dammit, I knew I shouldn't have done this."

"The biggest blow did **not** come from you, and you know that. And you had to do what you felt you needed to do. If you didn't sleep with Alexa, you would have been asking yourself 'what if?' and you know it."

"And I pretty much seduced her," Alexa admitted.

"That much I had figured out all by my lonesome," Warren grinned.

"Warren, I did **not** call you up here to tell you I like girls better, or to break up with you, or **anything** like that. I just called you up to talk about what had happened." Sophia said. She looked into his eyes. "I promise."

"OK."

"You know better, or you **should** know better, after all we've been through. But we'll work on your battered self confidence another time." She sighed. "Now, I think we should have **this** conversation another time, too."

"No, Pookie, it's all right. As long as I'm not getting a 'Dear Warren' speech, it's OK."

"You'll never get that one again, I promise. Anyhow, we did it, as you know. And I liked it. And if I told you I never wanted to do it again, I'd be lying."

"OK. I can handle that. But, can I ask, what did you like? Is there anything I should be doing, that you like better than what I **am** doing, or....."

"NO!" Sophia said adamantly. "Well, there is one little trick Alexa pulled, but it's minor, and it's just that I don't think you've thought of it, and we can discuss that later." She looked down. "It wasn't the receiving--though Alexa is good, you're better--it was the giving."

"I don't understand."

Sophia blushed furiously. "Warren, what's your favorite thing to do to me?"

"Eating your pussy, you know that."

"Right." She blushed harder. "Well, I discovered last night exactly why you like it so much."

Warren stared at her, then cracked up laughing. "You liked doing that!"

"Uh-huh," she grinned through her blush. "Listen, I prefer sex with guys, I prefer **you**, and if you told me right now that you never wanted me to have sex with another woman ever again, I'd go along with that. You are number one, you are the most important thing, and you are the person I want in my bed, permanently." She looked down. "But, yeah, I enjoyed eating Alexa out."

Warren smiled, feeling much better. "So, what I've got here is a girlfriend who wants to stay with me and **mostly** be faithful, but would like to stick her tongue in another girl's snatch every once in a while, have I got that about right?"

"Well.....yeah."

Warren was grinning widely by now. "I suppose I can live with that. I certainly can understand the impulse."

"Oh, and guess what, Warren?" Alexa interjected. "She's good. Real good."

"Really?" Warren was laughing now.

"Well, like I told Alexa, when you've had the best of the best working you over for four years, you're bound to pick up a few things."

"This sounds like a bad headline in Penthouse Forum: 'I taught my girlfriend how to suck pussy!'" Warren joked to laughter all around.

"You OK with this?" Sophia asked him.

"Yeah, I am. As long as you're not going full time..."

"Wouldn't think of it. In fact, we got to one point where I said to Alexa, 'This really is fun, but I'm about to the point where I'm waiting to be impaled on Warren's cock.'"

"I offered to do her with my strap-on, but she said that wouldn't be the same," Alexa joked.

"I really don't believe you two," Warren said.

"Anyhow, that's why you're here. We **did** want to have this little chat with you, but that's not the main reason we called you up here," Alexa said.

"Right. We both figured that, for being such a good sport, you deserved a little reward." She reached over and undid the snap on his jeans, while Alexa grabbed his shirt and pulled it over his head. Sophia pulled him up standing, pulled his pants and underwear down, then pushed him back on the bed, taking them off all the way. Alexa grabbed his head and pulled him down flat on the bed and started kissing him, while Sophia went to his cock with her mouth.

Alexa broke the kiss, and smiled at him. "We both decided we need to be fucked tonight, Warren, You up for the job?"

"Oh, I'm rapidly getting there, thanks to Sophia down there."

Alexa smiled at him, then moved down to his chest. "Sophia told me you liked this," she said, and started sucking on his nipple.

"Oh, shit, yeah," Warren moaned. He had one girl working on his cock, and the other on his nipple. He was definitely having a good time.

"Umm...Sophia.....you might get it where you don't want it if you keep that up," Warren finally said.

Sophia broke away from his cock. "Pity. I was enjoying myself. Get up, Warren." He did, and Alexa lied down in his place on the bed. Sophia crawled up so that she was at the top of the bed. She squatted over Alexa, and lowered her pussy to Alexa's face. "Oh, that feels good," she purred.

Warren just looked at her. "I don't believe I'm seeing this."

"Well.....you shouldn't be watching. You should be fucking! Get to it!" Sophia ordered, giggling. Warren laughed, and positioned himself in between Alexa's legs. With one long stroke, he was in. He could hear Alexa groan from underneath Sophia.

"Speaking of watching," Sophia said, "What a great view I have," as she watched Warren's cock slide in and out of Alexa's pussy."

Alexa's groans were mostly muffled, but Warren could hear Sophia's. "Nnnngg! Nnnnnngg! Nnnnggg! Jesus.....Christ.....every time you hit bottom.....Nnnngggg... Warren, she slams her whole.....OH!..... face into my pussy.....GOD!"

Alexa reached up and grabbed Sophia by the hips, forcing Sophia's pussy down harder on her mouth. "OH SHITOHSHIT! OH I'M CUMMING!" Sophia screamed, as she ground her pussy into Alexa's face. Now Warren could hear Alexa's screams from underneath Sophia, as he felt Alexa's body go stiff and her pussy clench at his dick.

Sophia climbed off of Alexa just as her orgasm peaked. She howled as she came, Sophia looking on in delight. Warren was close, but not there yet, as he continued to pound in and out of her. Sophia lay down next to Alexa with her head down near Alexa's crotch, watching Warren slide in and out of her.

"Oh, God, that is so hot to watch this close," Sophia said. "Warren, honey, cum inside her. I want to watch you cum inside her."

"Oh Jesus!" Warren howled, and thrust deep into Alexa, cumming into her. He slipped out of her, and Sophia grabbed for his cock, licking their juices off of it greedily. Then, she looked up at Warren, and said, "Sweetie, switch places." She crawled in between Alexa's legs and Warren moved beside Alexa on the bed. Sophia dove in on Alexa's pussy, cleaning up their juices and driving Alexa towards another orgasm. Warren couldn't believe his eyes.

"Oh God Oh God Oh YESSSSS!!" Alexa moaned, as Sophia drove her tongue into Alexa's pussy and clit. Warren reached down and started nibbling on Alexa's nipples. "OH JESUS!" Alexa moaned from the twin assault on her pussy and tits. "OH GOD I'M CUMMING!!!!!!!!!"

Sophia emerged from between Alexa's legs, and crawled up the bed, on top of Warren, until her face was right above his. She grinned down at him, her face covered with juices, and then kissed him, long and deep. He was a bit surprised at first, but then got into it, as she stuck her tongue into his mouth and swirled it all around. She broke the kiss, and leaned over and kissed Alexa, who was snuggling into the two of them.

"You are an animal, Sophia," Warren said.

"You betcha," she smiled.

"And I'm not?" Alexa complained, and reached over to Warren and stuck **her** tongue down his throat.

"We too much for you to handle, Snugglebear?" Sophia laughed.

"No, but I'll probably have to sleep for three days," Warren admitted.

Sophia ground herself on top of him, realizing he was hard again. "I must say, though, sweetie, your powers of recuperation are in top shape."

"With all this stimulation, you're surprised?" Warren laughed.

"No." She sat up, and then raised herself up. "My turn for that cock," she said, and lowered herself on it, taking him all in one stroke. "OH!"

She started moving up and down on top of him. "Oh YEAH I needed this," she howled. Meanwhile, Alexa pulled herself up and crawled on top of Warren, facing Sophia, and straddled his face, lowering her pussy onto his eager tongue.

"Oh God so good so good so good," Sophia moaned as she bounced up and down on Warren."

"Oh, shit, yeah," Alexa said. Warren reached up and grabbed Alexa's hips, and pulled her down tight on him, as his tongue went to work on her pussy. She leaned forward and ended up holding herself up by her arms--putting her in a perfect position to suck on one of Sophia's tits.

"AYEEEEIIIII!" Sophia howled. It didn't take long for her to cum, and Alexa, with the furious assault from Warren's tongue, went right behind her.

Alexa slipped off of Warren's face, completely spent. "Warren, you're still the best," Alexa said, and kissed him.

"Yes, he is," Sophia agreed, still straddled on his cock. "And he's still going."

"I'm trying to figure out **how**," Warren said. "You two are a handful."

"And don't you forget it," Sophia giggled. She leaned forward, on her hands, so that her tits were rubbing up against Warren's chest. Alexa, lying next to them, reached in with her hands to fondle Sophia tit and Warren's chest. Sophia rode Warren and Alexa fondled both of them until they both came again.

Sophia sprawled on top of Warren, as he slipped out of her, as they both tried to catch their breath.

"Ladies, this was.....incredible," Warren told them.



"You like sharing?" Sophia said.

"Only if you also like it....."Warren said.

"You have to ask?" Sophia laughed.

"No." Warren admitted. "But, like I was saying, only if you also like it, and only with certain people." He wrapped his arm around Alexa, drawing her into them.

"I'll buy that," Sophia agreed.

"Thank you, both," Alexa said. "This was very generous of you, you know, to share each other with me like this."

"Hey, we both think you're a special person, you know," Sophia told her.

"Yes, we do." Warren agreed.

They cuddled up together happily until the three of them fell asleep.

### **CAUGHT (Chapter 81)**

Dave and Kate lay next to each other on Kate's bed, catching their breath.

"Oh, you make me feel so good, Sir David," Kate said to him.

"The feeling is mutual, Lady Katherine."

"Hmmm. It's nice to be in a bed for a change. Not that there's anything wrong with the back of your car, mind you."

Dave laughed. "I agree with you. I still can't believe your father left you alone in the house."

"That's only because Ellen was giving him crap about not going out. And even Dad said that it was unfair to always go out when Eric and Tara were here, thus making me babysit."

"Ellen should give your Dad crap about not going out more often." They both laughed.

Kate reached down between Dave's legs. "Oh, Sir David? It does seem like you've recovered."

"I do believe you are right, my Lady." He started to move towards her.

"No, darling, you stay right where you are," Kate said. She climbed up on top of him, straddling him. "We never get to do it this way in a car."

"You're right," Dave smiled. Kate grabbed his cock, aimed, and sank down on it.

"OOOF!" She settled down on him, taking his full length in her. "Oh, yeah!" she moaned. Deliberately, she started moving up and down on him.

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"I'm sorry, Dan. Our first night out in weeks, and I get sick," Ellen said.

"That's OK. There will be other nights," Dan said. He opened the door for her, and they both stepped in.

"I'm going to fix myself some tea to settle my stomach down," Ellen said.

"OK, honey. Funny that the house is dark," Dan said. "Kate?" he called.

"She's probably painting," Ellen called from the kitchen.

"True. Dan walked up the stairs. Kate's door was closed. She wasn't supposed to close that door, dammit, he thought. "Kate?" he called, opening the door.

He froze. There, on her bed, was his stark naked daughter, straddling her boyfriend. He could see her moving up and down. Her eyes were closed, and she was moving softly.

As Dan looked at her in disbelief from the doorway, her eyes opened. "OH SHIT!" she yelled, jumping off of Dave and attempting to cover up.

"Katherine Elizabeth Thompson, you will get dressed and get your ass downstairs RIGHT NOW!!" With that, he turned and left the room.

"Oh, we have had it," Dave said after he had left.

"You can say that again," Kate agreed. "Get dressed, honey. And when we get down the stairs, you just keep going out the door."

"You sure? I'll stay and take my share of it, if that will help."

"No, Sir David, gallant as that may be, it will **not** help. It'll just give Dad an excuse to blame it all on your evil male influence. Let me handle this, OK?"

"OK."

They dressed in a hurry. When they reached the bottom of the stairs, Dan was pacing in the living room. He saw them come down, yelled "YOU!", and strode towards Dave.

Kate got in his way. "You stay right there. David, go. Love you."

"Love you too, Katherine." He beat it out the door.

"Damn you, Kate, if I ever get my hands on him....."

"You'll do **nothing**."

"You sit down and shut up, young lady!" Dan bellowed at her.

"Fat chance of that," she said, though she did sit down in a chair.

"Kate, I am shocked at what I just saw," Dan began. "Completely shocked."

"You know, you'd find you'd be shocked a lot less if you learned how to **knock** on a damn door," Kate spat at him.

"KATE! I will **not** stand for any lip from you, not now. First of all, you **will** stop seeing David, immediately."

"You **are** kidding."

"No! He's obviously a bad influence."

Kate broke up laughing. "Oh, and I had nothing to do with it?"

"Kate, dammit, I won't allow this. I'll be damned if I'm going to watch my daughter turn into a slut."

"A SLUT?????" Kate came flying off the chair. "I have been with ONE guy, after we had been going out over a YEAR, and that makes me a slut? Or, are you one of those assholes that thinks that any girl that does it even once is a slut? If I were your **son**, would we be even having this conversation?"

"Boys are different."

"Oh **really**. So how old were **you** your first time?"

"That is none of your business."

"In other words, younger than me." Kate wasn't backing down now. "And, if your sex life is none of my business, than mine is none of yours. So, how old **were** you, Dad?"

"He was fourteen, from what he told me," Ellen interjected. Dan glared at her. "She's right, you know, if this were a son, you wouldn't be reacting this way."

"Like I said, boys are different." Dan maintained.

"Only because you're a Neanderthal, sexist pig," Kate said.

"Kate, that will be more than enough of that. I am your father, you will do as I say. You're not to see David."

"Fine. Then I plan to fuck the entire Oceanview High baseball team, one at a time."

"KATHERINE!" Dan yelled.

"Your choice, Dad. Either I stay with the guy I love, or I **will** become a slut out of sheer spite."

"That's it. Kate, you are grounded. You will come home directly after school every day until I say differently."

"You know what, Dad? I won't be coming home here at **all**!" She stormed out of the room and up the stairs.

"You were way too hard on her," Ellen said.

"You might enjoy having a daughter like Sophia, but I do not want one."

"What is **that** supposed to mean?"

"You know exactly what it means. A little sex maniac. Girls aren't supposed to be sex maniacs."

"Kate's right. You **are** a sexist pig," Ellen said, storming into the kitchen.

Dan sighed, and followed Kate up the stairs. By the time he got there, she had already pulled out a suitcase and was busy throwing clothes into it.

"What do you think you're doing?" he asked.

"Going to live with Mother!"

"You can not be serious."

"WATCH ME!!"

"Your mother can't take care of herself, much less you."

"All the better," Kate spat out. "She'll get drunk and pass out every night, like she always does, and I'll do what I want."

"Kate, your mother is violent."

"I'm bigger than she is now."

"Kate, please do not do this."

"You leave me no choice, Dad. I refuse to sit here and be treated like a child, not when it comes to my love life. I'm damn near the perfect daughter, except for the fact that I'm no longer a virgin, and you practically treat me like I've committed murder."

"Kate, I'm just worried about you."

"What? That's a laugh. You're not worried about me, you're worried about your little antiquated ideas about teenaged girls and sex--actually, it might be **all** girls and sex. Worried about me? David and I have been together forever. You **used** to like him. We're protecting ourselves. We were both virgins the first time, and are faithful, so there's no chance of disease. What's to worry about?"

"Kate, I worry about you getting hurt."

"That's bound to happen sooner or later. And whether or not David or I had sex, losing him would hurt just the same either way. You can't protect me from getting hurt. And I haven't been hurt worse lately than I was hurt by the guy who called me a slut because I've been to bed with one guy."

"I'm sorry."

"You should be."

"Kate, what do you want from me?"

"Stay out of my love life, and stay out of my room unless you are expressly invited, would be a start."

Dan sighed. "Kate, why couldn't you wait?"

"I **could** have, I didn't want to. Why didn't **you** wait?"

"It's different for guys, like I said. Teenage boys have certain urges and drives."

Kate cracked up laughing, and heard Ellen laughing from the doorway. "He just doesn't get it, does he?" Ellen said to her.

"No, he does not." Kate agreed.

"WHAT?" Dan yelled.

"Kate, tell him." Ellen said.

"Fine. He's gonna **love** this one. Dad, I spend a very large chunk of my waking hours hornier than a German Shepherd in heat."

"I did **not** want to hear that!" Dan blurted out.

"Maybe you need to," Ellen said. "You're under the sad impression that girls don't get horny."

"Hell, I'm hornier than David is, most of the time. Well, he's catching up lately," she giggled. "Daddy, I waited to have sex with David over a year, even though I was in love with him after about a month, and even though I was horny enough to jump the nearest fencepost. I still waited, to make sure I was ready. I do not feel I should be condemned for that."

"I still think you're too young."

"Well, then we're at an impasse, because I don't. I love David, I love what we do together, I don't plan on stopping, and that's all there is to it."

Dan looked at Kate, then turned away, towards the door. He stopped at the door, turned around, and said, "Kate, don't go to your mother's. Please." With that, he walked out the door.

"Give him some time to adjust, Kate," Ellen advised.

"I will, but I am **not** going to break up with David. And I'm putting a lock on that damn door."

## **HOMEWARD BOUND (Chapter 82)**

"On the road again, just can't wait to be on the road again....." Warren sang as they pulled out of Madison, heading home for the summer.

"Yeah, drive three days, be home for less than a week, and then get on a plane," Sophia mock-grumbled.

"Yeah, but we get to get on a plane to go skate in the COI tour for a month."

"Yeah, I am looking forward to it, but our life is getting really, really hectic if you think about it."

"Yup." Warren drove in silence for a bit. "I have to say, I'm glad this year is over."

"Wasn't **all** bad," Sophia pointed out.

"Yeah, but the bad parts were **really** bad."

"Yeah. Worse for you than me, I think. I actually learned a lot about myself this year. Things I needed to learn, I think. I'm a lot stronger person pulling out of Wisconsin than I was when we pulled into Wisconsin in September."

"I agree," Warren said. "You are stronger. Which makes one of us."

"Yeah, you are stronger too, Warren. You just don't see it yet."

"Sophia, everything I learned about myself this year was bad."

"Everything?"

"Well, let's see. I learned that my unassailable self-confidence **isn't** unassailable. I learned I can get hurt, badly. I learned that I'm weaker than I thought. I learned that if bad things happen to me I can have a lot of difficulty dealing with them." He sighed. "A year ago, I thought I could take anything. I thought I could stand anything, and I thought the only person that I ever really, truly needed was **myself**, and finding out that I was wrong about that was a brutally hard lesson to learn."

Sophia thought for a minute. "I can see that being disturbing in the abstract--but figuring out that you needed **me**, specifically, as much as I need you--that couldn't have been a totally bad thing."

Warren smiled despite himself. "Yeah, I suppose that's true. I shudder to think what I would have done after the attack if you hadn't been there."

"Well, dear heart, I promise you--no, I swear on a stack of Glenn Miller and Beatles CDs that you will never, ever again have to find that out, not until the day I die."

"Good."

"And there's some things that I hope you've also learned--good things."

"Like what?"

"That our relationship can withstand almost anything. It's stronger than it ever was. That you can go through absolute hell personally **and** a brutal work schedule and get out with a 3.8 GPA for the year."

"Well, that's one part of my self-confidence that is intact. Genius is genius. And let's not forget your 3.5."

"Yes, let's not," she giggled. "You also learned that you **can** survive things that would destroy other people. Yeah, you're shaken, but you're OK, you really are, for the most part. And last, but certainly not least, you found out that people love you, that they're on your side, and that the two of us are **damn** good skaters!"

Warren laughed at that. "Yeah, I must say that Worlds was pretty special. And, you're right, we **are** good."

Sophia shot him a wicked smile. "You also learned that if I ever leave again, you can make a damn good living as a gigolo."

Warren cracked up laughing. "I have to admit that those two months that we were apart were.....interesting."

"Not just those two months. What about the other week with Alexa?"

"Can't get any more interesting than that, I think," Warren giggled. "We should probably talk about that."

"Well, I think we did." Sophia said.

"To a point." Warren thought for a minute. "Alexa's not going to be around this summer. Do you still want to experiment with other girls should the chance arise?"

"I don't know." Sophia thought for a minute. "No, not really. It's not that important. I liked it, but I think one of the reasons I liked it was that it was Alexa."

"Yeah. I don't mind, you know."

"Part of you **does** mind, and I understand that. You don't have to be open and accommodating **all** the time, you know," Sophia pointed out. "Look, I know part of it was that it was Alexa. What if we're on the tour and I get propositioned by.....oh, Stephie Eberhardt?"

Warren blushed. "Damn. You've got a point. I'd be insanely jealous. Of **both** of you."

"Right. Unless, of course, you got invited in again," she giggled. "So, anything I do will be done with **your** approval, and I don't mind if you say no, and if I really want it I can wait until we see Alexa again, because I know you don't have a problem with that. And, like I said, I could live without it forever if I had to. Look, I enjoyed it, but the next night was infinitely better, because **you** were there. I told you the truth--I liked having sex with a girl, but only to a point. When you fucked me **after** Alexa and I had fooled around, that was the best. I'm getting wet just thinking about it."



Warren cracked up laughing. "So, what you're telling me is that you're always up for a three-way."

"With you and another girl? OK, I admit, I can't see myself **ever** turning that one down."

"Even thought I'd be fucking another girl? Again, pretend it's someone **other** than Alexa. Pretend it's Stephie Eberhardt."

Sophia thought for a minute. "Yeah, I'd do it. Watching you fuck another girl while she's eating me out, I found out, is **very** exciting."

"OK." Warren grinned. "I wonder if Stephie is bi."

"I'll find out when we get on the tour," Sophia said coyly. "Besides, with all the joking, Stephie is not the girl on the tour that you really want."

"Huh? I've lusted after her for years!"

"Yeah, but that's from far away. You don't really **know** her. Think about it, if I offered you a night with any girl on the tour, would it really be Stephie? Assume that your girl of choice is willing."

"Yeah, I think I'd pick Stephie. Who do you think I'd pick?"

"Christine Arsenault."

Warren smiled. "Would you really want me to sleep with someone who's half in love with me?"

"Good point," Sophia agreed.

Warren looked up at a sign. "Rest stop. Coffee?"

"I'd love some."

-----

It was early afternoon. They had stopped for lunch, and were back on the road again.

"Alexa's staying with her grandmother?" Sophia asked Warren.

"Yeah. Her parents won't speak to her. It's ridiculous. Oh, and you missed the big teary goodbye this morning."

"Who?"

"Cait and Paul. It's gonna be a **long** summer for those two."

"Well, Paul lives in Cleveland, and Cait lives where?"

"Rochester, New York."

"That's not that far."

"It's not distance, it's time. They both have to work. So, they have to plan get-togethers, and they're not going to be that frequent. Cait is coming to Cleveland, however, when COI is there. I already made sure they got tickets."

"Cool. We'll get to introduce them around."

"Yup," Warren agreed. "Now, tell me what kind of fresh hell we're going to encounter at your house?"

"Oh, you mean the Civil War reenactment?" Sophia sighed. "Apparently, Dan and Kate are barely speaking. I haven't told you the whole story, thought. Dan walked in on Kate....and David."

"Oops. Doesn't that man knock on doors?"

"Not Kate's door. Drives her nuts. Drives **me** nuts. Anyhow, when he walked in, his darling baby girl was straddling her boyfriend."

"Yikes."

"They had a big blow out. Dan told her to break up with David."

"Oh yeah. Great way to handle it," Warren said sarcastically.

"Exactly. Kate was so incensed she said that she was going to fuck the entire Oceanview High baseball team out of spite, **and** she was going to move in with her drunk, mentally disturbed mother, just to get out from under Dan's thumb."

"Wow."

"Well, she didn't move out, and Dan didn't press the break up with Dave issue, but they kind of barely tolerate each other. Dave's afraid to go to the house if Dan is there. And Kate put a lock on her door, which made Dan livid."

"Oh, goody. What a fun homecoming **this** is gonna be."

-----

They were right. The homecoming **was** strained. Ellen was glad to see everybody, as was Kate, but Dan was noticeably cold to Sophia and especially Warren.

In fact, the second day they were there, Sophia came upstairs to get something from the kitchen. Dan and Ellen didn't realize she was there, and were having a loud argument in the living room, which Sophia could hear plain as day.

"Dan, she's only home for a week!"

"But then she's coming home for another two months after the tour is over," Dan said. "And it's going to go on then. I don't like it. I don't want him spending the night here."

"Dan, Warren was spending the night here long before you came along."

"Yes, but this is **my** house, too, now. And having him practically move in is not setting a good example for Kate."

"First of all, Kate does **not** need Sophia to get ideas, just in case you haven't noticed. Second of all, Kate **knows** that Sophia is not your daughter and you have **no** say in what she does. Third of all, you're being completely unreasonable."

"What I think is unreasonable is allowing a teenage girl to have her boyfriend over for the night! They've been doing it since they were **how** old?"

"How is it that you are becoming **more** close-minded? Remember the first night you met Sophia? When she told you that two of her favorite things were sex and baseball? You thought it was **funny** then!"

"That's before it started affecting Kate."

"Fine," Sophia said as she stormed into the living room. "Dan, you don't want me around? That's easily fixed."

"Were you eavesdropping? And, no, it's not you I don't want around, it's Warren." Dan said.

"I wasn't eavesdropping. I came up to get a coke. You were yelling. And, as for the other thing--if you want me, you get Warren. We're a package deal. As are Kate and Dave, though you're too pigheaded to see that. Anyhow, when we get back from COI, I'll move in with Warren at his house. Satisfied?" She stormed back down the stairs.

"Good." Dan said as Sophia disappeared.

"No, Dan, it is **not** good! There's no way I'm going to let Sophia leave like this."

"Ellen...."

"No. You listen to me. I have not been able to say too much because Kate is not my daughter, but now you're forcing your views on my daughter, and I won't stand for it. And I've never pushed the issue of exactly who legally owns this house, but I'm going to now. Sophia stays. Warren stays. If you have a problem with that, you know where the front door is."

"Ellen!"

"You have a problem with female sexuality. Now, I've managed to loosen you up enough where **we** are concerned, but you're still taking it out on your daughter, and now you're trying to take it out on **my** daughter. I won't stand for it. Sophia goes nowhere. And you can consider yourself officially informed that I am also on Kate's side." With that, she got up and went to the intercom. "Soph, I'm coming down."

"OK."

### **THE TOUR (Chapter 83)**

"Hotel room, sweet hotel room," Warren quipped as he and Sophia got into their room in the hotel in Salt Lake City, which was the first city they would be performing in, the following night.

"Better than my damn house, at this point," Sophia grumbled.

"Well, that's true, but you're out of there for a month."

"And then we'll get to go back to school shortly after that. Thank God."

There was a knock on the door. Sophia opened it, to find Liz Cushman and Christine Arsenault there.

"HEY!" Sophia yelled, giving them both a hug. They then ran over and hugged Warren.

"How's my favorite dance team?" Liz asked.

"Great. How's the tour going?" Warren asked.

"So far so good, but new blood is always cool," Liz said.

"Yeah, Warren, I think Stephie Eberhardt is looking for someone new to fuck," Christine joked.

"Oh **please** don't tempt him," Sophia said.

"That's OK, Sophia, you could have Andrei Gravachkin," Liz teased her.

"Oh.....hmmmmm.....well....." Sophia joked.

"You two just can't help but cause trouble, can you?" Warren asked.

"That's our job!" Christine agreed.

-----

One of the fun parts of the tour was watching who ended up in whose room. As it turns out, Christine had a night with Andrei Gravachkin, and pronounced him "delectable". Stephie Eberhardt was on her second go-round through the available male cast members. Even Evan Pogdar had a couple of liaisons with a gay Russian pairs skater.

"I feel left out," Liz Cushman told Warren one afternoon when they were lounging in Warren's room.

"Well, you don't have to be."

"Yeah, but I don't necessarily want casual sex with half the cast. I want what you and Sophia have, and there's nobody here that interests me."

"Aaah. Well, there are things to be said for casual sex."

"Yeah, but, what's better, casual sex or true love?"

"True love is better. Both at the same time is kinda cool, too."

"Huh?"

"Sophia and I have had sex with other people, a couple of times, since we've been going out."

"Well, yeah," Liz said, "while you were broke up."

"Not just then."

"Huh?"

"For example, Sophia has been with someone else here on the tour."

"WHAT? She cheated on you?"

"It's not cheating if I know about it, is it?"

"I guess not." Liz looked at Warren. "Who was it?"

"I'm not at liberty to say."

"Do you **know** who it was?"

"Yes."

"Andrei Gravachkin? Ed Voorhees? Steve Coleman?"

"I'm not going to tell you, and you are really barking up the wrong tree, anyway."

"What do you mean, barking up the wrong tree?"

"Sophie's bed partner wasn't male."

Liz's eyes bugged out of her head. "WHAT?"

"Sophia's bisexual. She discovered that, this year."

"I don't believe this. She's had sex with another woman--and you **approve**?"

Warren laughed. "After all we've been through, if our relationship can't withstand a little experimenting.....I really don't mind. Although it **is** more fun if I get invited to join in--which is what happened with the girl back at school--that didn't happen here, and Sophia doesn't think her bedmate would have gone for it, because the bedmate apparently **only** likes girls. The girl at school was bi."

"My head is spinning," Liz said. "I'm way too sweet and innocent for this."

"How innocent can you be, Liz, being on this tour for all these years," Warren joked.

"OK, true," Liz laughed, "but I'm **personally** innocent."

Warren looked at her. "As in, still a virgin?"

"Yeah."

"Waiting for Mister Right?"

"I was. Now I think I'm just waiting for someone who won't treat it as just another feather in his cap."

"Andrei Gravachkin, for example."

"Right."

"I had an interesting situation like that this year at school, when Soph and I were broken up." He explained all about Alexa, and Caitlin, and Papa Bear. "I'm glad I turned her

down, but, then again, I knew she was in love with Paul, and Paul's my best friend at school. It worked out fine for them."

"Good," Liz said, then she sighed. "However, I'll be waiting forever, if I wait for Mister Right, I think. I've got no prospects, and it's hard to meet guys except for other skaters, and they're all either gay, taken, or Andrei Gravachkin-types. Ordinary guys are intimidated by me, because of who I am."

"I can see that. You'll meet someone, Liz, I promise."

"Well, I know I will, eventually. But that doesn't take care of my.....well....."

"Itch?" Warren joked.

Liz blushed. "Well....yeah. Dammit, Warren, it's too bad you're taken. I've heard stories about how good you are from Sophia, and I know you're not a feather in your cap type of guy. But, alas....." She smiled at him.

Warren thought for a minute. He looked at Liz, and said it. "I have a chit I can cash in."

"What?"

"Sophia owes me one, because of her sleeping with someone else. We've talked about this. I'm allowed one night with anyone in the cast that I want."

Liz felt her mouth get dry. "You are?"

"Yeah."

"Would you? I mean, are you going to do it with someone?"

"I hadn't decided yet."

"Had you decided who, if you did?"

"No. Sophia is no doubt counting on it being either Stephie Eberhardt or Christine."

Liz cracked up laughing. "Christine would cut off her left arm for the chance, you know."

"I know," Warren said, "which is why I pretty much ruled her out. She's a little **too** eager, you know what I mean? I think she's half in love with me."

"Yeah." Liz got silent for a minute.

Warren looked at her. "I suspected you were a virgin. Which is why I never thought of you."

Liz laughed. "You don't like virgins?"

"Never had one," Warren smiled. "But that's not what I meant. Most virgins your age **are** waiting for Mister Right."

"Or have been, and now just want it to be a kind, sensitive guy, just as long as they get laid." Liz blushed. "Oh my God, did I just **say** that?"

"Yes, you did." Warren smiled. He was sitting in a chair, Liz on the couch, and he got off the chair and sat next to her on the couch. He reached over and pulled her towards him, and kissed her.

He broke the kiss, and she smiled up at him. "You have a chance to do this with anyone in the cast, and you want **me**?"

"Yeah. But only if you want to. You have to make sure, Liz--you only lose your virginity once."

In response, she crawled up on his lap, wrapped her arms around his shoulders, and kissed him again. They made out for a while, then Warren gently pushed her away. "You don't want to do this on a **couch**, right?" he said to her. She smiled at him, got off his lap, and grabbed his hand, leading him to the bed.

Once there, she lay down, and he lay next to her, taking her in his arms and kissing her again. Then he sat up. "Uh, Liz, before we go too far.....I don't have anything."

"Anything what?"

"Protection. Sophia's on the pill, so I don't carry it as a matter of course."

"I'm on the pill, too, Warren. Girl's got to be prepared for strange encounters, right?" She giggled. "Now get back here and kiss me again." He did, and, while their lips were locked, he moved a hand down and grabbed her breast through her shirt.

"Oooohhh.." she whispered through the kiss. She kept kissing him, even harder now, as his hand worked on her breast. As she felt herself getting more tingly, she broke the kiss.

"Warren, you have to understand something. I am **completely** inexperienced. That's the first time anyone's even done **that** to me."

"I didn't realize that. Are you sure you want to go through with this?"

"Definitely. If it feels like **that** just did....." she giggled.

"Oh, I'm just getting started, but anything that makes you uncomfortable, just say so."



"OK." She looked up at his eyes as his hand went back to her breast. He didn't resume the kiss, preferring to watch her expression. He reached both hands down, and unbuttoned her blouse. She looked into his eyes with anticipation, as he slipped his hand into her shirt. She wasn't wearing a bra, so his hand latched onto bare tit. She groaned as he grabbed her.

He kept his hand on her breast as he started kissing down her neck, and then down to her breast. He pulled her blouse off as his mouth made contact with her nipple, and he got his first look at her breasts. They were small, but perfectly formed, and her nipples were very erect. He took one in his mouth and sucked on it, as his hand played with the other.

"OH!" Liz whimpered in surprise as his tongue wrapped itself around her nipple. "Oh my," she said with undisguised wonder in her voice. Warren continued working at her breasts, and her breathing got more and more labored. She couldn't believe how good this felt. It kept building and building, and, suddenly, she felt a tightening in her stomach, that spread down to her crotch, and then something down there **exploded**. She arched her back and all her muscles tightened, and she let out a little whinny.

Warren looked at her in disbelief. She caught her breath. "That was incredible," she said to him.

"Liz, what just happened?" Warren asked, thinking he knew the answer, but not believing it.

"I had an orgasm. Least, that's what I think it was. I've never had one before. I think that's what it was, though."

"From **that**?"

"Uh huh," she grinned at him. "I can't even make myself cum the few times I've tried playing with myself, and you did it without even touching me down there."

Warren shook his head. "I think this is going to be a very interesting afternoon." Liz just giggled, as Warren went to the snap on her jeans. He had them and her panties off in a hurry. She was absolutely drenched. He picked up her panties. "Look at these things, they look like they've been through a shower," he joked. Liz just giggled again, as Warren put the panties down on the bed. Then he went back to Liz's breast with his tongue.

While he was doing this, he slipped a hand in between Liz's legs. He gently pushed on them, and Liz spread them. He slowly moved his hand up her legs, until they reached the junction between them, and Warren used his whole hand to cup Liz's pussy. He heard the breath catch in her throat.

He pressed in with his whole hand against her pussy. She gasped again, and pushed back into his hand. He continued with his mouth on her breast the whole time, and she was squirming and panting, pressing her breast into his mouth, and her pussy into his hand. "Oh....God...." she managed to get out in a strangled gasp.

He moved his hand up and down on her pussy, then took two fingers and slipped them in between her pussy lips, running them up and down, coating them with her fluid. He took the fingers and probed at her opening with them. He slipped one in, and it slid in easily, she was so wet. The second one joined the first, just as easily. He had barely got them in when she stiffened and spasmed again. She thrashed on the bed, gasping and moaning, as another orgasm overtook her.

"My God, Liz, you're a firecracker. And one with a short fuse, even."

"Who knew?" she said, smiling weakly up at him. "Wow."

"Wow is right. Do you know you're not, technically, a virgin?"

"You mean I don't have a maidenhead? Yeah, I know. Did you know you can break your hymen doing a split smack on the ice that was supposed to be a triple loop? Boy, was **that** day painful. I was, like, eleven, I think."

"Well, that's good, in a way. It means the final act won't hurt as much."

"How could you tell, by the way?"

"Come on, Liz. Where are my fingers? And they're all the way in." He wiggled them to prove his point. She giggled, and then moaned.

"Jesus, Warren, I have never felt like this in my life. My word....."

"I was planning on doing my favorite thing to you, but I don't know if you'll survive the experience."

She grinned at him. "Try me."

"OK." He withdrew his fingers from her pussy, prompting a groan. He just smiled at her, and then kissed his way down her stomach, and positioned his head in between her legs. Then, he stuck his tongue into her pussy.

She jumped. "AH!!" He worked his tongue up and down her labia, and then stuck it into her opening. "OH!" she cried. He worked that for a little while, and then came up with his tongue. He teased around her clit for a while, and then slipped his tongue over it. She jumped, and screeched. He bore down on her clit with his tongue, and slipped his fingers back up into her pussy. She went completely bonkers. She started cumming very quickly, and just didn't stop. She screeched, and moaned, and bounced all over the bed, almost throwing him off. She'd come down off of one, and it would start right up again. After about ten minutes of this, he finally stopped so she could catch her breath.

It took a while. She was covered in sweat, still writhing around on the bed, and wheezing and gasping. When she finally started to breathe normally, and the color in her face

returned to normal, Warren smiled at her and said, "So, how long have you been keeping all that pent-up lust inside yourself?"

"Longer than I thought," she said. "This is unbelievable."

"You need to know something. I am **not** this good."

She cracked up laughing. "Well, yeah you are. You take your time, and you're gentle, and you're doing a thorough job on me. But, you're right, I was more than ready for this, I guess." Suddenly, she sat up and tackled him, kissing him, and reaching for his shirt. She broke the kiss to pull that off his head, then went for his pants. She got them off in a hurry, and then sat up, just staring at his erect cock.

"Wow. It's so big. I'm gonna get that inside me?"

"It **will** fit, Liz, but if you want to stop now, that's OK with me."

"Not a chance." She looked at him. "What should I.....is there anything you want me to do?"

"Whatever you want, Liz. Is this your first time even seeing....."

"Yeah, and I'm nineteen years old. Isn't that pathetic?"

"No."

"Just never wanted to, I guess. Well I **did** want to, but didn't know who, or.....oh hell, I don't know." She reached out to touch it, moving her hand up and down it. Warren moaned softly. "You like?" she asked.

"Oh yeah."

Liz stared at it as her hand moved up and down on it. Suddenly, she leaned over and took it into her mouth.

"Oh, God, Liz!" Warren yelled. "That's the last thing I expected!"

She pulled off. "Surprise! Listen, girls talk, you know? I know girls do this. I wanted to do it myself. And you did me, so it's only fair." She looked up at him. "Listen, if you cum, will you still be able to.....you know....."

"Sure. It might take a few minutes, but yeah, I can. But you don't have to make me cum."

"Won't you last inside me longer if you cum first?"

"Well, yeah, how'd you know that?"

"Sophia told me once, actually," she said with a giggle. Then she went back to his cock with her mouth. She started by just sucking on the head, but then devoured more of it with her mouth. She got it about halfway in, and then started sliding up and down on it while massaging it with her tongue. After watching her go off all afternoon, Warren was more than turned on, and she was **very** good at this for a beginner. He felt the familiar tightening in his balls after not too long.

"Liz, this is a warning," he gasped out. "Not much longer."

"Hmmm," she just hummed on his cock. She kept at it.

"Liz, I'm about to cum. Oh God, Liz, I'm CUMMING!!" He felt it build, and then started squirting, right into her mouth. He saw her eyes widen and then swallow, but it was too much, as it leaked out from around his cock and dripped down her mouth. However, she didn't stop sucking until she had drained him of every drop. Then she disengaged.

"Liz, you are something else, you know that?"

"Uh-huh." She giggled. "I thought I knew what was going to happen, but I didn't know there would be quite that **much** of it!" Warren leaned off the bed, and grabbed a towel, then sat up next to her, cleaning off her face and neck with the towel.

"Thanks, Warren," she smiled at him. Then she leaned into him, and tackled him back into the bed, kissing him. He could taste the remnants of his cum on her tongue. She could still taste traces of her pussy juices on his. They locked lips for quite a long time, their bodies mashed together. Liz reached down between both of their legs, and grabbed Warren's cock, pleased to find it coming back to life. She jerked her hand up and down on it, still kissing him.

When he felt himself get back to fully erect, he grabbed her around the waist and flipped her over, onto her back, he on top of her. "You ready?" he asked her.

"Unbelievably ready. Pop my cherry, Warren. Figuratively speaking."

He laughed, and got himself into position. He grabbed his cock and moved it up and down her pussy, making sure she was well lubricated. She let out a groan.

"OK, Liz, this might hurt some."

"I know, Warren. Do it. Fuck me." He lined up the tip with her opening and pushed, ever so slightly.

Warren slipped the head through her tight opening. "OH GOD!" Liz yelled.

"OK?" Warren asked her.

"YES! Keep going.....AAAHHH!!!" He had about an inch in her, and kept pushing, slowly and deliberately. "OH GOD!" He slowly got about halfway in. She was gasping for air, eyes wide open, cheeks flushed. "Warren....uh...stop for a minute, 'k?"

"Sure. You all right?"

"Yeah. Need to get used to feeling so.....full, is all." She groaned softly. "Oh my stars and garters."

Warren smiled. "The Beast! You're an X-Men fan!"

"That's right." She giggled.

"Me, too. How you feel?"

"Great, Warren, you can keep going," Liz said. He did, and after a few more minutes was buried completely.

"All the way in, Liz," he told her.

"OH GOD.....oh so FULL....." She panted heavily. "Oh, Warren, it feels fantastic."

"No pain?"

"No. Just a little stretching. It's delicious. Goodbye, virginity!" she giggled.

Warren was laughing at her comment. Then he looked down at her. "Ready?"

"Oh, yeah, am I ready. Fuck me, Warren." He started slowly, moving in and out of her with calm, deliberate motions. It didn't matter. It wasn't long before her moaning and whining started up again, and not long after that that he felt her stiffen and felt her pussy clamp down on his cock hard. He stopped moving until she came down again, and then started again. A couple more strokes, and off she went again.

. "Warren....." she gasped, coming down, "uh....oh....go faster...harder, OK?....please...." He did so, plunging in and out of her hard and fast. She let out an earth-shattering bellow, and then orgasmed again. Warren kept hammering away at her, so that orgasm never really stopped. She just rode the waves of it, moaning and howling, wildly thrusting her hips back up at him, as she came and came. She wrapped her arms around his neck and her legs around his hips, and bounced up and down on the bed underneath him. No man could hold out for long faced with this, and Warren didn't, cumming deep inside her. She screeched one more time, and stiffened, her clenching pussy muscles draining the last from him.

Warren quietly slipped off of Liz, and he and Liz lay side-by-side on the bed, catching their breath.

"Wow. Wow, wow, wow, wow, wow!" Liz finally said.

"Glad you enjoyed yourself," Warren smiled at her.

She leaned over and kissed his cheek. "Warren, thank you so much. I couldn't have wished for a better first time. And thank that girlfriend of yours for me. I'll remember this day forever, I can promise you that."

"Well, Liz, I must say, you were pretty unforgettable yourself." They both laughed.

"You know what? If it's **half** that good again, I'll have one hell of a sex life."

"It will be. Liz, I told you, you're a firecracker." She giggled.

"Well, unfortunately, all good things must come to an end, and that lucky, lucky girlfriend of yours will be back soon." She stood up on her shaky legs. "Thank **God** we don't have to skate tonight!"

Warren laughed, and joined her in gathering up their clothes and getting dressed. She gave him a kiss, and walked unsteadily from the room. Warren lay on the bed for a while, and then fell asleep, totally spent.

-----

It was two hours before Sophia came back to the room.

"Hiya, sweetie," she said, waking him with a kiss.

"Hm? Oh, hi, Pookie. Do lots of shopping?"

"Yup. What did you do today?"

"Well.....I.....uh....I cashed in the Shawna Vickers chit."

"Ah, that's why it smells like sex in here," Sophia giggled. She sat on the bed. "So, Snugglebear, who got the pleasure of your expertise? Stephie or Christine?"

"Neither."

"Neither? I figured it would be one of them. Who, then?"

"I took Liz's virginity."

"Liz CUSHMAN?" He nodded. Her voice got a little strangled. "You....took...Liz's virginity?"

"Yeah. She was sick of it." He smiled.

"WARREN! How **could** you?"

"Huh?"

"How could you go to bed with Liz Cushman?"

"Because she wanted me to. She wanted to lose her virginity to someone who wouldn't treat it as just another notch on his belt, and you told her how good I was. We were talking, and she said that she wished I wasn't taken, and I told her about my 'sleep with anyone in the cast' pass, and she told me she wanted me. So we did it."

"Dammit, Warren, you weren't supposed to go to bed with **Liz Cushman!!!**" Sophia was close to tears.

"Now, wait a minute, you didn't put any restrictions on this. This was **your** idea, remember?"

"Yeah, but I thought you'd do Stephie Eberhardt!"

"What difference does it make?"

"Because it wouldn't have **meant** anything to Stephie! And it wouldn't have meant anything to you to do her! My God, Liz gave you her **virginity**?"

Warren stared down at the floor. "I wasn't even going to use it, you know. I was just going to let it pass, and if you bugged me enough about it, I was going to tell you that Stephie turned me down, or something. I had no intention of using it. It wasn't until Liz told me that she wished I could be her first that I even considered it." He looked up at her. "And, yeah, it meant something to me, and it meant something to Liz. We're friends. I got to give her a good first time, and she got to have one. If you can't deal with that, then you shouldn't be playing these games." He got up and walked out of the room, got into the elevator, and walked out of the hotel, into the street.

"Oh shit," Sophia said, as she plopped down on the couch.

## THE TOUR CONTINUES (Chapter 84)

Warren came back to the room about an hour and a half later. Sophia had fallen asleep crying on the couch.

"Hey," he said, nudging her.

"Warren?" She opened her eyes and sat up. "Where did you go?"

"Went for a walk. Downtown St. Louis is nice. Went up in the Arch. Just needed to think."

"I'm sorry," Sophia said. "I overreacted. And I did say anyone in the cast."

"Apology accepted." He sat down next to her.

Sophia sighed. "I suppose I was feeling guilty. I was with Shawna again this afternoon. And it just didn't feel right." She sighed again. "I wasn't sure how right it felt the first time. I mean, I **thought** I was attracted to her, sexually. And it was fun. But something was missing. So I gave it another try, and it was the same thing." She looked up and gave him a sad smile. "I think my bisexual itch has been scratched out. Or Alexa is just a special situation. But I don't plan on doing it again."

"Did you talk to Shawna about it?"

"Yeah. She understands. We're still friends. She knew this was kind of an experiment, and she knew all along that whatever happened, it was just a fling."

Warren sighed. "I suppose I'm feeling a little guilty, too. Because I **did** enjoy myself."

"How much?"

"A lot," Warren sighed. "Look, that was my one fantasy that you didn't know about, the one that I never thought would be fulfilled, especially after I turned Cait down last fall."

"What?"

"Deflowering a virgin. And Liz wasn't **just** a virgin--she was as inexperienced as I was our first time."

"Really? So everything you did, it was her first?"

"Yeah."

Sophia grinned at him. "Did you go down on her?"

Warren smirked. "What do **you** think?"

Sophia grinned wider. "Did she cum?"

Warren took a deep breath. "Sophia, she started cumming from just me sucking on her nipple with her pants still on."

"Wow!"



"Yeah. When I got to the cunnilingus stage, it was one long endless orgasm. And I **completely** lost count by the time I was in her. The girl had some **serious** pent-up lust. I am not **that** good."

Sophia cracked up laughing. "Well, you've had me in continuous-orgasm mode more than once. Not from just tittie play, though. You've gotten me close, but never over." She smiled, and sighed. "Shit. Liz Cushman is one of my best friends. This all hasn't made her stuck on you, has it?"

"No, not at all."

"Good. Like I said, she's one of my best friends. If my little chit let you make her first time **that** memorable, who am I to argue?"

"Good. It was, and we both enjoyed ourselves, and parted the way we were when we started, as friends. But, Sophia, this has to stop, I think."

"Experimenting with other people, you mean?"

"Yeah."

"I think you're right. I've gotten it out of my system. Have you?"

"Yeah. Believe me, you're the best, but only the best--you--could ever top the Liz Cushman Deflowering Experience. Anyone besides you would just pale in comparison."

Sophia laughed. "Good!"

-----  
Sophia plopped down in front of Liz in the hotel dining room the next morning at breakfast.

"So, Liz, I hear my boyfriend plucked your cherry yesterday," Sophia grinned at her.

She turned beet red, and got a sheepish smile. "Oh, he told you about that."

"Course he told me. That's the deal, he has to tell. He also said you enjoyed yourself."

"That's one way of putting it." Liz looked at her friend. "You're not mad?"

"I actually was," Sophia admitted. "I **did** give him permission, so I had no right to be mad. He just didn't do what I expected."

"You expected him to take a meaningless roll in the hay with Stephanie Eberhardt, not taking one of his best friend's cherry."

"You got it. But I calmed down. We talked things out. I've come to realize that I'm **glad** he did you, because apparently it was a night you'll never forget....."

Liz blushed deep red.

".....that's what I thought," Sophia laughed. "You're my friend, and I trust you, and if I had a part in providing you a memorable first time, great. But we also decided that this is damaging our relationship, and I decided that my bisexual itch was not as strong as I first thought. So, congratulations, because you are the **last** person besides me that will ever sleep with Warren."

"Damn. I was hoping for round two." Liz laughed at Sophia's stricken expression. "No, I'm just kidding. Well, partially. Listen, Warren's yours, that's fine with me, I'm not in love with him or anything. But most of the eligible guys on this tour I wouldn't give the time of day to, and Warren.....well.....he kind of opened the floodgates." She grinned, blushing.

"In other words, you want it again."

"Oh YEAH. I'm wondering why the hell I waited. But, I know why--and it's the same problem I have now--lack of guys. Especially lack of guys that won't kiss and tell. I know Warren won't. There's very few on the cast that won't."

"What about outside of skating?"

"That's tough. I don't meet many guys outside of skating. And the ones I do are interested in me **because** I'm semi-famous. Nice guys don't approach World Champion Elizabeth Cushman for dates. "

"Hmmm....."

-----

A couple of days after that, they pulled into Cleveland. Warren and Sophia got into the lobby of the hotel, to run into Caitlin and Papa Bear. Liz was with them.

"HEY!" Warren called out and rushed over to greet them, Sophia joining in. When all the hugs and handshakes were done, Warren said, "Guys, I'd like you to meet our friend Liz Cushman. Liz, this is Paul Herlihy and Caitlin McDermott, our friends from school."

"Nice to meet you," Cait said. "It's a thrill, actually--I've seen you skate."

"Thanks," Liz smiled.

"I've seen you skate, too. Warren and Sophia have actually made a skating fan out of me, perish the thought," Paul grinned as he shook her hand. "And now my intro: guys, this is

my older brother Rich. Rich this is Warren and Sophia, and Liz." Rich shook everyone's hand. He was almost a carbon copy of Papa Bear.

"Nice to meet you, Rich," Warren said. "I see the family resemblance."

"Everybody says that," Rich smiled.

"Hey, let us get our bags up to our rooms, and we'll be down in a flash. We need some supper."

"I know a place around here," Paul said.

"Cool. Liz, you coming?" Warren asked.

"I think I just might," smiled Liz.

-----

Liz and Rich ended up sitting next to one another. "I know I've seen you skate," Rich said. "You've won a world championship, right?"

"A couple."

"What's that like, being that good at something?"

Liz giggled. "That's a funny way of putting it. I don't think of it that way. Although it's a hell of a lot of satisfaction to actually win a World Championship. I've finished second the last two years, which makes me appreciate the ones I've won all the more." She took a sip of her drink. "So, what do you do?"

"I'm going to be a junior in college, studying pre-med, just like my little brother over there. I wanted to get out of the cold and snow, though, so I go to UCLA."

"Really? Classmate!"

"You go to UCLA?"

"Yeah, in between skating, that is. I tend to take a full class load in the fall, but only a couple classes in the spring, because that's when Nationals and Worlds are. I'm taking next year off, though, because it's an Olympic year."

"That must be a juggling act."

"Yeah. Nothing like Warren over there, who's taking a full pre-med schedule while skating. Of course, being an ice dancer, he doesn't have to practice as much, because there's no jumps. Dancers have it easy."

"I heard that!" Warren bellowed from the other end of the table. "You come talk to me when you start choreographing your own programs, little miss 'I have it so tough.'" Liz just stuck her tongue out at him.

Rich laughed. "Do you live in California even when you're not in school?"

"Yeah. Well, when I'm not on tour. I live close to campus, in an apartment. Grew up in LA. I train there, not too far from UCLA."

"Cool. I live off-campus myself. Going back in a couple weeks, I just came home for a quick visit."

"Yeah, that's about when I'll be there, after the tour ends. Gotta start cracking on them new programs, what with it being an Olympic year and all."

"Now, you have an Olympic medal, right?"

"Yeah. Silver. I don't want another," she grinned.

He laughed. "Gold or nothing?"

"Hey, I went in last time as the defending World Champion, and got upset. This time, I'm **not** going in as the defending World Champion. It's time to be the upsetter, not the upsettee."

The food came, and they all started eating.

"What's the hardest part about skating?" Rich asked her.

"Where I am now, actually, it's **not** the skating. It's all the peripheral junk."

"Getting stopped on the street, that kind of thing?"

"That's part of it," Liz agreed. "Dealing with agents, dealing with autograph hounds, that too. Dealing with expectations, that's a big part of it. Warren and Sophia over there won a bronze medal at Worlds, and were thrilled beyond belief, because it was unexpected. I won a silver, and everybody's 'disappointed'."

"Oy. That's tough."

"It can be. Well, enough about me. You're pre-med?"

"Yeah, the table is lousy with future doctors," Rich laughed. "Me, my brother, and Warren. I want to do surgery, probably neurosurgery. I find it fascinating."

"Now, that's a tougher gig than skating. If I mess up, I just fall. If a doctor messes up.....  
"

"Yeah. But I think there's a greater margin of error in some things than there is in other things. Think about it. Think about baseball. If a hitter is hitting .350, that's great. That's 35 percent! What would happen if you only hit 35 percent of your jumps?"

Liz giggled. "I'd have my face plastered all over Sports Illustrated with the headline 'MELTDOWN!!' in big letters."

"Right," Rich laughed. "So you have less of a margin of error than a shortstop. Doctors have **no** margin of error. However, we don't have to make the split-second decisions like a skater or a hitter does. I don't know if it's tougher. The consequences of failing are tougher, but that's it, and I think it's easier for a skater to fail, and I **know** it's easier for a baseball player to fail."

Liz giggled. "You sound like a baseball player."

"All-state catcher my senior year in high school. I could have played in college, but not at UCLA, so now I just play pickup."

"I never would have pegged you for an athlete," Liz said, then immediately regretted it. Rich was a big guy, like Paul. "I'm sorry, that was a stupid thing to say."

Rich just laughed. "Hey, you know the old joke--I'm not an athlete, I'm a baseball player. Which holds doubly true for catchers." Liz laughed in spite of herself. "My bulk is deceptive. I'm 6'2" and pushing 250, but you'd be amazed how low my body fat is. I'm just big."

"I'm sorry."

"Don't be," he smiled. "Although, I could make figure skater anorexia comments. What do you weigh, 80?"

She cracked up. "No, I weigh considerably more than 80. And what I'm doing to this pile of food should disabuse any anorexia notions. No, I'm just small. An asset for a skater, but I come naturally by it, being half-Asian. You should see my mother. She's the Itty Bitty Japanese Woman stereotype come to life."

"I was wondering about that. I thought I saw Asian in the eyes, but your hair color and complexion....."

"Well, Daddy is the blonde, blue-eyed California surfer dude stereotype." They both cracked up. "So I ended up with Japanese eyes and facial features, light brown hair, and a complexion that nobody can make hide nor hair out of. And green eyes, of all things."

"It's a wonderful combination. You're one of the most exotically beautiful women I've ever seen."

Liz blushed. "Thank you."

"It's the truth. That was **not** a line, I'm no good at those," Rich grinned.

"Oh, I'm not so sure about that," Liz grinned back.

-----  
They chatted throughout the meal. Paul and Cait, and Rich, had rented rooms in the hotel for tonight and for after the performance the following night, but were gathered in Warren and Sophia's room right now, just chatting.

"Hey, have you seen what's going on over on the couch?" Warren whispered to Sophia, who was sitting on his lap in a chair.

"Liz and Rich? Yeah, started in the restaurant. They really seem to be hitting it off."

"Yeah. And Paul told me he goes to UCLA, and Liz lives in California."

"Hmmm. Verrrry interesting," Sophia giggled. "And, from what she told me this morning, she has now achieved maximum horniness."

Warren couldn't help but laugh. "Hey, what's so funny?" Liz called from across the room.

"Nothing, Liz, dear. You just carry on." Warren said with a grin.

"Hmph."

"Hey, Rich, Paul, Cait, you guys are going to join us for breakfast, right?"

"Sure," Paul said. The rest agreed.

"It'll be fun. You'll get to meet more skaters." Sophia told them. "They all come down. Eventually, if they're Stephie Eberhardt."

Liz cracked up laughing. "Yeah, Crazy Stephie is always sleeping something or other off."

"Stephie Eberhardt?" Rich asked

"Yes, the Vegas Showgirl of Figure Skating," Liz told him with a grin. "Don't get me wrong, I know Stephie well, because she used to train with me, and I love her, she's delightful. But Crazy Stephie on tour has three priorities: getting drunk; getting laid; and wearing the tightest, skimpiest costume she can find so every guy in the audience is looking at her ass--which facilitates number two, of course."

"What's **your** priority on tour?" Rich asked her.

"Just to skate. I like skating. Making money is nice, too," she giggled.

"You don't pick up guys from the audience?" he smiled.

"Never have. I have trouble dating. Most skating guys are male versions of Stephie Eberhardt, or are gay, or are taken, like Warren and Jack Garrison, who are my two best male friends in skating. And guys outside of skating....."

"What?"

"Well, it just causes problems."

"What kind of problems?"

She looked at him. "Rich, why are you interested in why I don't date guys outside of skating?"

"Because I'm outside of skating."

Liz just looked at him for a minute, then the light dawned. She blushed. "I think I just got asked out."

Rich cracked up. "Yeah, but I did a botch-up job of it. Liz, when we both get back to California, may I have the pleasure of your company for an evening?"

She giggled. "Just an evening?"

"Well, got to start somewhere, right?"

"Hmm. I got to think about it, OK?"

"Sure, but I'm not asking you to marry me or anything," Rich cracked up. "I've spent all evening with you. I really like what I see. I'd like to see more."

"Well, let me say this, then," Liz said. "You're going to be around tomorrow, right?" He nodded. "Come to breakfast with us, then you can show me around Cleveland tomorrow, and then I'll decide if I want to see you in California. Fair enough?"

"Fair enough, but what's to see in Cleveland?" Rich laughed.

"The Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, of course!"

"You're right. It's a date."

-----

They all met for breakfast the next day, and Warren and Sophia introduced their friends around.

Afterwards, Rich and Liz head out for the rock and roll hall of fame. They spent a few hours there, and then went for a late lunch.

"Hey, Rich?"

"Yeah?"

"Why are you interested in me?"

"Because you're sweet, charming, intelligent, funny, and gorgeous. Have I left anything out?" he grinned at her.

"No, you didn't. In fact, you left out what I usually hear. I've only known you two days, and that's not long enough, but, I wanted to tell you--yes, I'll go out with you when we get back to LA. Remind me to give you my number before you leave."

"Great!" He smiled at her. "Can I ask you a question?"

"Sure."

"Are you always this wary around guys? I was surprised when you didn't say yes right away last night, when I asked you, because it seemed to me that we were really hitting it off."

"Yeah, I'm wary around guys. It's hard to explain."

"That's OK. I'm glad you said yes. You don't know how hard I had to screw my courage on to even ask you."

"Really?" she laughed. "Why?"

"Well, that's my wariness around girls."

"I'll tell if you tell. Might as well get all the nasty fears out in the open," she told him.

"Well, I'm self-conscious about my size. When you gave me the 'maybe' answer yesterday, my first thought was, 'Oh, shit, here we go again.' Like I said, I thought we were getting along great, and I couldn't think of another reason you wouldn't say yes outside of my looks."

She smiled at him. "What, a big huggable hunk like you?" Liz blushed as she said it, but Rich might have blushed more. "And you're even cute when you blush," Liz giggled, making him blush deeper. "Your looks were never an issue, Rich, except for the fact that



I do think you're cute and huggable." She looked at him, still grinning. "Boy, can **you** blush!"

"Stop it!" Rich said, but was grinning as he said it.

"Now you know how I felt last night. 'Exotically beautiful' and all that."

"OK, so we're even with that. But it's your turn to tell me why you're so wary."

Liz took a deep breath. "Rich, how much of a figure skating fan are you?"

"A little. I'll watch it if it's on. I like it, but I'm not a nut. For example, you've won, what did you tell me, three world championships, a bunch of national championships, and an Olympic silver medal, right? And when I met you, I had only a very slight inkling who you were. And that was mostly from Paul refreshing my memory on the way to the hotel, because Warren had told him you were going to be there."

"OK. This is hard to say, so bear with me. I'm not bragging, just telling you how it is. I'm fairly famous--we've been insanely lucky this morning that I haven't been recognized. I was praying I wouldn't, not today, not while I was with you. But I **will** be when I get back to the hotel. In fact, I'll be mobbed, because all the fans know we're in town today, and it's child's play to figure out where we're staying. I also...well, let's just say that I have no financial worries, and won't for a very long time."

Rich was just listening, so Liz continued. "What this means for my social life is that I tend to meet two types of guys. Those who are intimidated by me because I'm rich, famous, and successful--or those who only want to go out with me in the first place because I'm rich, famous, and successful. Now, this builds up on itself--because of this, I am woefully inexperienced with guys, which makes me **more** wary. The date we go on in LA will be my first real date. I had a friend take my virginity, because I was just plain sick of waiting, but he was just a friend." Rich choked on his coke at that one. "Sorry. Heck, I'm nineteen. It was time, don't you think? Anyhow, outside of that, I am completely, totally inexperienced. And scared shitless."

Rich just looked at her for a minute. "First of all, I had a friend take my virginity, too, when I was a senior in high school. I was just a little surprised you came out with that out of the blue," he grinned.

"Well, I was emphasizing my inexperience, but didn't want you to think I was a complete blushing violet," she grinned at him.

"OK. Now I know why you didn't say yes right away. Honestly, after that soliloquy, I'm shocked you said yes at all." She just smiled at him. "As for what I think about what you said--I plan to be rich, I plan to be successful, and couldn't give a crap about famous." She laughed at that. "And rich, successful, famous women don't intimidate me. I prefer a woman with a life of her own, makes her more interesting. The only thing that intimidates me about you is your beauty, but I can deal with that."

It was Liz's turn to blush again.

"GOTCHA!" he yelled, making her crack up.

"Fine, you just look out," she said. "So, let me get this straight. You're sweet, cute, smart, interesting, unintimidated, straight, available, and relatively unimpressed. Are you sure you're real?"

He cracked up laughing. "I'm not so sure about the unimpressed part. Just not impressed by your fame and fortune. Everything else is completely impressive." She blushed again. "Gotcha again!"

"Flattery will get you anything you.....ooh, I'm not even gonna finish that!"

He laughed. "Don't worry, Liz, I'm not the type to try to get a girl in bed the second day I know her."

"You're not? Damn!" It was his turn to blush again. "Gotcha back!"

-----

Warren had gotten them front row seats for the performance. Warren and Sophia did "Kiss Me Baby," to great applause. Liz skated two programs, and, after her second one, Rich stood up in his front row seat and gave her a rose when she skated over.

They were heading to Pittsburgh in the morning, so it was an early night, but they went out for a late supper before going back to the hotel.

Jack wasn't lying--he wasn't the type to make any serious moves on a girl he just met. That could wait. Kiss her goodnight? Oh, yeah, that he'd do. A good long one that made Liz weak in the knees.

"So, you're going to see him in LA?" Warren asked her the next morning.

"Yup."

"Listen, I don't know him, but he comes from good stock. His brother is the salt of the earth."

"I know. Warren, I think I **really** like this guy. And, boy, the kiss he gave me last night... .."

"He's got your number?"

"Yup. Gonna call me as soon as he gets back to LA--we figured I'm going to beat him by about three days. So, we'll see. But, everything I see so far, I like."

"Good luck, kid. Keep me posted?"

"Between me and Paul, you'll know everything!"

## TALK TALK (Chapter 85)

Warren and Sophia were on a plane, flying from the last stop on the tour, back home.

"Warren?" Sophia said.

"Hmph?" Warren looked up from the book he was reading.

"Can we talk?"

"Sure, Pookie," he said, putting his book away.

"I've been thinking. Something's wrong, honey. I can't completely put my finger on it, but we're a little bit.....I don't know. Disconnected, somehow. Unraveled."

"What makes you say that?"

"Lots of things." She sighed. "We've been through a lot. But we broke up, and then we got back together, and almost immediately after that, you got beat up. Then, we barely get through **that**, and I decide I want to experiment with my sexuality--and I feel guilty about it, so I talk **you** into having a couple of flings." She sighed again. "It just seems so crazy."

"Honey, we got through it. We did."

"Yeah, but what do we have left?"

"We have us."

"Do we?" She looked at him. "Warren, why is there an 'us'? Why do we stay together?"

"Because we love one another?" He looked at his hands. "Or has that changed?"

"No, that has **not** changed."

"Then I guess I'm missing something."

"Warren, is love enough? Do you really think it is? Warren, what do you want from life?"

"First question first. After all we've been through, and we made it through this past year, and we're still together. Do you really have to ask if love is enough?"

She smiled at him. "Touche."

"As for what I want from life? Lots of things. Mostly to make sure I spend it with you. Everything else is negotiable."

Sophia smiled, but then got a serious look on her face. "After the past year, you **still** feel that way?"

"Absolutely. Now more than ever. What do **you** want from life?"

"Just that. A nice, normal relationship with the man I love. We haven't had that for a while." She looked down. "I can't help but feel I did a lot of damage to our relationship by insisting on experimenting. God, when I found out about you and Liz.....I thought.....hell, I don't know what I thought."

"Sophia. Listen to me. It was a one time thing. It was never, ever going to be **more** than a one-time thing."

"I know," she smiled. "What did you think about what I was doing?"

"I admit, it bothered me. However, I figured, better you figure that stuff out now."

"You didn't want me to do it? Why didn't you say anything?"

"The first time, with Alexa, just happened. After that, after the feelings that awoke in you, I didn't feel I had the right to say no. If I had said no, you would have just resented me. Better you sort that one out on your own."

"OK." She looked down. "Sometimes you're too accepting, you know."

"If I had been that accepting, I would have gone to bed with Stephie Eberhardt." Sophia looked up at him, startled. "Now, most of the reasons I picked Liz were the right ones-- she wanted to lose her virginity to a nice guy who wouldn't talk, I thought it would be fun, and I **knew** it would never go past that day. I also had **no** idea you'd be **that** upset that I had picked Liz. However, I did know that picking Liz would not be what you expected."

"Why was that important?"

"Because I felt controlled. I didn't feel I could stop you from sleeping with Shawna. You needed to know. But you almost begged me to sleep with Stephie. 'I'm doing this, and you must even the score, so go sleep with Stephie.' The problem was, I did not want you to sleep with Shawna, and I did not want to sleep with Stephie. I couldn't stop the first, but, because you gave me a loophole by not specifying Stephie, I **could** stop the second. I

would not have slept with Stephie under any circumstances. When the opportunity arose with Liz, I went for it."

"So you were rebelling, is that it?"

"Consciously, no. But thinking back on it, I think that, subconsciously, I might have been trying to send you a message that you could not control this situation as perfectly as you thought you could."

Sophia smiled ruefully. "The message was received, I can tell you that. Warren, what do you want from **me**?"

"Just you. Only you. And I want you to want only me."

She smiled. "Deal. That having been settled, Warren, we still need to reconnect. We didn't spend hardly any time alone while we were on tour unless we were having sex."

"Well, the role of Social Butterfly and Grand Hostess comes naturally to you. Truth be told, I like it, too."

"I know," Sophia smiled, "but the tour is over, school is over, and we're home for two months. Yeah, we need to spend some time with Jessie and Crash, and we'll have to hit a party or two. And we have to skate. However, outside of that, I just want to spend time with you. Just the two of us. When's the last time we just read together, or played chess, or just went for a long drive? It seems we've been hopping from crisis to crisis. I need you, by my side, just **being** together."

Warren smiled at her. "Do you know how wonderful that sounds?"

"So you see what I mean?"

"Yes. Absolutely. You're right."

She smiled back at him, and reached over in the seat to take his hand. "You're the most wonderful guy in the world, you know that?"

"Well, I'm hopelessly in love with the most wonderful girl in the world, I know that much."

-----

When they had been on tour, they had gotten ice time almost every day. With their schedule a bit crunched, they had decided to start choreographing a free dance while on tour. They had picked "Riverdance". By the time they got home, it was about half done. They worked on it for a couple of weeks, and got it to about three-quarters done. However, they had taken a break one day, and Sophia skated up to Warren.

"Warren, honey? I've been thinking."

"Oh-oh," he smiled.

"You just shut up. I've been thinking--Riverdance. For the Olympics. Us. I'm not quite sure it works. You know how much I love it, and I'd like to skate to it some day, but I'm not sure it's right for the Olympics. Hey, Bourne and Kraatz didn't set the world on fire with it."

"Well, our program is better. More unison, less side-by-side skating. However, I take it you have a better idea?"

"Warren, we're going to the Olympics. **Us**. I want to skate to something romantic."

"Did you have any ideas?"

"Yeah. 'Romeo and Juliet'."

"That's been done at the Olympics, too, Pookie--by Anissina and Peizerat."

"No, no, not any of the classical ones. The song, the Dire Straits one. You know, **our** song."

"Really?"

"Yeah. I did a sample timing. Of the live version. If we cut the intro, the last verse, and the outro, it fits. And there's a logical beginning and end."

"It would be a radical departure, though. It's one constant tempo, and **that** is on the slow side of midtempo. It might be a challenge to choreograph something to that that is technically demanding enough."

"Can we try?"

"Why not?" He smiled at her. "We have 'Riverdance' as a backup."

"Have you come up with any ideas for the Original Dance?"

"Yeah," Warren smiled. "I still can't believe that the rhythm for the OD is Swing."

"I know. Glenn Miller?"

"No, they'll be expecting that from us. I decided to ratchet up the intensity a little." He skated over to the boombox, and popped in a CD. The music was by the Brian Setzer Orchestra, and it was called "If You Can't Rock Me."

"Warren, does that fit into the beat requirements?" June, their coach, who had been listening, asked.

"Just," he smiled. "Three beats a minute more and it would be too fast."

"So, if we can choreograph this correctly, we'll have the fastest OD in the world?" Sophia asked with a grin.

"That's the plan. Our rooting section will go berserk at Nationals."

"Our rooting section?" Sophia grinned at him. "What makes you so sure we'll have one?"

"Sophia, where are Nationals this year?"

"You know what? I don't know," she giggled.

Warren gave her a huge grin. "Milwaukee."

"You're kidding! Wow."

"Yup! And I plan to tell a whole bunch of college crazies to fill that arena wearing Wisconsin red!"

-----

They were at Warren's house that night, just chatting and playing on the computer. Things were still a bit strained at Sophia's, so they were spending more time at Warren's. Sophia felt comfortable there, especially after Peg had pulled her aside the first time they were there that summer and thanked her for helping Warren through his hard time. "Without you, I don't know what would have happened." Sophia felt really good about that--much better than going home and being blamed by Dan for "corrupting Kate." Peg had put a lock on Warren's door and, with Warren's brother and sister older, had given them all the privacy they wanted. Still, in their efforts to reconnect with one another, they spent most of their time there doing things other than having sex.

This was one of those times. They had played some chess and watched a little TV, then decided to get on the computer. They had decided to create a little website for themselves--there were already a couple of fan ones, but they wanted to do an "official" one, and Sophia had taught herself HTML. They were working on the website, when Warren's IM beeped.

"Hi Liz. This is Sophia, but Warren's here, too." Sophia typed.

"Hi guys! How you?"

"Wonderful. How are you?"

"Fantastic. Unbelievable. Totally great."

"Wow, are **you** a happy puppy!" Sophia typed. "Skating going **that** well?"

"<G> Yeah, riiiggghhhtttt. No, actually, skating is going great. I have a killer long program, we think. That's not why I'm so happy, though."

"<G> Let me guess. Rich?" Sophia typed.

"You got it! We have gone out almost every night since I've been back in LA. He's like a dream."

"That's so cool! You go to bed with him yet?"

"LOL! Sophia, do you think of anything besides sex?"

"Sure. Sometimes. Well, once in a while <giggle>."

"<G> Well, yes, I've been to bed with him a couple of times. He's a complete gentleman, so I had to drop a few not-so-subtle hints, but I let him think it was his idea. <G>"

"And it was good?"

"Oh my God."

"Good for you, Liz," Sophia typed. "Warren is over here next to me, yelling, 'Hallelujah, I'm off the hook!'"

"ROFL! Tell Warren that he is, indeed, off the hook. Oh, and he was right. Not to disparage his abilities or anything, but it turns out I am, indeed, **really** orgasmic. Rich's jaw almost hit the floor the first night. He told me afterwards he thought he was going to have to sedate me. <G>"

"ROFL!"

"So, how are you guys' programs coming?"

"Well, we just decided--today--to switch our free, and we haven't even started our OD yet, so talk to us in a month <G>."

"Hee hee. OK, then."

"Warren wants to know if Dick Button has figured out yet that America's Skating Sweetheart is a sex maniac."

"Tell Warren if Dick ever asks, I'll be sure to tell him who my first was, and Dick can figure out that the male member of America's Ice Dance Love Team is a gigolo. <G>"



"Warren says, 'ouch'."

"<G> Good. Hey, I am eternally grateful to him. If I didn't know him, I never would have met Rich, right?"

"Warren says, 'That's right, and don't you forget it!'"

"I won't. Ever. There are a lot of things that I'll never forget you two for. Hey, gotta run, OK? Love you!"

"Love you, too, Liz. Bye."

After Sophia had signed off, Warren looked at her and said, "True Love Conquers All, yet again. I'm so happy for Liz."

"Yeah, I am too. Hey, we could have a quadruple wedding. Us, Crash and Jessie, Paul and Cait, and Liz and Rich!"

"Yeah, riiiiiggghhttttt!"

## **UPHEAVALS (Chapter 86)**

Sophia and Warren, in between rejuvenating their relationship, still found time to spend time with their friends. In early August, they ended up in Sophia's room with Jessie, Crash, Kate, and Dave. They were the only people in the house.

"So, Jessie," Warren said, "I hear you're joining us at the University of Wisconsin."

"Yeah, Prep Stud, but the Milwaukee campus. Just about an hour away from Evanston, IL."

"Yeah, it's not quite going to the same school," Crash said, "but it's a hell of a lot closer than Amherst."

"Get your tickets now," Warren quipped, "the National Championships are in Milwaukee this year."

"Really? Cool!" Jessie said.

"So, Dave, being as your going to be a senior, you started thinking yet?"

"Yup. Got a nice little list."

"Northeastern, BU, etc. I'm going to be burning up Route One going to Boston," Kate giggled.

"All Boston schools?" Crash asked him.

"Well....." Dave stammered, "not exactly."

"Where else?" Warren asked.

"Yeah, where else, Dave?" Kate echoed in surprise.

"Um, guys, Kate and I have not talked about this...." Dave said.

"So talk," Kate told him.

"Fine. I'm planning on applying to Maine, Connecticut, and Rochester Tech. Possibly Seton Hall, too."

Kate looked at him. "I thought you weren't going to go any further than Boston?"

"I changed my mind."

Kate couldn't disguise the hurt in her eyes. "David.....why?"

Just then, the slam of the front door could be heard. "KATE? WHERE ARE YOU?" Dan was bellowing.

Kate hit the intercom. "I'm down here, with Sophia and Warren."

"Kate," Dan said into the intercom, "I thought I told you that I didn't want that boyfriend of yours in this house when we're not here!"

"Dad, there's six people in this room. What do you think we're doing, having an orgy?"

"I wouldn't put it past you, especially if Sophia is involved."

"And **now** you know why I'm considering Maine, or Connecticut, or New York, and I might even consider Kazakhstan if they have a fucking university," Dave spat out.

"What?" Kate said. "You're leaving.....because of my Dad?"

"I'm considering it," Dave said. "I can't take much more of this."

"How do you think **I** feel?" Kate cried.

The intercom sounded again. "Kate! I want you to get your ass up here right this minute! And tell that boyfriend of yours to go out the downstairs door."

"Dad," Kate started out reasonably, "We're just talking. Jessie and Jason are here, too. We're just chatting. We were going to play some cards."

"Kate, I said **right now**! And I meant it! I don't want you down there, especially with that boyfriend!"

Kate looked at Dave, and then at Sophia, and then at the intercom panel. She hit the intercom. "Dad? Go fuck yourself." Everyone in the room looked at her in complete shock, especially Dave. "Did you hear me, Dad? Let me repeat. Go fuck yourself." She sat down

"Jesus Christ, is that door locked?" Jessie asked with a giggle.

"Yup!" Warren confirmed. It was a good thing, as they heard footsteps coming down the stairs, and then pounding on the door. "KATE! Open this door up RIGHT NOW!!"

"It ain't Kate's room," Sophia said, "It's mine. No admittance unless I invite you. I didn't invite you. Go away."

"Sophia, open this door," Dan said.

"What is going on down here?" they heard from the other side of the door. It was Ellen.

"My daughter just told me to go fuck myself, now **your** daughter won't open the door!"

"Dan. Go upstairs."

"Dammit, Ellen....."

"Go upstairs. I want to talk to them calmly before you go off in a huff. Now GO." There was a wait of a couple of minutes, while the six people in the room looked at each other in amazement. Then, "Sophia, it's just me. Please open up."

Sophia walked to the door and opened it. True to her word, only Ellen entered. "All right, what happened?"

"He.....I.....he said.....oh shit..." Kate started, then began to cry.

"He went off again, what else is new?" Sophia said. "He saw Dave's car out front, found out we were down here and told Kate to get upstairs and to get Dave out of here, even though Kate told him that there were six people down here and we were just chatting."

"Yeah, and when Kate sarcastically asked him if he thought we were having an orgy or something, he made a disparaging remark about Sophia," Warren added.

"So, Kate, after trying reasonableness, finally told him to go fuck himself," Jessie finished.

"You really said that?" Ellen asked. Kate just nodded.

"She was a little upset. I had just told her that I was considering out of state colleges," Dave informed her.

"Really?" Ellen asked. "I thought you were going to stay in Boston. I thought you and Kate had had this all worked out--that's what Kate told me, anyway."

"We did," Dave sighed, "but I don't know how much longer I can deal with my girlfriend's father thinking I'm the devil incarnate."

"Your girlfriend's father thinks that your **girlfriend** is the devil incarnate," Kate spat out through her tears.

"Really? Shit, I thought it was **me**," Sophia giggled.

"Only cause he doesn't know me well enough," Jessie supplied.

"It's the eeeeeee-vil room! Crash, you forgot to set up the pentagram!" Warren joked.

"I thought we were going to do that **after** the orgy," Crash deadpanned.

"Oh, yeah, I forgot."

"And before the virgin sacrifice," Crash continued.

"Where? Ain't no virgins in **this** room," Jessie pointed out. By this time, everyone in the room was chuckling, even Kate.

"You guys are too much," Ellen said. "I need to go talk to Dan." She left the room and went upstairs.

"So, is Kate coming up?" Dan asked when Ellen got upstairs.

"No. Look, everybody is clothed, there's six people in that room, there's nothing going on."

"I don't care. I told Kate not to have Dave in this house if we're not here."

"No you did not," Ellen said. "You told her not to have Dave in this house if she was **alone**. And I told her to ignore that rule, anyway, but I don't think she does. She wasn't alone in the house, she and Dave are down there with them. And she's not feeling particularly good right now, because Dave just told her he is considering out of state colleges. Because of **you**."

"Good. The further away the better."

Ellen just looked at him. "You know what? The minute that girl graduates from high school and can be on her own, she is never going to speak to you again. And I won't blame her."

"You know, I'm tired of not getting support from you on this," Dan said to her.

"You can just be tired of it, then. You treat your daughter like shit, and she's the nicest, most wonderful, most interesting kid in the world. You treat her boyfriend like shit, and he's just as nice and wonderful. And you're not particularly nice to **my** daughter, either. Dan, Kate's having sex with her boyfriend. You can either pout about it like a fucking child, or you can grow up. And until you decide to grow up, you can sleep on the couch."

"WHAT?"

"You heard me." She stood up. "I'm going back downstairs."

"So, what happened?" Kate asked her when she came back in the room.

"Oh, I told him that I was sick of him treating you like shit, and treating Dave like shit, and until he grows up, he has to sleep on the couch."

Sophia practically choked on her root beer. "You didn't!"

"I did," Ellen said with a smile.

"You **are** the coolest," Jessie said with admiration.

"Thanks, Ellen," Kate said

"Yes, thank you," Dave echoed.

"Ellen, could you come up here for a minute, please?" Dan asked into the intercom.

She went up. She was surprised to see Dan carrying a suitcase. "What?" she asked.

"I can't sleep on couches. I'm going to a hotel. I need time to think. I'll be in touch. I'm leaving Kate here, if that's all right."

"Of course that's all right," Ellen told him. "What do you mean, you'll be in touch? How long are you going to be gone?"

"I don't know," he admitted. "As long as it takes for me to decide whether or not I can live with you anymore, considering what you just said to me."

"Dan, I know I was harsh, but you are really out of control when it comes to Kate."

"Yeah, I know. Wanting to preserve my daughter's virtue is so out of control."

"No, what's out of control is thinking that you can **retrieve** your daughter's virtue as you define it, and not accepting the fact that it is **gone**, never to return, and still managing to love and respect your daughter for all the **good** things about her, which are many, by the way. Like I said, Kate is a delightful young lady. She's a delightful young lady who happens to be sexually active. And you can't see the delightful part because you're obsessed with the sexually active part. What a pity."

She turned away from him, and walked into the kitchen. He watched her go, and walked out the door. She went downstairs to break the news to Kate.

-----  
A couple of days later, Kate asked Ellen, "Do you know where Daddy's staying?"

"Yes. The Holiday Inn on Route One."

"I think it's time Dad and I had a little talk."

"Are you sure that's a good idea?"

Kate sighed. "It's never going to get any better until we do. And your marriage shouldn't have to suffer over this."

She got in the car and drove to the hotel. Dan was surprised that there was a knock on the door.

"Kate?"

"Hi, Dad. Can I come in?"

"Sure." He stepped aside and let her in. She walked over to a chair and sat down.

"Dad, are you coming home?"

"I don't know." He looked at her. "I think you'd be glad I was out of your hair."

"Dad, if you think I'm glad to be causing problems between you and Ellen, you don't know me very well."

"I used to think I did," he said sadly.

"You do. And that's what drives me nuts, you know? **One** thing about me has changed--and it was an inevitable change, and a natural one--and you act as if your darling daughter

was hauled off by aliens and replaced by an evil pod person." She sighed. "We used to get along so well. It kills me that falling in love and having sex has changed all that."

"Look, when I was growing up, girls your age did **not** have sex unless they were pressured into it."

"Oh, sure they did, they just had to play the game," Kate told him. "Ask Ellen. You acted like you were pressured into it so nobody called you a slut. Of course, some girls **were** pressured. That happens nowadays--Sophia being an example. But you can't assume that all girls think that way, or did. Did your girlfriends?"

"I didn't have that many. The first one, well, she had a reputation."

"But you did her anyway." Kate grinned at him.

Dan grinned back, sheepishly. "Well.....I wouldn't want a **daughter** to have that kind of reputation, though."

"I don't, and you know it. Everybody at school thinks I'm an artsy-fartsy freak, not a sex goddess. And the ones that even know I have a boyfriend think that all we can think to do with each other is draw and paint."

Dan smiled. "Well, you **do** do that." His smile faded. "In fact, I went in your room recently to put some of your stuff in it, and you had left your closet door open."

"Oops."

"I got to admit, Dave has talent. And that picture **was** tastefully done. For a nude drawing of my **daughter**, that is." Kate giggled. "I don't suppose I have to ask if you posed for that, or if it was just his imagination?"

"No, you don't have to ask!"

Dan looked at his daughter. "Do you love Dave?"

"Yeah. I really do. We didn't jump into this, you know."

"I know."

There was a long pause. "Dad," Kate began, "if you can treat Dave civilly, and not have a nutty every time you find him in the house.....I'd really like for you to come home."

"Let me call Ellen up and ask her to lunch tomorrow, and we'll talk. OK?"

"OK."

Dan moved back in the next evening.

## ICE IS FOR SKATING? (Chapter 87)

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Author's note: credit where credit is due: a co-worker gave me the "Turkeys" one-liner. You'll see what I mean. Don't worry if it takes you a second--it did me, too. As it does Sophia. <G> Thanks, pal. He knows who he is.  
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"These are really coming along well," June was telling Warren and Sophia.

"Yeah, they are. We still need help with Romeo and Juliet, though," Sophia said.

"I've got news that might help. An old friend of mine, Kathy Sleighter, she's a dance coach. We used to compete, back in the day. She's probably a better coach than I am, at least technically."

"Ah, June, you're the best," Warren smiled.

"Flatterer. Listen, I think I've helped you develop your choreographic and artistic sides, because that's my strength. But Kathy is better technically than I am. To build up 'Romeo and Juliet' technically, you need her. The good news is, you've got her. She just got hired to build up a dance program at the University of Wisconsin."

"Really?" Warren smiled.

"Really. This is the deal. One of you will have to change your club affiliation from the North Shore Figure Skating Club, to the U of Wisconsin club. You might also have to do some promotional stuff for the club. However, you get free ice time and free coaching from Kathy. One of you will be a member of each club and we will be your co-coaches. She wants to use the World Bronze Medallists as a calling card for the new club out there, and you guys get a good coach when you're away from me." June hoped they'd see what a great thing this was.

They did. "This sounds fantastic," Sophia said.

"Sure does," agreed Warren.

"You need to meet her, of course, but I think you'll like her."

"We put up with **you**, don't we?" Warren teased her.



"Thanks, Warren. When you get back to school, go find her at the rink, and she'll hash out the details with you," June concluded.

"We will."

-----

They had scheduled a late-night session to do some extra work on 'Romeo and Juliet.' The staff trusted them, so they were the only ones in the whole building. Warren had a set of keys to lock the place after they were done.

They had worked out for about an hour, just arranging steps and moves.

"You tired?" Sophia asked Warren.

"Nope."

"Good. Let's take a break."

"I said I **wasn't** tried!" Warren laughed.

"I know. Have a seat, I'll be right back." She left the ice and trudge towards the locker room. Warren watched her go, bemused, and watched her return a few minutes later. She was carrying a pile of blankets and quilts.

"Watcha doin, Sophie?"

She skated out to the middle of the ice, and lay all the blankets down, one on top of the other, except for one. That one she rolled up at the end of the pile.

"What am I doing? Well, I know this isn't the Olympic ice, but I'm making one of your fantasies almost come true."

"Are you saying what I **think** you're saying?"

Sophia didn't answer him right away. She sat on the pile of blankets, and unlaced and removed her skates. Then she lay down on the blankets, on her side, head propped up with an arm, and said, "Why don't you skate on over here and find out, big boy?"

Warren gave her a big smile, and skated over to her. He sat down on the blankets, and took off his own skates, as she reached around him and ran her hands up and down his chest. After he got his skates off, he lay down next to her. She reached down to where their feet were, and grabbed the last quilt and pulled it up on top of them.

"We're working on this romantic program every night and it's making me **horny**," Sophia told Warren.

"Uh-huh." He gathered her into his arms. "So horny you decided we should freeze our buns off in a deserted ice rink?"

"We've worked up a sweat. Plus, this is **your** fantasy."

"That it is, but where are the panel of judges?"

"Sorry, can't have everything. Now shut up and kiss me."

He did, long and deep, as his hands slipped down to her breast. She was wearing a practice dress, and he undid the buttons on the front of the bodice and slipped his hand in. Her nipples were as erect as he had ever seen them, and hard as rocks.

"Your turkeys are done," Warren said with an impish smile.

It took Sophia a minute. Then she erupted with laughter.

"Is that arousal or cold?" Warren asked.

"Little bit of both, but mostly arousal. Mmmmmmm...." He worked his hands over her breasts. Then he slipped under the quilt with his head and took a nipple into his mouth.

"Oh, your mouth is warmer than your hands," she told him. "Oh....mmmmmm...."

He worked his mouth around her breast for a while, and then slid down. He pulled her tights and panties off, lifted her dress up, and dove in to her pussy with his mouth.

"Oh, man....." Sophia said.

Warren looked up at her from underneath the quilt, and said, "I think I found the warmest place in the rink."

"Goof! Well then, get back down there, already!" she joked as she playfully swatted his shoulder.

"Your wish is my command," he said, moving his head back down. He started gently probing his tongue into her pussy.

"Oh....wow.....this is so **damn** naughty!" Sophia declared. She could feel the cold from the ice, under her and all around her--and she could feel the heat rising from her body, flowing out of her pussy, rising up from her breasts.

Warren was doing his usual thorough job with his mouth on her. The combination of her increasing arousal, the thought of where they were doing this, and the cold make her skin tingly.

She felt her arousal build. She felt the droplets of sweat build up on her forehead, as her overheated body waged war with the frigid surroundings. Even from under the blanket, the sounds of Warren's tongue on her pussy echoed throughout the empty, cavernous ice rink. This only turned her on more. She moaned deeply, as her body writhed upon the blankets. She felt her orgasm start in the pit of her stomach, and explode outward in a rush of welcome heat, as her back arched and her hands clenched the blanket. Her yelps of pleasure filled the building.

"Warren, fuck me!" she said in a low growl as her orgasm subsided. "Fuck me on the ice, honey, fuck me now!"

"Gladly," he said, as he crawled up her body from underneath the top quilt. He pulled his pants down to his knees, adjusted himself between her legs, and eased his cock into her waiting pussy. She grunted, and he stopped, all the way in her, adjusting himself on the blankets. Even through the blankets, he could feel the hard ice, and was glad he wore kneepads to practice.

He started moving, slowly and deliberately, in and out of her, testing his leverage and making sure they weren't going to slide, blankets and all, all around the ice. Satisfied, he picked up the pace.

"Oh....nnnnngggg....Warren, I have to confess," Sophia groaned. "This.....oooofff...is a fantasy of mine, too."

Warren just smiled and kept going, concentrating on the task at hand. Sophia felt the tingling feeling return, as her body once again built up to a fever pitch.

"Oh, God, yeah, Warren, fuck me! Fuck me on the ice, **our** ice, make the ice melt, Warren! Fuck me until the ice melts! AAAAAHHHHHH!!!!" Her screaming reverberated, sounding like thunder. The slurp slurp slurp of his cock sliding in and out of her pussy filled their ears, as did the sound of Warren's pelvis banging into Sophia's. Sophia let out a few strangled howls, and then her body tensed, her stomach becoming as hard and unyielding as the ice below her. "OH I'M CUMMMMINNNGGGG!!!" she screamed, and then she did, spasming underneath Warren. Just after she was done, he thrust deep into her and came himself, pouring his seed deep into her.

She reached up and drew him down to her, hugging him deeply into her as she kissed his neck. Then, she gently pushed him off her. He settled in, lying next to her, their arms entwined. After a few minutes, she sat up. She reached underneath herself, in between two of the blankets on the ice, and withdrew a sheet of cardboard that she had kept hidden. With an impish smile, she turned toward Warren and held the cardboard high over her head.

On it, she had written "6.0".

Warren didn't stop laughing for quite a while.

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They were driving home afterwards.

"So, was I enough judges for you?" Sophia asked playfully.

"Only one I need," Warren smiled back. "Thanks, Pookie. That was a thrill."

"I know. Cold, but very, very arousing. I kept waiting for June to come in, saying she had forgotten something."

"That would have been.....embarrassing!"

"Yup. Well, we always knew we could dance off ice as well as on. Now we know we can fuck on ice as well as off."

"That's one way to put it," Warren chuckled. "Now I just have to figure out how to sneak into Fenway Park late one night so I can fuck you on top of the dugout and fulfill **your** fantasy," Warren said.

"Ooooooh!!!"

-----  
"So, did you guys get anything done last night?" June asked them at practice the next day.

"You might say that," Sophia said.

"Yeah, we worked on some new moves," Warren said, deadpan.

"Lots of new moves," Sophia agreed, giggling.

June looked at them strangely. "You guys all right?"

"Sure. Never better." Warren supplied.

"You're acting strange."

"We're always strange!" Warren asserted.

"Just check center ice. There might be a puddle or two," Sophia said, and then skated away, laughing, leaving June shaking her head in befuddlement.

They were on the ice at the University of Wisconsin, in their first practice with Kathy Sleighter, their new coach there. She had met them over a cup of coffee, chatted a bit, and then asked them to do their programs from last year, so she could see them run through a couple of completed programs from close-up. "I wasn't at Nationals the last two years--I took a break from coaching to have a kid--so I've only seen you two on TV."

They ran through last year's original dance and free dance, then skated up to Kathy. "Oh my God, I can't believe your speed! You guys can get speed from the smallest movements, it's incredible."

"That's always been one of our strengths," Sophia said.

"That's a good question. What do you consider your strengths?"

"The speed thing, an ability to skate close together that's almost innate, a romantic style of presentation that appeals to an audience," Sophia said.

"Musical awareness, good choreographic sense, and we're a **couple** on the ice, not just two people skating together. We also match well physically." Warren added.

"What about weaknesses?" Kathy asked.

"Sometimes we get too into the music," Sophia said. "We go with our first musical instinct, and not necessarily our first technical or difficulty-enhancing instinct. We can be sloppy, especially on compulsories. Oh, and we can't act worth beans," Sophia added with a smile.

"Our musical choices can be anachronistic or unusual, which I consider a strength but others don't. Our line, the pointing of toes, that kind of stuff, needs work. Plus, we're mismatched in ability to some degree," Warren said.

"Oh, here we go again," Sophia said with a chuckle.

"What do you mean?" Kathy asked.

"One member of this team is a better skater than the other member of this team," Warren said. "Hint: I'm not the better one."

Kathy just laughed. "Warren, I did **not** see much disparity. Honestly. She's better on turns than you are, by a bit, and that's all."

"This is a very old conversation," Sophia told her. "When we started skating together, I **was** a lot better, because I had the dance background. He's caught up, but I can't convince him of that."

"Well, I hear it, actually. On the internet, and from commentators," Warren pointed out. "I don't know if that's just because she grabs more attention than I do, that might be it."

"What do you mean?" Kathy asked.

"Everybody watches her no matter what I'm doing," Warren said with a laugh.

"He's got a complex about this," Sophia said.

"Not really. I just know what is. Hey, if I were in the audience, I wouldn't be watching me, either."

"Maybe we can accentuate you, Warren, more than you have been," Kathy pointed out.

"Why? Heck, we're third in the world. If it ain't broke, don't fix it, right?" Warren said.

"Actually, our new OD **does** accentuate him, because there's so much fast footwork, which is his strength," Sophia pointed out.

"Let's see it," Kathy told them.

They ran through "If You Can't Rock Me" as Kathy watched, taking mental notes.

"Great. Let's see the new free dance." They did "Romeo and Juliet."

"OK," Kathy said. "Go get changed. We'll have a cup of coffee and talk."

They did, and met her in the snack bar a few minutes later.

"OK, here's my thoughts, and my plan. The OD is great, and it's on its way to being stupendous. No worries, we just need to touch it up."

"Agreed," said Sophia.

"OK. Romeo and Juliet needs work, but it's got the beginnings and potential to be fantastic. I love the concept, I love how you guys carry it out, but it needs work. Right now, that's the program that highlights two of your weaknesses--it's too reliant on the music, and it's too Sophia-centric. We need to add more difficulty, and especially more difficulty for Warren."

"OK," said Warren.

"Here's my plan. We nail the OD down **now**, because we need that right away. You can't do another OD at Skate Canada; you need to do a swing, so we need it ready for then. When you guys can skate it in your sleep, **then** we go to work on Romeo and Juliet. If it's not ready, and you have to do the Sinatra program for Skate Canada--heck, for the whole Grand Prix--who cares? Just as long as Romeo and Juliet is ready--and I mean **really** ready--for Nationals and the Olympics."

"Hmmm. Never thought of it that way," Warren said.

"It's a good plan, though," Sophia said.

"Agreed," said Warren.

"Great!"

-----

Classes had started, and Sophia had a problem. He was in her American History class, and his name was Michael Bjornsen.

He was a transfer, from Wisconsin-Green Bay, and was a sophomore Computer Science major. And he was seriously infatuated with Sophia.

She thought to herself, here we go again, but she knew that wasn't entirely accurate. He was **not** Eduardo, he was sweet and kind. And she didn't feel any **sparks**. But, boy, was he persistent.

"So, what are you doing this Saturday?" Michael asked her about a month into the semester, not for the first time.

"Mike, I'm busy," she said with a smile.

"Jeez, you're **always** busy."

"Mike, I've been trying to let you down easy, but that's not working," Sophia sighed. "I have a boyfriend. A very serious boyfriend."

"You do?"

"Yeah," she smiled. "I do like you, you know, and if I weren't attached, I'd think about it. But I **am** attached."

"No chance?" he asked her.

"Sorry. I've been with him for more than four years."

"Jeez, you should want some variety by now," Mike joked.

She couldn't help but laugh. "Nice try."

-----

Sophia never mentioned Warren's name to Mike. If she had, Mike would have discovered that his dream girl's boyfriend lived on his floor.

In fact, that evening, Mike was in Warren's room, bemoaning his plight. Papa Bear was also there.

"She's perfect. Beautiful, smart, sexy, funny, sweet. I've been asking her out since the first week of class, and she kept putting me off. She figured I'd get the hint and give up. No, not me--so she finally gets tired of my unceasing attention and spills the beans--she's got a boyfriend."

"Damn, that's rough," said Warren.

"Yup," agreed Paul.

"Ah, how would you guys know? You both **have** girlfriends. And Caitlin is a peach. I've never met yours, Warren."

"Yeah, she rooms with Cait, so it just seems I end up up there and Cait comes down here. You'll get to meet her today, though."

"Cool! Hey, be right back, got to use the can."

He walked back in about three minutes later.

"Damn! Guess what? My dream girl is walking down the hall. She just turned the corner--didn't see me. I ducked in here. Damn, what's she doing on this floor?"

"Maybe her boyfriend lives here," Paul pointed out.

"I know everybody's girlfriend on this floor, I think," Warren said. "Mike, what's her name?"

"Sophia. Sophia Daniels."

Warren tried to stifle his chuckle. It didn't work. "Well, Mike, I hate to tell you this, but she's about to knock on this door."

"Huh?"

"And another thing," Warren said, grinning, "I'd appreciate it if you didn't hit on my girlfriend, OK?"

Just then the door knocked. "Pookie?" Warren asked, and Sophia stepped through the door.

"Hi, Snugglebear. Hi Paul." Then she looked and saw Mike standing in the corner. "Mike? Hi, what are you doing here?"



"I live down the hall. I don't need to ask you what you're doing here, Warren just told me. I didn't know he was your boyfriend."

"Yup," she smiled.

"Great. Listen, I'll see you guys later, OK?" Mike hastily beat it out the door.

"There goes a lovesick human being," proclaimed Papa Bear. "Unrequited love **sucks**, I know that much."

"I know. He's a nice guy, too," Sophia said. "Damn, why did he have to fall for **me**? I hate hurting people."

"I know you do. If I had known Mike was the guy you were talking about that was hitting on you, I would have tried to let him down easy before this," Warren said.

-----

Warren and Paul were eating breakfast the next morning, and were pleased to see Mike walk over with his tray of food to join them.

"Yo," he said. "Listen, Warren, I want to apologize for getting all goofy last night when Sophia showed up."

"No need," Warren said. "Been there, done that."

"What do you mean?"

"Look, when I first met Sophia, not only did she have a boyfriend, but said boyfriend.... well, let's just say that the boyfriend did **not** treat her well. So, not only was I dealing with the whole unrequited love thing, I also **knew** beyond a shadow of a doubt that she'd be a lot better off with me. And I was only fourteen at the time, and had never had so much as a **date**, much less a girlfriend. I shudder to think what would have happened if we hadn't finally got together."

"Yeah, I can see that," Mike said. "But, think of it this way--I know I've only known you for a month, but I know you well enough to have figured out that you probably treat Sophia like a princess."

"She'd agree with that," Warren said with a smile.

"Right. When 'the boyfriend' was just an abstract, I could dream, right? But when the boyfriend is Warren, my floormate, who I like--well, that's different. She's yours, I have no chance." He sighed. "Ah, hell, it was just an infatuation anyway. So, it was a little difficult yesterday, but I'm fine." He smiled at Warren. "Just so you understand what a lucky son of a bitch you are."

Warren smiled back, and said, "To a point. I **am** incredibly lucky, but I've also gone through hell for her, more than once. She's gone through hell for me, too."

"How serious are you guys?" Mike asked.

"Play your cards right, and you'll get invited to a wedding one of these days." Even Mike had to smile at that.

"Hey, guys!" They heard from behind them. It was Alexa. She came over and greeted Warren and Paul. Warren introduced her to Mike. They chatted for a bit, then Alexa made her way out the door.

Mike watched her go, then turned to Warren. "Who was **that**?"

"That was Alexa, one of my very best friends. She lives up on 15, she's a business major from Colorado."

"Wow. She's beautiful."

"That she is. Good kid, too." Warren smiled to himself.

-----

A couple of days later, Paul and Cait were standing in front of Mike's room.

"Now, **where** do you want me to go?" Mike was asking them.

"To the ice rink, to watch Sophia and Warren practice."

"Practice what?"

"They are ice dancers," Cait told him. "In fact, they were third in the world this year, and they will be going to the Olympics hopefully in February."

"Wow, I didn't know that. That's cool, but I don't get much into ice skating, so why would I want to go watch?"

"Well," Paul said, "because Alexa is going to be there. I saw that look you gave her when you met her at breakfast the other day."

"I also know that she asked Warren about you, too," Cait said.

"Ah."

"It's perfect," Paul told him. "It's not a fix up. You're going to watch Sophia and Warren skate, right? She'll just happen to be there. And you'll have a chance to talk."

"OK. What the heck? Maybe I'll learn something about ice dancing, anyway."

-----

Alexa was already there, and watched with interest as Mike walked in with Cait and Paul. He came over with them and sat down next to her.

"Hi!" she said.

"Hi."

"What are you doing here?"

"Ah, Paul and Caitlin convinced me I should come and watch this whole ice dancing thing."

"That's right, we'll get you cultured if it kills us!" Warren shouted from the ice.

"Could we have some skating, please?" Kathy told Warren and Sophia.

"You know, this was a lot more fun last year when you didn't have a coach," Paul teased. They actually all liked Kathy, who liked them right back.

"You just shut up, Papa Bear, or we'll get your ass down here," Kathy told him.

"Promises, promises."

They started working on Romeo and Juliet. Mike found himself watching, and enjoying it.

"I don't know nothing about ice dance, but it seems some of this stuff that they are doing is really difficult," Mike said.

"It is," Alexa told him. "What's considered difficult in ice dance is skating close together with complex footwork, and they do that a lot. This is actually a program that's not difficult enough yet--they're bulking it up with more steps and turns and stuff."

"Do you skate?"

Alexa laughed. "No. I just learned a lot watching them. It's fun for me, I like watching them. It's fascinating to watch these programs develop."

"I can see that."

"They're my best friends on campus, them and Paul and Cait there. I knew Warren first, and then got to know Sophia."

"Really?"

"Yeah. They were actually broken up for two months at the beginning of last year. That's when I got to know Warren. And when they got back together, I got to know Sophia."

"Damn. I should have been here last year."

Alexa laughed. "Got a thing for Sophia?"

"I did, until I found out she was the girlfriend of a guy I like a lot. Just infatuation, that's all."

"Well, if you had met her last year when they were broken up, you wouldn't have been so infatuated, because she was a shell of herself, from what I understand. It's a long story, suffice it to say that that breakup **never** should have happened. And they would have gotten back together in any case. Trust me, I know."

"Ah."

They chatted for a while after that, asking each other question about themselves.

"Hey," Mike said after a while, "are you busy Friday night?"

"No."

"You want to go out?"

"Love to!"

-----

Saturday morning, Alexa joined Warren and Sophia for breakfast.

"So, how was the date with Mike?" Sophia asked.

"Great. He's nice and sweet, and very funny. We went out to eat, then went to a party. I had a very good time. He walked me back to my room, gave me a kiss that made my hair stand on end, and then left. But we made another date for tonight."

"You didn't drag him into your bed?" Warren teased her.

"No," she smiled. "I figure I'll take it slow, let him take the lead. It'll be a whole new experience!"

Skate Canada was Sophia and Warren's first event in the Grand Prix series. It was the last week in October, in Edmonton. They arrived on a Tuesday, and would compete Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday.

"HEY!" They heard from behind them as they walked into the hotel lobby. It was Liz Cushman.

"Hey, Liz, what's up?" Warren asked.

"Not much. You guys ready for the season?"

"No!" Sophia laughed. "We're still using last year's free dance, because the new one isn't ready yet!"

"Oh," Liz said. "Is there a problem with it?"

"Not difficult enough," Warren told her. "We're getting there, though. If we can get the difficulty, it's going to be a very special program. Might have to wait for Nationals to unveil it, though."

"So, how's Rich?" Sophia asked her with a smile.

"Rich is just fantastic," Liz said. "Unfortunately, he couldn't make it here, but things between us are wonderful."

"Glad to hear it," Warren said.

-----

Their main competitors at Skate Canada would be the home country favorites, Canadian dancers Renee Damphier and Christian Gaudler. Warren and Sophia were watching them practice Wednesday morning.

"I really, really like their free dance," Sophia said to Warren. Renee and Christian were dancing to a funky mix of various soul songs.

"Yeah, they got da funk, don't they?" Warren laughed. "Their OD isn't as good as ours is, though, I don't think."

"True, but that free is something else. I love dancers that dance. They're not just dancing, they're shaking that thing."

Just then Renee and Christian came off the ice. "Hey, Warren, Sophia! How you guys doing?"

"Great," Sophia told them. "That's some free."

"Glad you like it," Renee said. "What you guys got up your sleeves?"

"Well, the OD will rock your world," Warren told them with a grin, "but the free is Sinatra again. The new one's not ready."

"Will it be?" Christian asked.

"Oh yeah. Nationals, if not sooner."

---

It was a fun competition. Warren and Sophia finished second in the compulsories, won the original dance, and finished second in the free. A silver medal, behind Renee and Christian, which was fine with them. They knew they were competing with an old free dance, which would hinder them.

They had decided to choreograph a number of exhibitions, and the one they did for the fall competitions was a number by Patti Scialfa called "As Long As I Can Be With You." It was poppy, with nice loud guitars, and a fine romantic sentiment in the lyrics.

Liz won the ladies' competition, and Warren and Sophia were impressed with her skating. She seemed much freer on the ice than in the past couple of years.

The new Canadian pairs team, Jennie Sellers and Denis Poulin, won the pairs competition.

---

Three weeks later, they were in Moscow for Cup of Russia. This time, their main competition was the world champions, Olga Bradochkina and Nikolai Zhargov. Warren and Sophia finished second in all three phases of the competition, and won another silver medal. Two second-place finishes was enough to make them one of the five teams that qualified for the Grand Prix final, which was their goal.

---

In between their two competitions, Warren had a less pleasant duty to take care of. The four guys that had beat him up went on trial. He was called to testify.

The prosecutor, John Komack, started the questioning about what he was doing that night.

"Well, Sophia and I had practiced, and then I had gone to study, so I hadn't gotten supper. I had walked to the deli on Curtis Ave to get a sandwich. I was walking back, past Thompson Hall, when it happened."

"What happened?"

"These four guys approached me, and asked if I was 'that figure skater' that went to school here."

"Can you identify the four men?"

"Yes, the defendants."

"OK, what happened next?"

"I confirmed I was a figure skater. They went on to ask me if all figure skaters were gay. I told them, no, some, but not all. They got more belligerent in insisting that all skaters were gay. I told them to believe what they liked, and asked if I could get by. They told me no, because I was a figure skater, which means I must be a fag, and Reverend Watson told them what to do about fags. That's when the first punch hit my face."

"Who threw the first punch?"

"I honestly don't know. It wasn't long before I was getting hit from all sides. Then they dragged me behind Thompson Hall and really went to town."

"Were all four of them involved?"

"Yes. I do know that I saw every one of them either punch or kick me at one point."

"OK, so they punched and kicked you. Did anything else happen?"

"Yes." Warren took a deep breath. "I was raped."

"Do you know who raped you?"

"It wasn't Gornich or Stevens, they were holding my arms. It was either Kohler or Jorgensen. The medical reports found Kohler's semen in my.....in my rectum, so...." He took another deep breath.

"Are you all right, Mr. Kelleher?" the judge asked him.

"Yeah," he said with a small smile. "Any way I can get a glass of water?" One was provided for him.

"Warren," Mr. Komack asked, "I know this is difficult, but we need to ask these. Did you know you were being raped?"

"I'm not sure. I felt something....back there...a pressure, and then a searing pain. I blacked out just after, so I wasn't conscious for the whole thing. "

"Do you think that was what made you black out?"

"I don't know, maybe a doctor who has studied these things would know. I was in pain like you wouldn't believe at that point, and had already lost blood. Probably a combination."

"Now, the first time you were sure you had been raped was when the doctor in the hospital told you, is that correct?"

"Yeah. I was just regaining consciousness, talking to my girlfriend and the cop. I probably would have figured it out, though, because my ass hurt. I mean, **really** hurt."

"But the doctor is the one that told you. How did you react?"

"I don't know. How do you react to something like that? It took me months of therapy to work **that** one out. At that moment, I think I just felt horrified. And, I must admit, considering the reasons they stated for beating me up, I did **not** miss the irony."

"What do you mean?"

"Beating up a straight guy because you think he's gay, and, to make your point clear, performing a gay sexual act on him" Warren managed to smile. "It would have been viciously hilarious if it hadn't happened to **me**." Even the judge chuckled at that one.

"Warren, how has what happened to you affected you?"

"Well, I needed therapy. I shut down for a while, wouldn't talk to my girlfriend, almost quit skating. It's better now, but it was rough for a while."

"Thank you."

The attorney for one of the goons, Kohler, stood up to cross examine.

"Mr. Kelleher, did you see my client rape you?"

"Like I said, no. It was either him or Jorgensen, because I could see the other two."

"In fact, you didn't actually **see** my client do anything to you, did you? It was all a blur, isn't that correct?"

"No, that is not correct. Your client was the one that broke my wrist. I saw that. He reached out and grabbed my hand and twisted it, all the while grinning at me. I saw that, plain as day."

The attorney was taken aback by that. "But you didn't see him rape you."



"No, but **somebody** raped me, and he was the one that deposited his **semen** in my **ass**."

"Yes, **if** you believe DNA testing," the attorney said.

One of the other attorneys asked Warren about Reverend Watson. "What do you think of him, Warren?"

"Objection!" shouted the prosecutor.

The judge overruled it, so Warren answered. "I think Watson's a despicable, evil hatermonger."

"Do you hold him responsible for your attack?"

"He's responsible for fomenting hate, but he's not the one that beat me up. We're responsible for our actions. Your client, and those other three, took an action--they beat me up, and raped me. Watson wasn't there."

"You don't think my client was under Watson's influence?"

"I wouldn't be able to answer that, counselor, I have a mind of my own." Chuckles were heard even from the jury box.

"What is that supposed to mean, Mr. Kelleher?"

"Just what it sounds like. I have a mind of my own. Most human beings do. Does your client?"

"My client was under the influence of a persuasive and powerful man."

"Well, then your client's an idiot, but stupidity is no excuse." The defense attorneys howled at that, and the judge ordered Warren's remarks stricken from the record.

Finally, after a full day on the stand, Warren's ordeal was over.

## INTERLUDES (Chapter 90)

Warren found himself talking about his assault again, in an unlikely place.

Sophia and Warren, this semester, were actually taking a course together. It was a requirement for their degree, a Women's Studies course called "Women in Contemporary Society." The professor bordered on being one of those misandrist gender feminists, but Warren and Sophia actually had fun with that. Having a committed couple taking her course together threw Dr. Abrams for a bit of a loop. One day, when she was prattling on about how heterosexual sex "established male dominance," Sophia threw out a quip along

the lines of "I wish my particular male was **more** dominant," leading to laughter from most of the rest of the class, and sputters of indignation from Dr. Abrams and a couple of ultra-feminist classmates.

Warren and Sophia tried to keep it light, letting everyone in the class know the humor they found in some of Dr. Abrams' more ridiculous pronouncements. Until, one day right after Warren had testified in the trial, the topic of discussion in the class turned to rape.

"This is something you men in this class will **never** understand--what it's like to be raped, what it's like to walk in fear of being raped," Dr. Abrams was saying.

"You're wrong," Warren interrupted.

"Excuse me?"

"There's a criminal trial going on right here in Madison, it's been in all the papers," Warren said sarcastically. "The defendants are on trial for assault, attempted murder, and rape--and the victim is male. He was anally raped. Right here on campus, he's a student."

"I don't usually agree with him," Meg, one of the ultra-feminists in the class, said, "but I think he's right. I remember hearing something about that."

"Hmmm. I haven't heard a thing," Dr. Abrams said, "and I think I would have. Did the victim come to the rape center for counseling? He should have. I would like to meet this victim. I'm not sure I believe he was truly raped."

Warren got a little angry. "And that's the reason he didn't go to the rape center, because it's full of people like you who don't believe this could ever happen to a guy. He had private counseling with a therapist he trusts. And if you want to meet him, he's talking to you right now. Let me assure you, I was **raped**. It wasn't pleasant, and I don't particularly like talking about it, but if I can get you off your damn gender horse by talking about it, then I suppose it's worth it."

Dr. Abrams looked at him in stunned disbelief. "You're a rape victim?"

"Yes, I am. Last January, behind Thompson Hall. Four guys beat the living daylights out of me, and then one of them raped me. I just testified in the trial last week."

"Do you know why this happened, I mean, what was the motive?"

"Oh, it was a gay-bashing. I'm not gay, but they assumed I was, because I'm a figure skater."

Dr. Abrams realized something. "Oh, you and Sophia are those ice dancers!"

"Right."

"Did what happened to you make you more empathetic to women who have this happen to them?"

"I already was," Warren told her, "for a very personal reason."

"I was a survivor of both rape and boyfriend abuse when Warren met me. In fact, it was still going on, regularly. He's the one that pulled me out of that and convinced me to get help," Sophia told the class. "He didn't need to be raped himself to empathize, believe me. He even helped me in high school when I did peer counseling for other victims."

Dr. Abrams looked like someone who had had their entire worldview stood on its head. "You did rape and abuse counseling?" she asked Warren.

"No, Sophia did, but they asked me to talk to some of the girls about what friends and loved ones of abuse victims go through. Evidently, one of my speeches convinced one girl to confide in a friend, which lead to the friend convincing her to finally go to the police, which probably saved her life," Warren said, thinking of Meggan. "I'm going to wear that little feather in my cap proudly, thank you very much. I got to know this girl afterwards, because she started dating the guy she confided in, and that guy was part of Sophia's social circle, so I got to know her well. She's doing wonderfully, she's still with the guy, they go to college in Boston, and she's not a victim anymore."

"I'm stunned," said Dr. Abrams. "I never thought a guy could be this intimate with rape and abuse."

"That's because you don't **want** to believe it, because it shatters your little gender-oriented worldview," Warren told her.

"Let me ask you a question--did being raped increase your fear level, like it does to women?"

"Of **course** it did! I'm scared to walk across campus by myself--and I **enjoy** walking by myself. Look, I'm not weak. I'm a competitive athlete. I lift weights, because I have to lift Sophie on the ice. I never thought of myself as weak. And the assault made me feel weak, less than two months before we were supposed to compete in the World Championships. Feeling weak made me scared."

"Women feel weak **all** the time, Warren."

"No, I don't," Sophia told her. "I can't. And we had to drum that out of Warren, post-haste, believe me. Between his therapist and myself, we devoted the better part of two months convincing him he wasn't weak. It took **four** guys to do this to him, don't forget that. And, even though I'm an abuse survivor, I don't feel weak, either. I might have then. I don't anymore. That's a trap. You can't fall into that trap--and you **especially** can't fall into that trap if you're a competitive athlete. Neither of us are weak people. We proved that at the World Championships."

"What do you mean?" Dr. Abrams asked her.

"After the rape, after the beating, after the therapy--we got our asses to San Jose and won the bronze medal. This in our second Worlds, this after finishing tenth in the previous year, and this does **not** happen in Ice Dance." Sophia smiled. "We got to conquer our demons **and** the Russians, all at once." The class chuckled at that.

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Sophia and Warren stayed on campus for Thanksgiving. Paul went home to Cleveland, taking Cait with him, so Jessie and Crash decided to come up and spend the long weekend with them. They ended up eating Thanksgiving dinner in the dorm, along with Mike and Alexa.

"So, how's that fabulous free dance of yours coming?" Jessie asked them.

"It's coming," Warren told her.

"We going to see it at the Grand Prix final?"

"Nope. Nationals."

"I haven't even seen it yet," Alexa grinned. "They keep kicking me out of practice when they work on it."

"We want it to be a surprise," Warren said.

"Your biggest fan should get a preview," Alexa maintained.

"Maybe you will. When it's **done**," Sophia told her.

"Promises, promises."

"I got my tickets, by the way," Jessie told them. "Crash and I will be there, with bells on."

"Yeah, lots of people from here are coming, too, even though classes don't start for another week following," Alexa said. "Good thing the dorms stay open through Christmas break."

"Warren," Jessie asked him, "I forgot to ask you. What happened at the trial?"

"Oh, I just found out Tuesday. Guilty on all counts."

"Great."

"My only regret is that damn Reverend Watson couldn't accompany them."

"You should sue him," Mike said.

"What?" Warren asked.

"Sue him. Alexa's told me the whole story of what happened. You should talk to a lawyer about it, but you might have a case. You could probably shut his organization down."

"Hmmm. Something to think about, anyhow."

## TURNING JAPANESE (Chapter 91)

"Here we are in Japan. I hope we have time to get out of the hotel room," giggled Sophia. They were in Nagano, Japan, for the Grand Prix final.

"What day is it, anyhow? We left on Monday the seventh of December. And now it's what, Tuesday? I'm completely discombobulated," Warren joked.

"Forget about that. We don't have practice until tomorrow--or the next day--or something," Sophia laughed. "Get over on this bed and kiss me!"

"Don't have to tell me twice," Warren said, as he tackled her back on the bed.

"Mmmmmmm...I love sex in hotel rooms," Sophia said as they broke the kiss.

"Oh, really?"

"Yeah, but we're supposed to meet Liz for lunch...or supper....or something....in an hour. And we need a shower."

"Hmmm....." Warren got off the bed and went to the bathroom. He returned with a big smile on his face. "Shower's big enough for two, Pookie."

"Goody!"

They raced each other to the bathroom, and raced each other in getting their clothes off, laughing the whole time. Finally they got in the shower, and washed each other, still laughing.

"Well, with all the attention you paid to them, I can rest assure my breasts are **really** clean," jokes Sophia.

"Yeah, and I don't think I have to worry about my private parts, either," Warren told her.

"Well, unless you meant worrying about your private parts being all engorged and stuff," Sophia giggled.

"Engorged, but clean."

"Sounds like mine," she admitted.

"I could help you out with that," Warren leered at her.

"In here?"

He moved closer to her, his cock rubbing up against her pubic hair. "Sure," He backed her up against the wall of the shower and guided his cock into her.

"My GOD!" she screamed. He grabbed her hips and started moving into her. The angle was a little off--their four inch difference in height didn't help--but he managed to build up a steady rhythm. She wrapped her arms around his neck and stood up on her toes as he plunged in and out.

"Oh...wow.....we've never done it standing up before....." Sophia gasped. "Oh, YEAH....."

Warren felt Sophia's arms around his neck tighten, and she let out a wail. He stopped moving until she finished.

"Was it good for you, too?" he asked jokingly.

"Oh YEAH. You're not done yet?"

"Nope." He started plunging in and out of her again. Not long after, he spurted into her.

"Look at this," she said after they had caught their breath, "we have to clean off those private parts again!"

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The worst part about the Grand Prix final is that it was done in two days. This was fine for the singles and pairs skaters, they had two disciplines. Not dancers. They had to do both compulsories on Friday morning, and the original dance Friday night.

The two Russian teams, the Canadian team, and the French team joined Warren and Sophia in the finals. The compulsories did not go particularly well--Warren and Sophia finished fifth.

The original dance was much better--they finished second, behind Bradochkina and Zhargov, and, the way the placements worked out, they ended up in a three-way tie for second place, with the Canadians and Yatserova and Vaglach.

However, they knew they were handicapped by using last year's free dance. They were right. They finished fifth in the free, fifth (and last) overall.

They weren't all that upset. As Warren told the TV interviewer, "We knew we came in with an old free dance. The new one will be ready for Nationals, and we think it's fantastic. And we were really encouraged by the second place finish in the original dance."

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They finished up the semester and flew back home to Boston--they didn't drive this time because they would have to get back to Wisconsin in a hurry for Nationals.

Sophia was very glad to see a sense of normalcy had returned to her house--Dan was **finally** accepting Kate and Dave's relationship, and had again become the kind man that Sophia had first met. When he stopped worrying about Kate, he relaxed considerably. It was good to see--and he and Ellen were getting along better than ever.

Sophia and Warren had a wonderful Christmas together, but, as Warren sat with her in his room Christmas night, he thought that she seemed preoccupied. He said so.

"No, I'm fine," she told him with a smile.

"You sure?"

"Yeah. I'm just nervous."

"About what?"

"Oh.....Nationals, I guess. The new free dance. Making it to the Olympics. That stuff."

"You sure that's all it is?"

"Yeah, Snugglebear, that's it."

He wasn't convinced, but he didn't push it. "We're going to be fine at Nationals, you know."

"Yeah. I didn't say it was a **rational** nervousness!"

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They spent the week between Christmas and New Years mostly on the ice. Nationals began January Fifth, so they wanted to make sure they were ready.

June was going to be at Nationals, as was Kathy. "Two coaches, how can we lose?" quipped Warren.

He was worried, though. Sophia was withdrawn and wasn't talking much. Also, she didn't look particularly well. She chalked it up to nervousness and a bit of a flu, and, again, he didn't press the issue.

Next thing they knew, they were on their way back to Wisconsin for Nationals.







