

THE GOOD AND THE BAD (Chapter 92)

Sunday was their first practice, a free dance practice. The judges were in the audience, lots of other skaters were in the audience, and even some of their friends had shown up early.

All of them saw 'Romeo and Juliet' for the first time.

The program, under the tutelage of Kathy, had undergone an amazing transformation. It had started out as a wonderful expression of passion and music, but without the technical bite they would need. Kathy's suggestions and work had provided that bite. Romeo and Juliet was a slow, pretty, flowing song, but had wonderful rhythmic accents from the piano and Mark Knopfler's gorgeous lead acoustic guitar work. Kathy, Warren, and Sophia had taken full advantage of every accent, every nuance, and the flowing nature of the song, and had created a program full of deep edges, difficult turns, changes of edges, and changes of position and handholds. They had done this, and still kept the program a gorgeous, seamless whole.

They were sitting with friends at dinner that evening.

"Sophia, you got no appetite," Shawna Cochrane told her.

"Not much of one. I'm feeling a bit under the weather."

"Hope that doesn't affect your skating," Evan Pogdar told her. "That free dance is a marvel."

"Thanks. I'll be fine. I just have to force myself to eat, because I don't really feel like it, and it's making me weak."

"She's probably got a bit of flu," Warren told them, "we're just hoping it holds off until **after** Nationals are done."

"So, I'd better eat!" Sophia smiled, digging into her supper with a vengeance.

Tuesday night, they finished third in the compulsories, which was fine--top three was what they wanted out of that phase of the competition.

Wednesday night was the original dance, and their "If You Can't Rock Me" program was polished and ready to go. They would be the first couple in the last group to skate.

Warren and Sophia had made it known around campus that nationals were in Milwaukee, and got some tickets to sell. It paid off. They looked around the arena, and saw large

sections full of Wisconsin red. They themselves had made sure to play it up--they had had special costumes for the OD made for Nationals.

Sophia was wearing a red dress, with a bit white "W" in the middle. It was basically a University of Wisconsin cheerleading outfit. Warren completed the image with a grey sweatshirt with "WISCONSIN" written across it in red letters, and white pants. They took the ice for the warm-up, and the Wisconsin students in the audience went nuts.

"These costumes were one heck of a great idea, Pookie," Warren told her.

"Of course. It was my idea, right?"

As the other couples left the ice after the warm up, the PA announcer said, "They are skating to the music of the Brian Setzer Orchestra. He represents the North Shore Figure Skating Club in Oceanview, Massachusetts, and she represents the UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN!! figure skating club in Madison, Wisconsin!" The crowd went delirious at that. "Please welcome Sophia Daniels and Warren Kelleher!"

As they took their starting positions, they had to step out of them, because they were laughing too hard. Someone--or a group of someones--had started to sing the Wisconsin fight song. Warren, laughing, waved them quiet, and Warren and Sophia took their starting positions again.

"If You Can't Rock Me" filled the arena. They nailed it, from beginning to end. This was the hardest OD in the world this year, and they knew it. The side-by-side straight line step sequence was particularly hard, and they didn't make the slightest mistake. The crowd went nuts, and was on its feet by the time Warren and Sophia ended.

The marks were great. By the time everyone had skated, Warren and Sophia had won the OD.

They drew last to skate in the free dance. Nicholas and Coleman were leading, Vickers and Pogdar in second, by the time Warren and Sophia took the ice.

"Romeo and Juliet" was ready. They knew it, and those who had seen it at practice this week knew it. Now, all they had to do was skate it perfectly.

Sophia took the ice in a rose-colored dress that hung lower than the usual skating dress. She had put rollers in her hair, and the long, silky curves cascaded past her shoulders and around her face. Warren was wearing a purple tunic and black pants. Sophia had a rose in her hair. They took the ice, and the music started.

It was spellbinding. This was the first truly romantic program they had used for a competitive program. They skated it flawlessly, gliding around the ice, using difficult turns and changes of edge to build the difficulty. In terms of an artistic piece, it was

absolutely stunning. The crowd sat, hushed, through the whole thing, until the end. Then they exploded.

Warren and Sophia returned to the kiss and cry, out of breath, met by delirious hugs from Kathy and June.

"You did it, guys," Kathy told them. "That's a program for the ages."

"I agree," June told them. "Let's see if the judges also agree."

They waited for the PA announcer. "The marks for Daniels and Kelleher. For technical merit: five point eight, five point nine, five point eight, five point nine, five point nine, five point eight, five point nine, five point nine, five point eight."

"That's about the same as Steve and Sharon," Kathy told them, "but they went down on presentation."

"Marks for presentation... **six**..."

Sophia screamed.

".....six, five point nine, six, six, six....."

The crowd was in complete pandemonium by now.

"...five point nine, six, six!"

"Seven sixes," said Kathy. "Oh my God."

Sophia was in tears, and Warren was close. He reached around her and hugged her. "Congratulations, honey," he whispered in her ear, "we're the National Champions."

As they sat there hugging and crying, the results were posted on the scoreboard, putting the crowd into a frenzy again. And Sophia and Warren had to stop crying and start laughing--because a bunch of crazy people in red sweatshirts had started the Wisconsin fight song again.

Warren and Sophia walked out to the front of the kiss and cry and waved. And sang along, just a little bit.

Then they did an interview with the TV folks, Sophia ducked back into the ladies' dressing room to fix her makeup, and they were back on the ice, skating over to the podium, and ascending to the top steps. They grinned broadly as the gold medals were placed around their necks.

"Two part time scrubs like us, National Champions. Who woulda thunk it?" Sophia giggled.

They watched Jack, Liz, and Andrea and Brett win their own gold medals. Liz was particularly impressive. She flew across the ice with a joy and abandon she hadn't had in a while.

Warren and Sophia looked at each other, said "She's in love" simultaneously, and giggled.

Warren and Sophia smuggled Mike, Alexa, Cait, and Paul into the competitors party-- Rich was already there, as Liz's date--and they had a blast.

They had worked up another exhibition, just for Nationals--"Come Dancing" by the Kinks. "We did our 'I love you' program for the free dance, so for the exhibition we decided to do a 'We love to dance' program. And that's such a great song, it's fun to skate to," Sophia had told the TV interviewer.

They almost didn't get to skate it. Sophia woke up the morning of the exhibitions, and ran into the bathroom, vomiting profusely.

"You didn't get drunk last night," Warren asked her.

"No. I think that flu just hit me."

"Can you skate?"

"Let's see."

She was fine for the rest of the day, and, by the time the exhibitions started in mid-afternoon, felt perfectly well. They skated, and it was a great program which the audience loved.

The exhibitions were on January 10th. They'd be leaving for the Olympics on February fourth. Less than a month, and they had a lot to do--polish up the programs, plus their schoolwork. They were excited and thrilled to go to an Olympics, and couldn't wait, but they were also nervous.

And Sophia was sick. She was vomiting about every other day. She passed it off as nerves. She'd throw up once, in the morning, and then be fine--but she was having trouble maintaining an appetite, and was a little weak. Warren was worried. Sophia told him she had been to a doctor, and it was just a little stomach upset, and that she was supposed to take Maalox.

That was a lie. She hadn't been to a doctor. She was afraid to--because she knew it wasn't a flu.

On January 21st, exactly two weeks before they were supposed to get on a plane to fly to Switzerland for the Olympics, she finally stopped running from her fears and decided to find out for sure. She had to know. She had **known** for a month, but wasn't sure. Now, she had to be sure.

Caitlin found her in their room that afternoon, sitting on her bed, crying uncontrollably.

"Sophia? What is it? What's wrong?"

Sophia held up a small, thin piece of plastic for Cait to see. And then she told Cait what it meant.

"I'm pregnant."

THE PROBLEM, AND SHOULD WE MAKE IT GO AWAY? **(Chapter 93)**

"Oh my God. What are you going to do?" Caitlin asked Sophia.

"We leave for the Olympics in two weeks. All I can do is get it taken care of, and hope that I can do that in time for me to heal to skate."

"You mean, an abortion?"

"What else **can** I do?"

Cait thought for a minute. "Have you told Warren yet?"

"No. I just found out for sure right now. He's the next step."

"Do you think he'll want you to get rid of it?"

"Of course. I've known that all along. Driven, over-achieving Warren? The Man with the Plan? Of course he's going to want me to get rid of it."

"Do **you** want to?"

"I don't want to be pregnant in the first place."

"That's not what I asked you."

"It's not a question of want," Sophia sighed. "At least you got me to stop crying. Now I get to go tell Warren."

"If Paul's down there, you can send him up," Cait told her.

Sophia took the elevator down to the second floor. She went to Warren's room. He opened the door for her.

"Paul, can you get lost for a bit? Cait's in the room, she said you can go up there."

"Surely," Paul said. "I was going to go see her anyway. Ciao," and he was gone.

"What's up, Pookie?"

"Sit down," she said. He did, on the bed, and she sat next to him. She was staring at her hands. "Warren, there's no easy way to say this, so I'm just going to tell you. I'm pregnant."

Warren looked at her. "Pregnant?" he said in disbelief. "Are you sure?"

"I took a home test and it was positive. I've known, anyhow. I missed my December period, and now I'm three days late for January's, and I've been getting sick in the morning."

"How did this happen?" he asked her.

She took a deep breath. "I missed a day. The pill, I mean. When we were in Japan, what with the time change, I got confused. I **think** I missed it the first or second day we were there, I'm not sure, I just know when we got back here and I got back on the proper day, I had an extra." She looked at him. "I'm so sorry."

"Hey, it happens. One day, huh? My **God** we are fertile. And do you realize our child was probably conceived in a shower in Nagano, Japan?"

Sophia laughed in spite of herself. "I never thought of that. Anyway, I'll go get a blood test but there's no doubt in my mind that I'm pregnant. And we need to get this taken care of post-haste so that I'll heal in time for the Olympics."

Warren stared at her, when he realized what she had said. "'Taken care of?'"

"Yeah. I don't know if there's a clinic here in Madison that does it or not."

"You mean an abortion."

"Well, yeah."

Warren took a deep breath. "OK," he said, in a tone of resignation.

Sophia caught it. "Don't you think that's the best thing to do?"

"It's your body, Sophia, it doesn't matter what I think."

"Of course it does, Warren! Your opinion counts in this."

"I don't mean this to be snippy, but you seem to have already made your mind up."

"Well, that's only because I knew you'd want me to terminate the pregnancy." She looked at him, and realization dawned on her face. "Oh my God," she whispered, "you **don't**, do you?" He didn't say anything, just stared into space. "You're so driven and committed, I thought for sure you wouldn't want an untimely pregnancy messing that up."

He looked at her. "Do you really want my opinion? Really, truly, even if it's not what you want to hear?"

"Yes, Warren, I do."

Warren took a deep breath. "If you terminate the pregnancy, you'll break my heart."

She looked at him in astonishment. "What?" she croaked.

"Absolutely break my heart. I'll get over it, and it **is** your decision in the end, but, no, I do **not** want you to get an abortion."

"What about the Olympics?"

"What about them? Sophia, you're in the first trimester. You're allowed to fly. You're allowed to exercise, and ice dancing is a low-impact activity. See a doctor, don't take my word for it, but, trust me--the Olympics are not an issue. You can skate in the Olympics two months pregnant."

"What about school?"

"You'll be due in early September, from my calculations." Sophia nodded agreement.

"We should have the baby at home, in Boston. We'll have to take a semester or a year off--take a sabbatical--but that shouldn't be a problem with our GPA's."

"What about skating?"

"If you can get back in shape for the end of the Grand Prix next year, we request the USFSA to assign us to Cup of Russia and NHK, they are the last two. If not, we shoot for Nationals. Skaters have had babies before."

"Having a baby is a big responsibility. We're young. We're still in school. We've got the skating. It'll be tough."

"No doubt," Warren agreed.

She looked at him. "But you still want to do it?"

"Yeah, I still want to do it. Look, I know the timing sucks. I know it's inconvenient. I know it was a mistake. But that's a **baby** in you, Sophia. A baby that got made because we love each other. You won't be in this alone, you know."

Sophia started crying. "I didn't expect this. I really didn't expect this."

"Sophia, what do **you** want?"

"God, I don't know. I was **convinced** you'd want me to abort. Now I see how wrong I was, and why, I should have known you might not. However, I've come to terms with the fact that this pregnancy was going to be terminated. I don't know **what** to think."

"Whatever you decide, I love you, you know."

"I know. Warren, I need to think." She got off the bed, walked over to him, and kissed him. "We'll talk later, OK?"

"OK, Pookie."

She left his room and went to her own. Cait and Paul were on their way to eat. They invited her along, but she declined. When they left, she picked up the phone.

"Mom?"

"Hi, honey. How are you?"

"Not so good," Sophia told her. "Mom, I'm pregnant."

"WHAT?"

"Yup. Two weeks before the fucking Olympics, and I turn up pregnant."

"How did this happen?" Sophia explained. "OK, so what are you going to do?"

"That's why I called. I've suspected this for a month. I was all set to have an abortion. I thought for **sure** Warren would want me to have an abortion."

"He doesn't."

"No, he doesn't."

"What do **you** want, Sophia?"

She sighed. "I don't know. I was so convinced he'd agree with the abortion idea....well, maybe I convinced myself. Now that he doesn't.....I'm so confused."

"Can I tell you a story?"

"Sure."

"This is about a friend of mine. She got pregnant, younger than you. She didn't have your money, and her relationship with the father wasn't nearly as wonderful as you and Warren are. In fact, the father **wanted** her to get an abortion, and she thought about it, long and hard. In the end she decided to have the baby."

"What happened?"

"Well, the father left, she had to raise the baby alone, and the kid put her through hell for a while. But the baby grew up to be happy, healthy, altogether delightful, and the National Champion in Ice Dance."

Sophia cracked up laughing. "Your friend is you. Neat trick, Mom." Then she got serious. "You considered aborting me?"

"Oh, yeah, I did. And your father wanted me to."

"Why didn't you?"

"I just couldn't. You were a part of me, Sophia. And, you know what? Even when you were going through your difficult period, I didn't regret keeping you. And now look how you've turned out."

"Aw, Mom....." Sophia sniffled. "I take it you think I should keep the baby."

"Hell, no! 38 is too young to be a grandmother!" They both laughed at that. "No, seriously, honey, you have to do what is right for you. What I'm telling you is, if you have the baby, you'll be fine. And Warren **will** be there, and not leave, and you know that as well as I do."

"That I do. Thanks, Mom."

The next morning, Sophia woke up and made some phone calls. Then, she went to class, and, after that, went to the student health center.

Then she went to see Warren.

"What's up, Pookie?"

"I went to see an OB-GYN. I asked him all about the Olympics. He said the same things you did. They took a blood test. The results will be in tomorrow, but the doctor thinks I'm definitely pregnant. He wants to do an ultrasound before we leave for Switzerland." She held up a piece of paper. "This is the address for a clinic here in Madison. If we want to have an abortion, this is where we go, and we should be able to get it done in time for me to skate in the Olympics."

"OK. So what do you want to do, Sophia?"

"Do you love me?"

"Of course."

"Will you stay with me?"

"We can discuss the particulars of that after the Olympics, but the short answer is--yes. I'm not going anywhere."

"I can't do this alone."

"You won't."

"You promise?"

"I promise."

She looked at the piece of paper in her hand, and then ripped it up. "Well, then, let's have ourselves a baby, shall we?"

Warren got up and wrapped her in a bear hug. "What made you decide?"

"Well, you had me half decided before I left the room yesterday. Just seeing how much you wanted to keep it made me realize that I did, too. But, then I talked to my mother. Did you know she considered aborting me?"

"No, but considering her age and circumstance, I'm not surprised."

"Right. She told me she didn't, because I was a part of her. Warren, this baby is a part of **us**. I can't get rid of it. Now that I know you'll support me, no way can I get rid of it."

"My sentiments exactly."

"I love you, Daddy," Sophia giggled.

"I love you, too, Mommy." Warren agreed. "Which reminds me. Now I get to tell **my** parents!"

MEDIA MUMBLINGS (Chapter 94)

Sophia and Warren walked down to the dining hall for supper together. Paul and Cait were already there.

"So, what's the verdict?" Cait asked Sophia.

"Well....you're going to be an Auntie." Sophia said with a broad smile.

"You're going to have it?"

"Yeah."

"All right, **what** is going on?" Paul bellowed, making the other three laugh.

"I'm pregnant," Sophia told him.

"Ah," Papa Bear said. "Is this a good thing or a bad thing?"

"We've decided that it's a good thing," Sophia told him. "An inconvenient and difficult thing, but a good thing."

"You gonna be able to go to the Olympics?"

"Yup. Talked to a doctor about that today. The only problem is I'm dealing with morning sickness. That won't affect us much--we have no competitions in the morning--except that it makes me lose my appetite. So, I have to force myself to eat so I don't lose strength."

"No cravings for pickles yet?" Papa Bear joked.

"No, silly, that comes later, **after** the morning sickness," Sophia grinned.

"Who knows?" Paul asked.

"My mother knows. She was cool. I have to tell my dad. And Warren's parents know."

"Oh, and what a pleasant conversation **that** was," Warren said ruefully. "They're OK about it, now, after reading me the riot act."

"We need to tell Crash and Jessie," Sophia reminded him. Then she turned back to Cait and Paul. "The only other people that know are you two."

"We're not keeping it a secret, though," Warren said. Sophia nodded agreement. "In fact, we need to tell the USFSA."

"Yeah, the medical staff they bring along with them to the Olympics has to know."

On the ice later that day, they told Kathy, their coach in Wisconsin.

"Oh, Jesus. Now I know why you've been so weak."

"Yeah, that's what we're most worried about--the doctor says we can go and compete, but the morning sickness is making me weak," Sophia told her.

"Listen to me. I have a two year old, I know what I'm talking about," Kathy said. "I didn't take my hiatus from coaching until the kid was almost born, so I coached through the first eight months of the pregnancy. Sophia, you absolutely **need** to eat. Even if food is unappetizing. Fruits and vegetables are best. The morning sickness sucks, but if you eat, you will **not** feel weak. Trust me."

"That's pretty much what the doctor said," Sophia told her. Then she smiled. "I had a massive salad for lunch, I held it down, and I feel pretty good."

"Good. Now let's see Romeo and Juliet, OK?" Kathy commanded.

The morning sickness actually got better over the next week and a half. Sophia did manage to remember to eat, and their practices were good.

Word about Sophia's pregnancy had not spread to the wider world yet, though Sophia and Warren had no doubt that it **would**. In fact, they had no intention of hiding it, and would be making it public when they got to Switzerland and were interviewed.

However, the proverbial shit hit the fan before that had a chance to happen.

Sophia and Warren were semi-famous, and getting more so. The "story" of what had happened to Warren the previous year had gotten them some attention. Being the first dance team in twenty years from the USA to win a medal at Worlds had only added to that. Then, their impressive win at Nationals had cemented it. Daniels and Kelleher were getting as much attention as any of the skaters representing the USA in the Olympics--a novel position for ice dancers. The fact that Sophia turned every head the minute she stepped onto the ice didn't hurt--and the whole "love story" angle didn't hurt, either.

So, people knew who they were. They had gotten some media coverage. However, the media coverage that they got two days before they were to leave for Switzerland was **not** the type they would have wanted.

Warren was in the store that day, and saw Sophia on the cover of the National Enquirer. Curious, he picked it up, bought it, took it back to his room, and started reading.

"The Skeletons In The Closet Of America's New Ice Princess!" the headline screamed. Warren read the whole thing, the horror becoming more apparent on his face with every line he read.

"Sophia Daniels, the new queen of American Ice Dance, is not the sweet and innocent young lass she seems to be. In fact, her past reads like the erotic passions of a steamy romance novel!"

"Young Miss Daniels was known in her hometown of Oceanview, Massachusetts, as someone who was free with her favors. She plowed through a long line of young men, from a very young age, before apparently snaring her current love, her partner, Warren Kelleher."

"'Oh, she was wild,' one former boyfriend told The Enquirer. 'Anything you wanted to do, she did. And she was only thirteen when I met her. She had more experience than girls twice her age. I knew her when she met Kelleher, and it was pathetic how she turned his head. He was an innocent, and she lured him right in.'"

"' And she was a party girl, too. She'd drink or take anything you'd give her.'"

"What makes this even more depressing is that her relationship with her partner seems to be a scam! A friend from the University of Wisconsin, where she and Warren both attend, told the Enquirer, 'I personally know three guys that Sophia has slept with, and none of them are Warren.'"

"What's more stunning is that Miss Daniels apparently had an affair with another skater on last summer's Champions on Ice skating tour--and that the other skater was also female. 'She's gay, and she's using Warren as a beard, I'm convinced of it,' a skating insider told The Enquirer. "

There was more, but Warren had read all he could take.

He called Sophia. "Honey, you'd better get down here. We have a problem."

STRATEGIES (Chapter 95)

Their phones started ringing off the hook almost immediately. They were never shy about communicating to the press, especially with the well known figure skating writers--people like Jared Hurstell of the NY Times, Fred Rausch of the Chicago Tribune, Tina Bowman of USA Today, and Jim Pitman of their hometown Boston Globe. All these people, and others, had Warren and Sophia's phone numbers. And, those who didn't were

calling Stephanie Langson, the USFSA's director of media relations--and **she** was calling Warren and Sophia.

"Listen, Steph, this is what we should do," Warren told her. "Set up a press conference for Friday, the day after we arrive in Switzerland. Tell all the writers we'll answer anything they want to ask, but not **now**. We've got to get ready to go, and that, for us, includes straightening out our classes."

"Gotcha," said Stephanie. "If you commit to a press conference, I can hold them off until then. You guys need a PR person, or an agent, or something!"

"No thanks!" Warren laughed.

"Anyhow, Warren, I have to ask you--how much of the Enquirer story is true?"

"Some of it. We'll explain more at the press conference. We need to decide, between the two of us, what to talk about and what to evade. At least they don't know about Sophia's pregnancy yet, that we get to spring on them ourselves."

The phone went silent for a minute. "What? Sophia's **pregnant**?" Stephanie finally asked.

"Yeah. They didn't tell you? We told Curtis, and the medical staff." Curtis Ingalls was the president of the USFSA.

"Nobody told **me**!" Stephanie explained. "Jesus, Warren, if the media want to portray her as a slut, she just gave them more ammunition. Does she have any idea who the father is?"

"Goddammit, Steph, you should know better than that! **I** am the father, of course!"

"Are you sure?"

"Stephanie, except for the two months we were broken up last year, Sophia has not slept with another man besides me for five years," Warren said, and it was almost true--and Warren didn't worry about the whole Jessie/Crash thing getting out.

"OK. Well, I'll set up the press conference, and you guys decide what you're going to say."

"We've got the press conference scheduled," Warren said to Sophia as she entered his room.

"Good. I've talked to Jessie. That whole thing never happened, and if the few people that know about it bring it up, Jess and Crash will deny it. Outside of that, we're going to more or less tell the truth."

"Well, sort of. We're going to leave Alexa and Liz out of this, because nobody but the two of us, Alexa, and Liz know."

"Right," Sophia agreed. "Warren, do you think Liz had anything to do with the Enquirer finding out I had a lesbian affair on tour?"

"I'd be surprised."

"So would I, but who else knew?"

"Evan and Shawna."

"But I had the affair **with** Shawna? Why would she tell?"

"Notice no names were mentioned, Sophia? They only said you had a lesbian affair, not who with."

"True."

"Plus, Liz has no motive, not even potentially."

"And Shawna does?"

"Sure. Jealousy that she couldn't steal you away permanently, or trying to throw us off stride competitively."

"Aaah."

As it turned out, when Sophia and Warren changed planes in NYC for the flight to Switzerland, Liz ended up sitting right behind them.

"Guys, I'm glad I ran into you," Liz said. "I want you to know I had **nothing** to do with that article."

"I hope not," Sophia said.

"Really," Liz said. "I like you guys too much for that. Both of you. Whoever did this sucks."

"That it does, but we've been through worse," Warren smiled at her.

"That is true, isn't it, Snugglebear?"

"It is true," Liz agreed. "And you've survived, every time."

"Now we get to see if we can survive a rabid press corps, and trying to skate in the Olympics with morning sickness," Sophia said to her with a wink.

"Morning sickness?" Liz asked. "You're **pregnant**?"

"Yup. We wanted to wait until we saw you in person to tell you," Sophia said, beaming.

"We've only known for a couple weeks," Warren said.

"Congratulations!" Liz said, then looked at them. "Um....should I be saying that?"

"Yes, you should," Sophia told her. "After much agonizing, we've decided we're happy about it."

"Great!"

Evan Pogdar walked up the aisle just then, and plopped down next to Liz. "Hi guys. Glad this seat is free. Warren, Sophia, I need to talk to you. About that article."

"Sure, Ev, what's on your mind?" Warren said.

"Can I talk in front of Liz, here?"

"Yeah, she's the only other person that knows, as far as we know."

"Good. Look, Shawna's the one that told the Enquirer about Sophia. I know that for a fact. I overheard her telling someone, and then I confronted her with it."

"Why would she do such a thing?" Sophia asked.

"Partially to throw you guys off stride, like **that's** going to work, and I told her that. But, mainly, even though you told her you were just experimenting and loved Warren, she still thought she could get you permanently. She's jealous."

"Uh huh," said Warren.

"Very nice," said Sophia. "Everything I do, I get bit in the ass. Damn."

"This wasn't your fault, Sophia," Evan told her. "I do **not** know what is wrong with that girl, but she's been flaky for months now. And this was **long** after the tour ended, so it wasn't like she was holding a torch for you from the get-go. She just recently discovered it, or something."

"Hmm," Sophia said. "Evan, why are you telling me what she did?"

"Because it drives me nuts."

"You must know that I'm ruthless enough to use this against her if I'm pissed--and I **am**." Sophia told him.

"I know. She deserves what she gets."

"She's your partner!"

"Yeah, but it's not like she's my lover, or anything. We're friends, but even I can't defend this. She seduced you, you made it plain it was only going to be a temporary thing, and then she turns on you and uses the press to do it. You do with the information what you need to do, Sophia." With that, Evan got out of the seat and walked back to his own.

"Very interesting," said Liz after Evan had gone.

"You don't know how relieved I am to know for sure it wasn't you, Liz," Warren smiled at her. "Of course, I knew anyway."

"Of course you did," Liz grinned.

"Damn, damn, damn. I should know better," Sophia said, half to herself.

"Don't strangle yourself over this, Pookie," Warren told her.

"I **won't**. It's not worth it. But, let's face it, except for you, I am an abysmal judge of character."

"Not true," Warren told her. "Jess has character. Caitlin has character. Liz, here, has character. Alexa has character. Alexa **is** a character." Sophia laughed at that, which was the objective.

"I suppose you're right," said Sophia. "But, damn, I misjudged Shawna."

"So did I," Warren conceded. "I'm surprised at this, I really am."

They landed in Switzerland and were taken to the Olympic village in Sion, the Swiss town that was hosting the games. To their consternation, there were no provisions in the Village for couples--all suites were single-sex, with three bedrooms attached to a common area. Very luxurious, but Warren and Sophia were not pleased to be separated. Luckily, they were in good roommate situations--Warren was in with Jack Garrison and Steve Coleman; Sophia was with Liz and Andrea Wallach.

"At least we each have our own bedroom," Liz told Sophia. "You and Warren have a place to be alone, if you don't scream **too** much," Liz joked. And then she blushed, "and Rich is coming here too, you know."

"He is?" Sophia said. "Great! You didn't stay in the village last time, did you?"

"No, which is why I wanted to, this time. Staying in a hotel four years ago didn't help, so, this time, I'm determined to enjoy myself. Of course, it's easier if you're a pairs skater."

"How so?" Andrea, who had been listening, asked.

"You go first!" Liz laughed. "Four days into the Olympics, and you're **done**, and you get to enjoy the rest."

"True," Andrea agreed.

"And, as an added bonus, you don't have to call a press conference to discuss magazine stories about your sex life," Sophia muttered.

"Well, at least you get that out of the way early," Andrea told her.

"True. Tomorrow. Oh, I can't wait...."

BEAT THE PRESS (Chapter 96)

Sophia and Warren walked into the press center and sat down at the table that had been set up for them. Stephanie Langson from the USFSA was already there, as was George Gullick from the USOC. Both of them were nervous. Sophia and Warren were charming, and the figure skating press loved them, but not everyone here was from the figure skating press.

"Just give us a minute to get settled," Stephanie said, as Warren and Sophia settled into their seats behind the table. However, just as soon as Sophia settled in her seat, she closed her eyes and reeled. Then, she was out of her seat in a flash, imploring to Stephanie, "Bathroom!!" Steph pointed to a door behind and to the left of the table, and said, "Turn left, second door on your right." Sophia sprinted out of the room.

The press corps, of course, wondered about this. Warren sat there, by himself, smiling at them. "Is she **that** nervous?" Tina Bowman of USA Today finally asked good-naturedly?

"No, she's not that nervous," Warren said with a smile.

"Is she that sick?" Tina persisted.

"No, not if you mean ill," Warren said mysteriously.

"Then what **was** that?" Fred Rausch of the Chicago Tribune asked him?

"When she gets back," Warren said. Just then, Sophia walked back in.

"OK, folks, sorry about that," Sophia said to the assembled press corps. "Morning sickness is a real pain in the ass."

It took the press about ten seconds to realize what she had just said. "Did you say **morning** sickness?" Tina Bowman asked her.

"Yup. Geez, the Enquirer is incompetent, aren't they? They dig up all this dirt on me, and they can't even find out that I'm two months pregnant. Would have been a fitting end to their story, don't you think?" Sophia smiled and sipped from the water that had been given to her.

"Pregnant?" Tina echoed.

"Yup."

"Do you know who the father is?" some reporter she didn't know asked her.

"I only sleep with one man, contrary to published reports." Sophia snapped at him.

"She only skates with one man, too. Coincidentally, it's the same guy," Warren quipped, to the laughter of at least the regulars in the press corps.

"Are you keeping the baby?" Jim Pitman of the Boston Globe asked.

"We most certainly are," Sophia told him.

"I hope I don't have to ask you if you've consulted with a doctor about competing while you're pregnant," Tina Bowman said to Sophia.

"Of course not, Tina. I've been cleared. There are no complications that they can see, and ice dancing is low impact, and I'm still in the first trimester. Plus, one of the USOC medical staff is an OB-GYN, Doctor Millar. I've already talked to her. I'm going to be monitored."

Jared Hurstell of the NY Times raised his hand. "Does the pregnancy affect your skating?"

"Only in the morning," Sophia said dryly. "My morning sickness is an accurate description, I only get it in the morning. We have a few morning practices, but no competitions in the morning. As long as I eat right, I should be just fine."

"But it is one o'clock in the afternoon," a foreign reporter said.

"Not in Wisconsin, it's not, it's 6am there, and I'm still on Wisconsin time. I get the sickness about an hour and a half to two hours after I wake up, and that's just about right."

I got up at quarter past eleven. Which was quarter past **four** Wisconsin time. I want to go back to bed," she said, drawing amused giggles.

"And **she's** the morning person in this team, if you can believe that. I'm desperately seeking coffee," Warren added, to more amusement. To **Warren's** amusement, Stephanie rapidly produced a cup. "Look at this. What service. I love the USFSA!"

"OK, now that I've given you the unexpected tidbit of my condition, I'm sure you all have tons of questions about how our long program is coming along, am I right? I mean, there's nothing **else** we could have to talk about, right?" Sophia baited them with a huge smile on her face.

"Well, there was this little article, you know, about you....." Jim Pitman said, playing along.

"Oh **that**. It was in the Boston Globe, wasn't it?" Sophia teased, drawing laughter around the room.

"We generally don't print stuff like that, no," Jim said.

"No, Jim, you wait until some rag like the Enquirer prints it, so you can conduct the follow-up," Sophia said pointedly, drawing an embarrassed look from Pitman. She **liked** Jim, but someone had to take that bait. "Having made my point....." she paused...."ask away."

"Well, let's start with the biggie," a reporter asked. "Are you gay, and is your relationship with Warren a sham?"

"Well, if it's a sham, how in **hell** did I get knocked up?" Sophia said amusedly.

"You don't need to be with a man for that nowadays. Babies can be conceived in a laboratory," the reporter said.

"Well, **this** particular baby was conceived in a hotel room in Nagano, Japan. In the shower." Warren interjected helpfully. Sophia cracked up laughing, and the reporters looked at him in amazement. "Hey, look at Jim, taking notes. I want to see **that** printed in the Boston Globe," Warren joked. Jim Pitman just smiled at him.

"Anyhow, to get back to the question," Sophia said, "My relationship with Warren is not, has never been, and will never be a sham. I love him completely. He loves me back. And our relationship is **not** platonic. This is his baby. As for whether or not I'm gay, I am not. I had a few bisexual feelings at one point, and I explored a little bit, and Warren knew about it. And that's **all** I'm going to say about that. But I'm not gay, and I finally decided I really wasn't bi, either. I don't regret finding that out for sure, but I would have rather not have to have read about it in the Enquirer. I don't think it's anybody's business."

"Don't you think you're a role model and should behave as such?" a reporter she didn't know asked.

"NO. I do **not** think I'm a role model, unless you're talking about skating. If some young skater, or team, wants to take our **skating** career as a blueprint, I'd be fine with that, because I think we've done it the right way. But as for anything else--no, I'm not a role model."

"But there **are** a lot of young girls that look up to you, I know that for a fact," Tina said. "What are they going to think when they read that article?"

"Hopefully, that I'm human, not perfect. They'll also learn, hopefully, to watch their back."

"What do you mean by that?" Tina asked.

"Let's get to the question that everyone wants to ask but is too polite to. 'Hey, Sophia, are you a slut?'" The press looked sheepish at that one. "I had boyfriends before Warren, and I started pretty young. I never slept around, so I never considered myself a slut. But, what I meant about watching your back is this--be very, very careful who you trust. I wasn't, and it almost destroyed me," Sophia said, and then took a breath. The press corps was listening with interest now.

"First of all, that story about my dabbling with another woman over the summer on tour? That story was given to the Enquirer **by** that other woman, and I know that for a fact."

"Who was it?" a reporter asked.

"I'm mad enough at her to tell you, but I don't think I will. She knows who she is. However, that wasn't the part of the story that really bugged me. It was the thing about my past. I only have one boyfriend before Warren that ever **met** Warren. I can't prove he was the source of this story, but it doesn't matter, because all of my boyfriends before Warren did the same thing to me, the last one was just the worst."

"What do you mean?" Tina asked.

Sophia took a big huge breath. "I was coerced into sex by every boyfriend I had before Warren, and out and out raped by more than one of them. As an added bonus, they all beat me up. The last one even beat Warren up, because we were friends, this was before we became a couple. He put **me** in the hospital. He just got out of jail. I have a picture, if you want visual proof. However, it's not pretty."

The press corps stared at them, as did Stephanie, the USFSA press liaison--she hadn't known this.

"You were battered?" Tina Bowman asked.

"Oh, yeah. From the time I was twelve until I was fourteen, by a number of different guys. The last one was the worst. I had the self-esteem of a slug. It was ugly." She took another deep breath. "Now you know why I don't feel like much of a role model. The drink and the drugs part of the Enquirer story, by the way, that part was true. I was blasted out of my mind most of the time. That made the punches and kicks hurt less. It also made the sex hurt less, if you want the whole gory details."

Jim Pitman raised his hand. "Don't you think overcoming something like that makes you something of a role model?"

"Maybe. I've worked with other kids it's happened to, trying to give them some of my wisdom, if you can call it that," Sophia smiled. "But, really, the only way you overcome something like that is not to let it happen in the first place. Girls, if someone you think you love tries to talk you into doing something you're not comfortable with, or raises his hand to you, RUN. Because, if it happens--even if it's six years down the road and you think you're recovered, you might have your past thrown back at you by a sleazy tabloid." The press corps looked chagrined. Sophia looked up, and offered them a slight smile. "Hey, I'm OK, I just had to let that one out once, because I know the Enquirer is in here, skulking about somewhere. Not the rest of you people's fault. I've made mistakes. Hey, I broke up with Warren for two months last year--biggest mistake I've ever made--and that's where the other part of that story came from. However, except for those two months--which I won't talk about further than that, because they're just a depressing blur--but, except for that, Warren has been my **only** guy, for almost six years. Believe me, when I was getting beat up, I **never** thought I would find something like this."

"What about the Enquirer saying you had been under psychiatric care?" a reporter asked.

"I was beat up by boyfriends, of **course** I was under psychiatric care!" Sophia snapped at him. "I also saw someone last year, after our break-up, to try to make sense of certain things. I do **not** apologize for seeing a shrink. It helped immensely. I needed it to get better."

"We saw the shrink together, also, when we were getting back together," Warren said. "There was a lot of a relationship counseling kind of thing."

"So what are you going to do about all this?" Fred Rausch said.

"Nothing. I did this press conference, and that's it. My focus for the next couple weeks is going to be solely on kicking Olga Bradochkina's ass right back to Moskva," Sophia quipped. "After that, I've got this baby to birth. It's over, my past is over, and the Enquirer knows where they can stick it."

"But now you'll have Olga Bradochkina gunning for you," Jim Pitman smiled.

"Better Olga, who's a friend of ours, than the damn Enquirer!" Warren interjected.

THE OLYMPICS BEGIN (Chapter 97)

"I got on my laptop and read a lot of the articles from the various papers," Warren told Sophia at lunch the next day. "They were great. You got them back on our side, I think."

"Even though I am a pregnant nympho?" Sophia teased.

"Even though. You know what? I love you."

"I love you, too, Snugglebear."

"I hope that took care of everything. I want to enjoy the Olympics."

"We will."

After they ate, they took a little walk around the Olympic Village. It was a lot of fun. They saw athletes from all kinds of sports.

"Hey, isn't that Liesl Schraeder, the Austrian skier?" Sophia asked Warren.

"Yeah, it is. She's great. Best slalom and giant slalom skier in the world," Warren confirmed.

"And look, over there, that's that new American downhiller, Shannon Gentry."

"This is great. I'm so excited," Warren admitted. They strolled through the village, meeting and introducing themselves to athletes from all over the world. Lots of them knew who Sophia and Warren were, which was neat.

They ran into Jennie Sellers and Denis Poulin, the Canadian pairs skaters.

"Hi guys!" Sophia greeted them. "Nervous?"

"Oh, yeah," Jennie told them. "We skate tomorrow, you bet we're nervous."

"Are you guys going to skip the Opening Ceremonies?" Warren asked them.

"Nah," Denis told them. "We thought about it, our coach said we should, since we're competing tomorrow. But, we figured, what the heck--this might be our only Olympics, right?"

"Yeah. I'm glad we have a week, didn't have to make that decision," Sophia said.

"Good luck to you guys," Jennie said.

"Same to you!"

"I skipped this last time--not making that mistake twice," Liz Cushman was telling Warren and Sophia, as they gathered in the staging area, getting ready to parade into the opening ceremonies.

"I've been waiting my whole life for this," Sophia said. "When I first started dancing, when I was a young kid, I dreamed about going to the Olympics, of course. Then when I stopped, I thought I had given that dream up. Even when Warren and I started skating together, we just did it for fun. I never thought we'd make it this far. Somebody pinch me!" Warren and Liz both laughed at that.

"You getting tips from the Olympic veteran?" Christine Arsenault said as she came up next to them.

"Not a veteran at **this**," Liz told her. "I skipped opening ceremonies last time."

"Geez, I wouldn't dream of doing that," Christine said.

"I know. Which is why my agent and parents are not here yet, dig?" Everyone laughed at that. "I got talked into it. Not this time." Liz sighed. "Everybody treated the Olympics four years ago as a deadly serious thing. Everyone around me, I mean. It was, at the same time, deadly serious and 'just another competition'. Well, it's neither, and I told all the people around me that I wasn't going to do that this time. This is the **Olympics**, for Goodness' sake. I plan to enjoy myself. I told my coach I'd see him at the rink for practice and not before or after, I told my agent to stay home, and I told Rich to get his ass over here!" She giggled.

"Is he coming?" Warren asked.

"Yup. He's either here or on his way right now. He flew in today, was hoping to make it in time for the ceremonies, but, if he didn't, that's OK, too. At least he's going to be here."

They chatted for a few minutes more, and then Christine and Liz wandered off, greeting other friends.

Sophia and Warren stood there, looking around, when they saw a tall, wiry guy with blonde hair approaching them.

"How you doing? Alan Zimmer, downhill skiing."

"Hi, Alan. I'm Warren Kelleher, she's Sophia Daniels. We're ice dancers." They all shook hands.

"Hey! I know you guys! You're the lovebirds, right?"

"That's us," Sophia grinned, blushing.

"I've heard of you, too," Warren said. "Didn't you get top five in a couple of the last World Cup races?"

"Yeah, thanks! Fourth in a downhill in Austria, and fifth in a Super GS in France. Nice to know somebody notices!"

"I like watching skiing," Warren told him.

"We're going tomorrow, to watch the downhill. We can't wait," Sophia added.

"Hey, Mister Gregarious! Chatting up the ice dancers?" a dark-haired guy said from behind Alan.

"You got it, buddy!"

"How you doin'?" I'm Toby Corr, I'm also a skier. I know who you guys are, my girlfriend is a figure skating nut."

"Nice to meet you," Warren said, as he and Sophia shook hands with Toby.

"I'm surprised you guys are here. Aren't you skiing early next morning?" Sophia asked them.

"Yeah, but we couldn't miss this. We'll get out early enough to get a good night's sleep, so we decided to come," Alan told them.

"Great! Enjoy the opening ceremonies!" Sophia told them.

"You too! C'mon, Toby, let's go meet more people!" With that, they were off.

Sophia and Warren milled around for a little longer, greeting friends and meeting new people. Then, the USOC officials with them started herding all the USA athletes together. It was time to enter the stadium.

"This is all so exciting," Sophia said happily. "I still can't believe we're actually here!"

"I know what you mean," Warren said. He took her hand, and they started walking with the rest of their teammates.

They proceeded through the tunnel leading to the stadium, and walked out the other end, to the sight of 50,000 people yelling and cheering.

"Les Etats-Unis d'Amerique!" the announcer intoned, heralding in French the arrival of the American team.

"Look, the president is here!" Warren told Sophia.

"Great, you found the president, where're our **parents**?" Warren asked with a laugh.

"They might be harder to find, Snugglebear, they're not in the VIP seats," Sophia teased him.

"There's the president of the IOC, though," Warren said.

"Look, a TV camera, right on us!" Sophia said, and then, with an impish grin, gave Warren a kiss on the cheek.

"Hey, none of that!" Andrea Wallach called from behind them. They just giggled and kept walking, hand in hand.

"Look, Sophia, there's your mom! Wave!" Warren said. They did, as did half of the figure skaters, prodded on by Jack Garrison yelling, "Everybody wave at Sophie's Mom!"

"Is this your first Olympics?" a woman behind them asked.

"Yup. I'm Sophia Daniels, this is Warren Kelleher, we're ice dancers."

"I'm Claudia Moore, I'm a luger. It's my third Olympics. Walking behind two first-timers is great. You guys are having a ball."

"We're still pinching ourselves to convince ourselves we're actually here," Warren told her.

"I know the feeling," Claudia laughed.

They kept walking, waving to the crowd, until they reached the end of the line and were herded into the infield for the rest of the ceremonies.

A few hours later, they stumbled back to the village, exhausted (and hungry) but excited and happy also. "Just think, Pookie," Sophia told Warren over a late snack in the village dining hall, "we're going to be able to tell this unborn kid of ours that he or she marched in the Olympic opening ceremonies. How cool is that?"

"Very cool. Almost as cool as **us** marching!"

DIRECT FROM SALZBURG (Chapter 98)

They had a morning practice the next day. They blew it off. They had told June and Kathy--both of whom were there with them--that they were going to. "We're going to watch downhill skiing. We'll see you at the afternoon practice!"

"Guys....." Kathy started.

"Hey, it's the Olympics," Sophia told them. "Screw it. We're trained, this practice isn't on the main ice, and Warren loves downhill skiing. See you!"

They found a spot at the end of the hill. To their amusement, they found themselves surrounded by Austrians. In fact, they found themselves in the midst of a bunch of rabid Gerhard Weichenbauer fans. Weichenbauer was the world's number one ranked downhiller. And, there they were, in their "USA" coats, waving tiny American flags.

"Was? Americans?" one of them asked a friend.

"Hey, are you lost?" the friend asked Warren and Sophia.

"Probably," Sophia laughed. "We just wanted to get a good seat."

"I see your coats. Are you athletes?"

"Yes, we're ice dancers," Sophia told him.

"We skipped practice to come watch some skiing," Warren laughed.

"Ah. Is gut. Austrian skiers are the best, yes?"

"Yes," Warren laughed. "Alan Zimmer's been skiing well lately, though."

"Ja, he has. Got fourth in Innsbruck. I'm Otto, this is Wilhelm."

"I'm Warren, this is Sophia."

"You stay with us, ja, see skiing with Austrians?"

"Yeah," said Sophia, "It'll be fun. As long as you don't mind us cheering for Alan Zimmer."

"Sure," Otto said, "for silver or bronze!"

Sophia and Warren stayed with the Austrian ski fanatics, and Sophia was right--they had a blast. One of the Austrians had brought some sort of grill, and, the next thing they knew, they each had a bratwurst in their hands. Then they had a beer in the other hand. And the race was about to start, so the Austrians were getting rowdy.

The first skier was a Swiss. He fell. The predominantly Swiss crowd groaned, but the Austrians delighted in it.

"We don't hate the Swiss, except in skiing," Otto told them with a smile.

A couple of other skiers came down, then the first Austrian--Ingo Buell. "He's a youngster," Otto told Warren and Sophia, "new to the national team."

"IN-GO! IN-GO! IN-GO!" the Austrians screamed as the skier roared down the hill. Warren and Sophia watched the huge video screens track his progress down the hill, until he appeared in their sight roaring down the final bit of terrain into the finish area.

"Sehr gut! Sehr gut!" one of the Austrians was yelling as the time flashed on the screen. It **was** a good time. It was early, but Buell had moved into first place by a full second.

Two skiers later, Alan Zimmer left the starting gate. "GO ALAN!" Sophia hollered, to the bemusement of the Austrians.

"Do you know him?" Otto asked them.

"We met him last night, at the opening ceremonies. He's great," Sophia told him.

He was roaring down the hill. They checked his progress on the video screen and the timer. "Ah, great time," one of the Austrians said as he passed the halfway point.

"He is **really** skiing well," Otto said admiringly, watching him on the screen. He roared into the final bit, and barreled over the finish line. Looking up at the timer, they saw that Alan had moved into first place.

"YEA, ALAN! WHOOO! USA! USA!" Sophia and Warren yelled. The Austrians smiled and good-naturedly clapped them on the back.

"Enjoy it while it lasts," Otto told them. "The Master is after this Norwegian guy."

The Norwegian finished, out of the running, and Gerhard Weichenbauer took to the hill. The Austrians started screaming "GER-HARD! GER-HARD!" and then the traditional Austrian skiing chant, "HOP! HOP! HOP! HOP! HOP!" Warren and Sophia loved it. Somebody thrust tiny Austrian flags in their hands. They looked at each other with a smile, and started waving them along with their American flags.

"HOP! HOP! HOP! HOP! HOP!" Weichenbauer was tearing down the hill full-bore, as he came around the bend into the final section. "HOP! HOP! HOP! HOP! HOP!" He

cruised across the finish line, and all eyes turned towards the scoreboard. Weichenbauer had flown into first place. Sophia and Warren's Austrian companions went completely berserk. And, of course, more beer was passed around and mugs were raised.

Many other skiers came down the hill, pursuing Weichenbauer, but none could catch him. The Swiss champion, Frederic Boucher, came close, and had the home country crowd on its feet, but fell just short. The good news for Warren and Sophia was that Alan Zimmer did, in fact, hold on for an upset bronze.

"Good day for Austria, pretty good day for USA, too," Otto said with a toast of his beer mug.

"I'm glad there aren't any prominent Austrian ice dancers!" Warren told him.

They thanked their new Austrian friends for their hospitality, and made arrangements to join them for the super giant slalom in three days. Then they went to lunch, took a quick nap, and made off for practice. They practiced 'Romeo and Juliet' and were thrilled with the way it went.

Walking through the village, they saw Gerhard Weichenbauer walking the other way. They approached him. "Sprechen zie Englisch?" Warren asked him.

"Sure," he said with a smile.

Sophia and Warren introduced themselves. "We watched you ski today, surrounded by, apparently, the Salzburg division of your fan club," Sophia told him.

Gerhard smiled. "How did you end up there?"

"Just happened," Warren said. "It was great. We had a blast."

"They didn't torture two lost American ice dancers, did they?"

"Nah, they just plied us with beer and bratwurst and made us yell 'Hop! Hop! Hop!' when you came down the hill," Sophia said with a grin.

Gerhard laughed out loud. "That must have been an experience."

"It was a blast," Warren told him. "Watching skiing with Austrians, who can beat that? Congratulations."

"Thank you. It's a good thing for you guys I won, you wouldn't want have been surrounded by depressed Austrians!"

After supper, it was time for the first ice skating competition of the games--the pairs' short program.

Warren and Sophia's friends Andrea and Brett were fairly early in the order, and skated wonderfully. They didn't miss an element, and had really matured in their skating.

The Russian world champions, Zharenya and Stanskiy skated later, and moved into first, even though they made a mistake in their side-by-side jumps. The Canadians Sellers and Poulin were next, skated clean, but still finished second.

"Figures," Sophia said to Warren.

When all was said and done, the Russians and Canadians were one-two. Andrea and Brett finished fourth, which was fine, as they would skate in the final group and were in position to try to get a medal.

Warren and Sophia walked through the village hand in hand.

"Not a bad first day at our first Olympics, eh?" Warren said.

"You got **that** right! Of course, we haven't had to **skate** yet!"

"We'll be fine. How are you feeling?"

"Fine. No problems."

"Great. Up for sleep and Day Two?"

"You betcha!"

THE DANCERS TAKE THE ICE (Chapter 99)

The first week proceeded like the first day did. Warren and Sophia got out and saw as much as they could see. They practiced. Sophia's morning sickness acted up a bit, but not much, and she was feeling generally good and fit.

Tuesday was the pairs' long program. Brett and Andrea were the first pair in the final group, and they skated wonderfully. "That's the best I've ever seen them skate," Warren said, and Sophia agreed. Brett and Andrea were beside themselves with joy as they came off the ice. When the other Russian team, which had been in third place, stumbled, Andrea and Brett found themselves assured of a medal, leading with only two pairs to go.

Zhalenya and Stanskiy were first. They skated good, but not great. They moved ahead of Andrea and Brett, and their presentation marks were, as always for Russians, overinflated--but the door was open.

Jennie Sellers and Denis Poulin stormed through that door and slammed it shut behind them. They were magical. They were perfect. The crowd was on its feet 30 seconds before the end of the program.

"Let's hope the judges don't screw that one up," Warren said to Sophia. They didn't. Sellers and Poulin became the first Canadian pairs team to ever win an Olympic gold medal.

Wednesday morning found them back on the slopes, with the Austrian contingent, watching the men's Super Giant Slalom. More beer, more bratwurst, and another gold for Gerhard Weichenberger. That evening, they had their first practice on the Olympic ice. It was an OD practice, and they ran through a spirited rendition of "If You Can't Rock Me."

Thursday was the men's short program. Jack Garrison, landing his troublesome quad, skated cleanly into third place, behind the Russians, Ganyavin and Bondarchenko.

Finally, Friday, it was the dancers' turn.

"Did you see the makeup of the judging panel?" Canadian ice dancer Renee Damphier asked Sophia and Warren at breakfast Friday morning?

"Yeah, we did," Sophia told her. "What a stroke of luck--only two members of the Ice Dance Judging Mafia on the panel."

The Ice Dance Judging Mafia was a term that some of the North American dance teams--and their internet fans--had come up with to describe a group of judges representing countries like Russia, Italy, France, Germany, Ukraine, and occasionally a few others. These judges tended to judge in a bloc, intimidate other judges, try to control the panel, and put dance teams in pre-decided "slots" in a competition. They also pushed the ethos of over-emotive bad mock-acting over actual **dancing**.

In the Olympics, there was only one panel that judged all four segments, unlike Worlds. This could bode badly for anyone that wasn't in the favor of the Mafia, because they could control every event if they controlled the panel. However, this year, the IOC widened the amount of judges that served as the pool that the nine Olympic judges were drawn from. The allegations of bloc judging and a Judging Mafia had hurt the sport.

Sophia and Warren, plus Renee Damphier and her partner Christian Gaudler, were thrilled with the makeup of the panel at the Olympics. Only Russia and France from the

Mafia were on it. The USA and Canada were on it. The other five judges were from Finland, Great Britain, Hungary, Austria, and Japan. Only Great Britain and Hungary had dance teams with even a hint of a chance to get into the top ten, and then only in the lower reaches thereof. Plus, the judges from those two countries here were known as impartial judges of integrity. Finland, Austria, and Japan had no axe to grind at all.

"We might actually have a fair competition," Christian told his companions.

The first compulsory was the Silver Samba. The Russians went one-two, the French beat the Canadians, and Warren and Sophia were fifth. There were some grumblings about that, and some people wondered if the Mafia hadn't gotten to some of the other judges. Sophia and Warren weren't too worried, however, as the Silver Samba was **not** their strength, and it was a strength of some of the teams above them--the second Russian pair of Yatserova and Vaglach and the French pair of Borisina and Dravouche in particular.

The second compulsory was the quickstep. This **was** one of Sophia and Warren's better compulsories, as it was of the Canadians. In fact, lots of people thought that they had the two best Quicksteps in the world. Neither of them won it--the three-time world champions Bradochkina and Zhargov did--but they beat everyone else, the Canadians placing second and Warren and Sophia third. Third in **any** compulsory was a real breakthrough for them. They ended up fifth after the compulsories, but second through fifth was almost a tie. A good showing in the OD, and they'd be right in it--and the OD was their strength.

Before the Original Dance, there was another day off for the dancers, and the arena was given over to the Men's long program.

Yuri Ganyavin was brilliant. He had won two World Championships before the previous year, when he was usurped by teammate Viktor Bondarchenko. Ganyavin had fell to third in those championships. However, he had started the Olympic year with a fire in his belly and it had never let up. He won everything he entered, and when the Olympics finally arrived he was **not** to be denied.

To the delight of Warren and Sophia, Jack Garrison chose the Olympic stage to skate the long program of his life. Skating to music by Beethoven, Jack combined power and grace, artistry and jumps. He wasn't quite as good as Ganyavin, but he was close.

Bondarenko, the last skater of the night, still had a chance to defeat Ganyavin, but he didn't handle the pressure. Downgrading a quad to a triple and stepping out of a triple axel sealed his fate. In fact, he only finished third. Yuri Ganyavin became the Olympic champion, and a thrilled Jack Garrison took home a sliver medal.

They talked about the OD over breakfast the next day. They wanted to win. Bradochkina and Zhargov had not been defeated in any phase of any competition since the last Olympics. Every compulsory, every Original Dance, every Free dance--every one they had entered, they had won. Warren and Sophia wanted to end that. They thought they had the best Original Dance in the world. They wanted to prove it.

"I'm nervous," Sophia told Warren that afternoon.

"Don't be, Pookie. We're going to be fine."

"I know. I can't help it. I just am."

"You need a diversion."

"What, sex? I think it's a little late for that," Sophia said.

"I suppose you're right."

"Hey, when we get to the rink and get into the swing of things, you'll be fine. I guarantee it."

"OK."

They both took a little nap, and then headed off to the rink

ANSWERING ALL THE QUESTIONS (Chapter 100)

Warren and Sophia were in the final group for the OD--in fact, they were the very last skaters to skate. However, they showed up early--they liked to do that--and the third-to-last group had only just got underway when they arrived.

They locked up their belongings, and met in the hallway in the bowels of the arena. There were various rooms off of the corridor. Warren looked around and found a room that the volunteers used to rest. It was deserted. He led Sophia into it.

"What are we doing here, Snuggles?"

"I wanted a quiet moment. Do you know what today is?"

"Sure, it's OD day," Sophia giggled.

"It's also Valentine's Day."

"Damn! You're right, it is. What with the Olympics and all, I had completely forgotten."

"I have something for you," Warren told her.

"Oh, sweetie," Sophia said happily. They sat on a couch in the room.

"First of all, I want you to know this has nothing to do with the baby. I planned this long before we knew about the baby. I've been planning this before Christmas. I almost gave you this **at** Christmas, but I figured here and now would be a better place, because it's Valentine's Day and skating means so much to us."

Sophia was befuddled. "Warren, what **are** you talking about?"

"This." He reached into his pocket, and withdrew a jewelry box. He held it out in front of her, and opened it. Inside was a perfect, one-carat, diamond ring.

"Sophia Daniels," Warren said, "will you marry me?"

Sophia couldn't speak. Her eyes grew to the size of saucers, as she stared at the ring. "Oh my God," she whispered. Her hands were shaking as she looked from the ring to Warren's expectant face, and the hint of tears formed in her eyes. Suddenly, she launched herself at Warren and wrapped her arms tightly around his shoulders.

"I have been dreaming of hearing you say those words for five years," she whispered in his ear.

"Can I take that as a 'yes'?" he asked with a smile.

"YES!" She disengaged from him, and faced him, holding out her left hand.

"Move the claddagh ring to the right hand, Pookie," Warren told her. She did so, and held out her hand again. Warren took the ring out of the box and put it on her hand.

"I did good with the size," Warren observed. It fit perfectly.

"You did good, period, my love," she told him. She held her hand up to her face. "My God, it's so beautiful," she sighed.

"No more beautiful than the girl wearing it," Warren told her.

"Flatterer."

"That's my job."

"You just keep doing it." She sighed. "Warren, I love you."

"I love you, too."

"Hey," Sophia said, "I wonder if we can get into the stands! We need to tell our parents, and Liz, and Jack, and all them!"

"Let's see."

They walked out of the room. "Hell, I want to tell the **world**!" Sophia enthused. Warren giggled, and said, "I know what you mean. I've had that ring for two months and haven't told a soul. It was not easy."

They turned a corner, and Warren said, "Hey, there's some people to tell." They walked down the corridor, hand-in-hand, heading towards the knot of people they saw in front of them--Bradochkina and Zhargov, Nicholas and Coleman, and Damphier and Gaudler.

"Hey, is Warren and Sophia," Olga said. "You guys ready?"

"You betcha," Warren said.

"Handling the nerves OK?" Steve Coleman asked them.

"Yeah, we found a way to deal with them. We just needed a distraction," Warren said.

"What kind of a distraction?" Christian Gaudler asked.

"Oh, instead of brooding about skating, we decided to get engaged instead," Sophia said. She held out her hand.

Renee and Sharon screamed. Olga appraised the ring. "Good taste, Warren," she judged. "Substantial, but not too gaudy." Congratulations were spread all around.

"Na zdarovya," Nikolai Zhargov said. Sophia looked at him in confusion.

"Congratulations, roughly translated," Warren told her. "Spacibo, Nikolai."

"We have to see if we can get to the stands. Our parents don't know," Warren said. He and Sophia were off.

They were back in a minute. "The security guard wouldn't let us get by, and we couldn't tell him why we wanted to get by, because neither of us speaks French," Sophia said depressedly.

"Come on," Renee Damphier told them. "I speak fluent French." She wasn't lying; she explained to the security guard why they wanted to get up in the stands. He smiled, said something in French, and let them by. "He says to come back here so he can let you back in," Renee told them.

"Thanks!"

They went up into the stands. Luckily, they got there in between the third-last group and the second-last group. The Zamboni was on the ice and the next group hadn't even come

out for warm-up yet. The people associated with the US skating team--other skaters, family--were all in one section. Warren and Sophia found it. A lot of their friends were in the middle of the section; their parents were in the front.

Sophia and Warren stood in front of the section.

"Hey!" Jim Kelleher asked. "Look, it's Sophia and Warren! What are you guys doing here."

"You'll find out in a minute." Sophia said. "Hey, Liz! Jack! Chris, you guys!" Their friends stopped chatting and looked over at them. "Hey, guys--Mom, Dad, Dan, Mr. and Mrs. Kelleher--we got an announcement to make."

"What?" yelled down Liz. Sophia, with a big smile on her face, held up her left hand. Sophia's mom jumped out of her seat, screaming, as did Liz Cushman. All of their friends and family members crowded around them, offering congratulations, asking about how Warren did it, and admiring the ring. As the skaters in the second-to-last group took the ice for the warm-up, Warren and Sophia slipped back under the stands.

Liz Cushman thought a bit, then walked over to the TV booth. She knew all the TV people, of course, and told one of the assistants that she wanted to talk to Dave Burrows, longtime color commentator and former Olympic champion himself.

"Good evening, Elizabeth, what can I do for you?"

"Hi, Dave. Want a scoop for the broadcast?"

"Always!"

"Sophia Daniels and Warren Kelleher just got engaged. He asked her to marry him under the stands about 20 minutes ago."

"On Valentine's Day? Isn't that romantic!"

"Yeah, it is."

"Well, since she's pregnant, that was probably a good thing!"

"Yeah," Liz agreed, "but he was going to do it anyway. They're just going to have a shorter engagement now. All of our friends knew this was coming sooner or later," she grinned.

"Too true. You just have to see them skate to figure that out. Thanks for the scoop, Liz, we'll tell America."

"My pleasure, Dave."

The first of the contenders to skate in the OD were Yatserova and Vaglach, the second Russian team, and they weren't all that impressive. The British couple, Breneman and Watts, were good--Sophia and Warren thought that they were better than the Russians, but they were placed behind them. Damphier and Gaudler, the Canadians, were fantastic, and moved into the lead--but only for a few minutes, as Bradochkina and Zhargov passed them. Sharon Nicholas and Steve Coleman were next, and were very impressive. In fact, they were placed ahead of Yatserova and Vaglach. Sophia and Warren were amazed by that development--maybe the judging **was** fair. That was reinforced when the French, Borisina and Dravouche, fell, and were actually marked down for it--they were way back in sixth place.

That only left one team to skate--Warren and Sophia.

"Well, future Mrs., Kelleher," Warren said to her as they took the ice, "shall we show these people how a Swing OD is supposed to be done?"

"You betcha!"

That's exactly what they did. "If You Can't Rock Me" started, and Sophia and Warren were dead-on right from the start. They stayed right with the music, executing their difficult and intricate steps with ease. Their enthusiasm and speed, always good, was even better tonight. The side-by-side step sequence, the hardest part of the program, was perfect. As they ended, the crowd was on its feet. They pumped their fists in triumph, embraced, took their bows, and practically danced off the ice.

"My God in heaven," Kathy intoned. "You guys should get engaged before every program!"

The marks came up. They were great--but Warren and Sophia were looking for the ordinals. They came up. One third--from the Russian judge, no big surprise--two seconds, and the rest were firsts. They had won the Original Dance.

The first person to congratulate them when they got off the ice was Olga Bradochkina. "Congratulations, darlings," Olga said, giving both of them the two-cheeks Russian kiss, "you deserved that. Great skating."

"Thanks, Olga," Sophia said. "That's very classy of you. I know you can't be happy about losing a phase for the first time in four years."

"Eh," Olga shrugged, "we'll get you in the free." They all laughed at that. "I was sincere--you deserved this. I watched it. And I **am** classy--the American media just don't know that!"

Dave Burrows did the interview for the TV network. "Let's see, you beat Bradochkina and Zhargov, which nobody's done in four years. You win the Original Dance. And, before hand, you got engaged. I think this would qualify as a good night, yes?"

Sophia laughed. "You know about the engagement? Jeez, Dave, I've always been told you know **everything** that goes on in skating, but....."

Dave smiled at her. "Your friend Elizabeth Cushman made a point of coming up to tell us, so we could announce it on the broadcast."

"Good ol' Liz," Warren smiled. "We don't mind, but the only problem is some dear friends of ours probably found out from **you**. Guys, this **just** happened. Really. We planned to call all of you."

"Oh, and Jessica?" Sophia said to the camera. "Get ready to be a maid of honor!"

"Now, back to the skating--you guys are in second place, but could win the gold if you win the free dance."

"Never happen," Warren laughed. "We'll be happy to stay on the podium. In fact, we'll be delirious."

"No international judging panel has seen our free dance, since we've only done it at Nationals," Sophia told him. "It's a bit out of the ordinary, and we're just hoping we don't get hammered for it."

"We love it, and we think the folks watching will love it. We don't know about the judges," Warren added.

"So, we just want to skate our best and see what happens. Quite frankly, Dave, we're having way too much fun to worry about placements and medals," Sophia said.

"Ah, that's right, it's your first Olympics," Dave said. "Besides the whole getting engaged thing, are you enjoying yourselves? Getting out to some of the events?"

"Yeah," Warren said. "We've seen skiing, bobsled. After we're done tomorrow, we have tickets to the ski jumping the next day, and we're really looking forward to it."

"We saw the Men's Downhill a week ago, and somehow found ourselves in the midst of a bunch of rowdy Austrians cheering for Gerhard Weichenbauer. What a trip that was," Sophia said.

"Watching ski-racing with a bunch of happy Austrians well-supplied with bratwurst and beer is about the most fun you can have outside in the snow," Warren quipped.

"And, of course, we watched our friends Andrea and Brett, and Jack Garrison, skate so well. We're also good friends with Jennie Sellers and Denis Poulin, so watching them win was fun," Sophia added.

"Did Olga Bradochkina say anything to you after the OD?" Dave asked.

"She was the first person to congratulate us. She's much nicer and more classy than American skating fans realize." Warren told him.

"Really! Well, congratulations to you two, for the performance and the engagement, and good luck tomorrow night." Dave said.

"Thanks!"

Sophia and Warren walked out of the arena, ready to celebrate their skate--and, of course, their engagement.

SKATING FOR GOLD (Chapter 101)

"So, have you set a date?" Mrs. Kelleher asked Warren and Sophia. They were getting a late supper after the OD.

"Well, we've got two possibilities. We have to get married in the summer. Late July or August," Warren said.

"After the tours end, so all our skating friends can be there," Sophia clarified.

"So," Warren continued, "We have two choices. We can get married this summer, which means we'd get married before the baby came, but Sophia would be walking down the aisle very pregnant. Or, we wait until next summer--which means the baby gets born to unmarried parents, but Sophia won't be getting married in a frilly tent."

Sophia giggled. "Also, waiting a year gives us more time to plan."

"So, that's what you're leaning towards?" Peg asked them.

"Yup. We'll make a final decision after the Olympics," Sophia told her.

"I'm just so glad it's actually going to happen," Peg smiled.

"You got that right!" Ellen chimed in.

Sophia and Warren laughed. "We agree," Sophia said.

Sophia suitemates in the Olympic village, Andrea and Liz, had gone out dancing, giving Sophia and Warren a couple of hours where they wouldn't be disturbing anyone. They enjoyed themselves and each other, and fell asleep in each other's arms.

Sophia emerged from her room in the morning. "Liz? Andrea? Are you guys here?"

"Yeah" Liz called from her room.

"Me too," said Andrea.

"OK, Warren's here, so you might want to be decent when you emerge," Sophia giggled.

"Oh, **must** we?" Andrea joked. They all came out and decided to get some breakfast together.

"You guys ready?" Liz asked them over breakfast.

"Yes, we are!" Sophia told her.

Sophia put her hair in rollers after breakfast, while Warren caught them both up on some of the internet postings. Then they were ready to head to the rink.

The final group had five skaters. Sophia and Warren were smack in the middle, the third pair to skate, after Sharon and Steve and the Canadians, and before the two Russian couples.

As they took the ice for the warmup, the French were in first. They had been all the way in sixth before the free dance, however, so weren't a factor for the medals.

The warmup ended, and the final group was ready to skate. Sharon Nicholas and Steve Coleman were the first to skate of the final group. Warren and Sophia liked their program--skated to the soundtrack from some heroic-warrior movie--but knew it had some deficiencies. The judges saw that, too--Steve and Sharon were placed behind the French.

The Canadians, Renee and Christian, were next. Sophia and Warren made sure to stand by the boards and watched, because they were very fond of the soul/funk free dance that their friends had come up with. It was upbeat, and energetic, and the crowd loved it. Most of the judging panel at least **liked** it, as seven of the nine judges put them in first place.

Warren and Sophia took the ice, took their starting positions, and waited for Dire Straits' "Romeo and Juliet" to start. It did, and Warren skated down the length of the ice to meet Sophia, as their program began.

Compared to Nationals--where they got 7 perfect sixes for the presentation mark--this was better. Technically they had upped the ante a bit more in the weeks after nationals. Artistically, this was a free, uninhibited, attacking performance. They hit each position, performed each step, executed each turn and edge, with an easy grace and style.

They finished the program in a happy, excited embrace. They skated off, greeted June and Kathy, and waited for their marks.

"Can't do it any better than that," Kathy told them. The technical marks came up. Mostly 5.7s and a few 5.8s.

"Not a problem," June said. "These will go up," she said, waiting for the presentation marks.

They did--in fact, there were three more sixes. They moved into first place on every judge's card.

"Waitaminnit....did we just win an Olympic medal?" Warren asked.

Kathy checked out the ordinals. "Yup. Actually, Yatserova and Vaglach can't catch you, so, you've won no worse than silver."

"OHMYGOD!!!" Sophia shouted in realization. She tackled Warren, as the crowd roared, realizing that Sophia and Warren were in the medals. They practically bounced out of the kiss and cry, backstage, where they were congratulated by friends.

"Highest finish in the Olympics by an American ice dance team in history, you know," Kathy said.

"And you could still be the first American gold medallists," June pointed out.

"Don't count on **that**," Sophia smiled.

Yatserova and Vaglach were the second-to-last to skate. When their marks came up, Sophia and Warren heard, from down the hall backstage, the delighted whoops of Renee and Christian. They had defeated Yatserova and Vaglach, and thus would stay on the podium.

Olga Bradochkina and Nikolai Zhargov, four-time World Champions, were the last to skate. They hadn't lost a competition in four years. Heck, they had never lost a **phase** of a competition until yesterday. They were shoo-ins, the gold would be theirs, no doubt. That was the assumption.

Olga and Nikolai were skating a typically-intense program to typically-intense music. They were technically brilliant, They were demonstrative and overdone. They were..... Bradochkina and Zhargov. It was the same stuff they had been doing for four years. It had always won.

Olga and Nikolai left the ice, to the kiss and cry, happy with their performance. They waited for the marks. The technical marks were very high. The presentation marks were, however, lower than Sophia and Warren's. This was close. They waited for the ordinals, as Warren and Sophia did backstage.

Kathy was figuring them out. "Olga and Nikolai got.....first....first.....second....second.....first.....
Second.....second....first....first." She sighed. "One judge."

"Huh?" Warren asked.

"Olga and Nikolai beat you by one judge. You lost the gold medal on a five-four split."

"We DID?" Sophia asked in amazement. Before they had a chance to digest that, the TV people wanted an interview.

As they suspected, that was the first thing they were asked about: "You lost the gold medal by one judge. Your thoughts?"

"We're amazed," laughed Sophia. "We expected nine. Hey, we're the first ever American ice dancers to win a silver medal at the Olympics. Does anyone expect us to be upset?"

"We're thrilled," Warren reiterated. "We knew we had won at least a silver after we came off the ice. That was shock enough. We **never** figured on gold, never, ever, not for a second."

"Plus, it gives us something to shoot for four years from now!" Sophia pointed out.

"We're not going anywhere. Well, we're going to have a baby, but after that, we'll be back," Warren laughed.

They were genuinely happy for Olga and Nikolai. They were thrilled that Christian and Renee had made it to the podium. And they were ecstatic for themselves.

The newly-engaged, parents-to-be, Olympic silver medallists stepped up on the podium, accepted their medals, and beamed with pride.

"Does it get any better than this?" Warren asked.

"Yes," said an eavesdropping Olga Bradochkina, "but you'll have to wait four years to find out!"

"That's OK. This is heaven enough for now," Sophia told her.

THE OLYMPIC EXPERIENCE (Chapter 102)

"One of the best things about being a dancer is that it's Tuesday, the Olympics don't end until Sunday, and we are **done**!" Sophia was saying.

"Har-dee-har-har" replied Liz Cushman, who didn't start until the next day. "Besides which, you still have to do the exhibition on Saturday."

"Yeah, but that's easy, the pressure's off," said Warren.

"Thanks. Thanks a lot," Liz said.

"Hey, you're going to be fine, you know," Sophia told Liz. "You've been skating like a house on fire all year. Just think of Rich, and attack, eh?"

Liz giggled. "I generally do think of attacking when I think of Rich, yes."

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Sophia and Warren spent the day just wandering from venue to venue. They started at the ski jumping, watched some bobsled, and then some speed skating. The next day was more of the same, starting on the mountain with some skiing.

That evening, it was time for the ladies' short program.

Christine Arsenault was the first of the main contenders to skate, and she was clean as a whistle. The current world champion, Olga Privolchina, was also clean. The German champion, Dagmar Schrade, and the young phenom from the Ukraine, Svetlana Tamaschenko, also skated well.

Elizabeth Cushman was the last of the favorites to skate. The best artistic skater in the world, she was consistent and reliable in the short program. She started her program, began with a gorgeous spin, and then launched into her usual combination, the triple lutz-double toe. She had been using that as her combination for years.

Not this time. "That was a triple toe!" Warren screamed to Sophia. "She did a triple-triple!" and it was clean. The triple flip and double axel were clean, as well, and the spins were solid. The spiral sequence was gorgeous, the choreography impeccable and perfectly delivered.

Liz Cushman moved into first place on every judge's card.

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"Where did that triple lutz-triple toe come from?" Warren asked Liz at breakfast the next morning.

"Oh, I've been working on that for months," Liz told him.

"Heck, Liz, you've been working on it for **years**. But I'm amazed Frank let you put it in a program!"

"He didn't have a choice," Liz laughed. "I told him at the beginning of the year--we aren't going to beat Privolchina with just a puny triple toe-triple toe; and I knew Christine had better triple-triples than that, too. Because of my second mark, a dead heat goes to me, but I wasn't getting any dead heats. So, I told Frank, and my Dad, and my agent, and everybody--by the time we got to the Olympics, we were going to have more than that. All or nothing, that's my motto. I didn't come here to win another silver medal."

"I'm impressed. Balls-to-the-wall aggressive isn't your usual deal, Liz."

"Didn't **used** to be, you mean. Look, I love Frank, and Lori my choreographer, and my family, and my agent, and all--but sometimes I think that I'm surrounded by a support team that thinks that creating great art and making a statement is more important than **winning**. You're a skater, you know how convoluted the whole art/sport argument can get."

"Yeah. Maybe even more for ice dancers. Romeo and Juliet was a chance, and a chance based on making an artistic statement--but our OD, while satisfying to us artistically, was designed to **win**, no doubt about it."

"Right. And I can guarantee that, four years from now, you will **only** be concerned with winning. You've **got** your silver medal, right? Well, that's how I feel. Frank and Lori brought me their ideas for my programs last summer, and they were going on and on about how beautiful and inventive and this and that they were; and I said to them, 'I only have one question. Can I **win** with these?' I think they were shocked."

"I bet. You never used to talk like that."

"You're right, but coming in here with a silver medal from four years ago, plus two silver medals from the last two World Championships--I'm **tired** of it. We've been playing it safe, trying to do just enough technically and eke out wins based on the second mark. No more. I **am** the best female singles skater in the world. I aim to prove it."

"I take it that means there are more surprises in the long program?"

"Ah, Warren, my boy, you ain't seen nothin' yet! Especially since I skate first in the final group tomorrow night. I plan to lay down one hell of a gauntlet."

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Later that day, Warren and Sophia were on the ski slopes, watching the ladies' slalom.

"Shawna apologized to you?" Warren asked.

"Yes, and she seemed sincere. I guess she's having some serious problems. She's decided to see a psychiatrist. She didn't elaborate, but she told me she's been a mess. She did apologize, and was practically in tears when she did it." Sophia told him.

"Good. Going to the newspapers like she did seemed so out of character."

"I know. I just hope she can work out whatever she is having a problem with."

"Me, too."

"Hey, look," Sophia said, "it's Otto and Wilhelm and their friends. HEY OTTO!" They waved, and Otto beckoned them over. They happily went.

"Guten Morgen," Otto said. "How are my two favorite American ice dancers?"

"Great, how are you?" Warren said.

"Fantastic. I must confess. We hadn't planned to, but Wilhelm and I and a few of the rest of us managed to get tickets for the finals of the Ice Dancing. It was wonderful. Congratulations."

"Thank you," Sophia said. "You came because of us?" Otto nodded. "How sweet!"

"It was quite enjoyable," Otto told them. "I don't understand how it's judged, but it certainly is fun to watch."

"Most of us who do it don't understand how it's judged," Warren told him wryly. "We're glad you enjoyed it, in any case."

"And you are engaged, I understand?" Otto said.

"Yes," Sophia beamed, showing him the ring.

"Congratulations again. You have been a couple for very long?"

"Five years next month, and I'm pregnant, so it was time," Sophia giggled.

"So, who are we cheering for today, Liesl Schraeder?" Warren asked him.

"You got it!" Otto replied happily.

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Warren and Sophia grabbed their seats for the ladies' final. They were sitting with Jack Garrison and his wife, Andrea and Brett, Sharon Nicholas and Steve Coleman, and a few others. Right in front of them were Rich, and Liz's parents. They all chatted happily, and watched the earlier groups.

Then, it was time for the final group. Liz came out for the warmup, all business, ticking off jumps. She left early, as she was the first to skate in the final group.

Her music started, and she did some breathtaking footwork to begin, and then launched into her customary first jump, the double axel. Except that she didn't do a double axel--she did a **triple**, and it was textbook.

"Did she just do what I think she just did?" Mr. Cushman asked the air.

"She sure did!" Sophia said.

And Liz Cushman was not finished. She did the triple lutz-triple toe again, and threw in a triple salchow, triple loop. Eight triples, absolutely perfectly done, with her customary style and grace and artistry. The arena was on its feet a minute before she got done.

"That is the single best ladies' figure skating performance of all time. No doubt. It was like Midori Ito and Kristi Yamaguchi all wrapped up together," Jack Garrison proclaimed.

The marks were incredible. A bunch of sixes--with five skaters still left to skate. Liz Cushman **was** beatable, but it would take a superhuman effort to beat her.

Olga Privolchina did not have a superhuman effort in her. She saw Liz's scores come up, took the ice, and completely fell apart, missing jump after jump.

Svetlana Tamaschenko, not expected to do anything at this Olympics, didn't feel any pressure. The sixteen-year-old newcomer still needed artistic development, but was pleasant and engaging, and ticked off all the jumps in her list. She didn't beat Liz, but she unexpectedly blew by the world champion, Privolchina.

Christine Arsenault was the last skater of the evening. In her mind, she conceded the gold to Liz, but thought to herself, fine. If I hit everything, I win a silver. That's exactly what she did. She hit everything, skated perfectly, and got her own standing ovation. She was right, it wasn't enough to beat Liz, but it was enough to win the silver.

The exhibitions were the next day. Sophia and Warren, like all the gold and silver medal winners, had been asked to do two. They opened the show, then the 5th through 3rd place finishers skated, then the silver and gold medalists again. Liz would be the last to skate.

Sophia and Warren were the third ones out there for their first skate. They did the number they had done at Nationals, "Come Dancing", and it went over well. They enjoyed the other skaters and then, a couple hours later, took the ice for their second exhibition.

This was the special one they had prepared for the Olympics, they had never done this one before. They chose to skate to "Thunder Road" by Bruce Springsteen--but not the "regular" version. They chose the live version, the one on Springsteen's live Box Set, an acoustic version that just had Bruce's voice, a piano, and snatches of harmonica and glockenspiel. No drums, no bass, no rhythm guitar--all the rhythm of the piece was in the piano and vocal. It **was** there, but it took some imagination and skill to find it, and dance to it. Sophia and Warren had imagination, and they had skill, and this song and this version of it had long been one of their favorites. They keyed on every one of Roy Bittan's piano arpeggios, and they keyed on the passion and cadence in Bruce Springsteen's voice, and they danced. They broke every rule there was, and twisted the definition of ice dance into a pretzel--and they created magic. The applause, when they were done, was thunderous.

QUIET TIME (Chapter 103)

"Oh, sweetie, it has been too long," Warren said as Sophia sank into his arms on his bed in the dorm room at Wisconsin.

"Don't I know it," agreed Sophia. She snuggled into his arms. "Things have been so hectic."

The Olympics had ended two weeks earlier. There had been parades in both their hometowns, Oceanview and Madison. Sophia had gone to the doctor for a full checkup. They had to catch up on their schoolwork. There was a meeting with their advisors about taking a sabbatical next year, which was easily approved. Plus, they had Worlds, which were now less than a month away. Quiet private time was hard to come by.

But, now they had managed to grab some. They were lying in bed together, after supper on a Friday night. Warren was running his fingers gently over Sophia's breast.

"Mmmmmmm.." Sophia purred. "Ah, those magic fingers, how I've missed them," she giggled.

Warren just smiled at her, and dropped his hand. He brought it up under her shirt, and stopped at her stomach, running his hand across it.

"You're not showing yet, Pookie, but I sure as heck can feel something going on here," Warren said.

"Yeah, it's a little bigger. Definitely harder and firmer." Sophia swallowed hard and looked at Warren. "Warren, honey, when I get all big and fat and stuff, will you.....I mean....."

"Still want you?" Warren laughed. "Here's a secret for you--lots of guys find pregnant women incredibly sexy. Including me."

"Really?"

"Oh, yeah. Quite honestly, I can't wait." His hand had moved back up onto her breast.
"Even these get bigger. That'll be fun."

"Oh, yeah, like I need more up there!"

"Don't get me wrong, I ain't complainin', but I ain't going to be looking any gift horses in the mouth, either."

"Pig!"

"You know it," Warren smiled at her. "You know what else happens to pregnant women?"

"What?"

"They get hornier."

Sophia laughed. "Another rather unnecessary benefit, don't you think? You'd better conserve your strength, Snugglebear." She got serious, and sighed. "You know what? I just realized something--I know next to nothing about pregnancy. **You** know more than I do."

"Well, future doctor, what can I say? However, there's books, you know. What to expect when you're pregnant, stuff like that."

"Hmmm. Can we hit a bookstore tomorrow?"

"Don't see why not. Not right now, though--I've got other things on my mind." He increased the pressure on her breast.

"Yeah, you've got something other than a book in your **hand**, too. Mmmmmmm....."

He withdrew his hand, ignoring her pout, and quickly discarded her shirt. He undid her bra, and lowered his mouth down to her nipple.

"Oh.....yeah.....you'd better enjoy this while it lasts, Snugglebear, in about six months you have to loan those things out."

He looked up at her. "Planning on breastfeeding?"

"Absolutely."

"Good. The pediatrician in me wholeheartedly approves."

"I knew he would."

"Luckily, however, they're still **mine** right now." Sophia giggled as he lowered his mouth back down.

"Oh, honey, they might not be much bigger yet, but they are definitely more sensitive," Sophia commented. Warren responded by rapidly drumming his tongue over her nipple. "Oh, shit, yeah, **way** more sensitive. Oh my God....." Warren reached up with his hand and massaged the nipple he wasn't nibbling on, as Sophia moaned and writhed beneath him.

As her breathing came out in ragged gasps, Warren quickly reached under her skirt, and pulled her panties down. She moaned as his fingers traced her labia, as his mouth continued on her breast. He slipped a finger in, and, almost immediately, she stiffened and howled out her pleasure.

"That was **quick!**" Warren said with amusement.

"Oh, you had me walking the edge for a couple minutes with your attention to my boobs. I knew it wouldn't take much," she smiled. She reached up and pulled Warren's shirt off, then went for his belt buckle. He helped her get him naked, and then got her panties and skirt all the way off.

"Lie down," she said suddenly, sitting up.

"Hm?"

"You heard me!" She pushed him gently down back onto the bed, and then leaned over his crotch. She ran her tongue up and down his still-flaccid cock, until it started to become increasingly less flaccid. "Lookie here, he's waking up!" Sophia giggled. She engulfed him in her mouth, feeling him swell up as she ran her tongue all around him.

"Oh, yeah, he's awake," Warren smiled.

"Good. Here, occupy yourself," Sophia said with a grin, and moved one of her legs over to the other side of him, and straddled him. Then, she lowered himself onto his face. She immediately felt his tongue run the length of her pussy, and she moaned around his cock. Warren's hands came up and gripped her hips, pulling her closer in, as his tongue-lashing on her pussy grew in intensity. Sophia moaned and squeaked, but didn't let up on his cock, deep-throating him and sliding up and down.

Suddenly, she ground her pussy into Warren's mouth, screeching as she devoured his cock, and then she stiffened. She grabbed around his legs, digging her fingers into his thighs, as she spasmed on top of him. Through all this, she never let up on his cock, and he quickly followed, spurting his cum into her throat. That, plus his unceasing work on her pussy, sent her into orbit a second time as she completely milked him.

"Oh my fucking head," she exclaimed as she rolled off of him, still panting.

"I know what you mean." Warren said. "Man, you wear me out."

"The feeling, my love, is mutual." She crawled up so she was lying next to him. "I think Mr. Happy needs a rest," she said, looking down. "I think I do, too," she admitted.

"Come here," he pulled her on top of him, and wrapped his arms around her. She snuggled her head into his chest.

"Ah, this is so nice," Sophia said. "Honey?"

"Yeah?"

"Thank you."

"You're welcome. For what?"

She giggled at that. "For making my life complete, that's for what."

"I can thank you for the same thing, you know."

"I was talking to Liz, after she won, in our room. She said that her Olympics had been so much better than her first one. And there were a lot of reasons for that--she won, she stayed in the village, she made sure she had more fun with what was going on--but she said the biggest and best change was that Rich was there with her. She said she was jealous of me that, not only were you **there**, you were going through **everything** with me, step by step, including competing. It made me realize how lucky I am."

"Yeah, I thought of that myself. Actually, I realized it during the pairs."

"Huh?"

"Watching the Canadians. They're as in love as we are, and it shows, and they must have had the same thrill we did, to be able to share this with the person you love."

"Yeah, you're right. The greatest two weeks of my life, that's for sure, and all the better because you were there with me."

"Amen."

Sophia looked down, and giggled. "Mr. Happy seems to have recuperated."

"Well, you've been grabbing at him for the past five minutes."

"Yup. Warren, make love to me, please."

He rolled her over. "Gladly." She spread her legs to allow him to enter her, which he did, slowly and deliberately.

She smiled up at him as he moved in and out of her, still pacing himself. "I love you, Warren. I love this with you."

He grinned down at her. "You just remember that when we're an old married couple with seven screaming kids. Heck, you just remember that when we've got the one screaming kid."

"I don't plan on ever forgetting it," she said. "Ooooooooooh.....oh fuck....."

"You are the most beautiful thing in the world."

"Uhhhh.....mmmmmmmm....I'll bet you say that to all the girls....."

"Nope."

"You're so sweet." She reached up and wrapped her arms around his neck. "I love you so much," she whispered in his ear. "Oh, God, Warren.....oh, harder, honey, faster..... unnnngggghhhhh....."

He picked up the pace, but just a bit, trying to build them both up. Sophia's squeals got louder and more frequent as Warren slowly and deliberately fucked her.

"Oh God Oh God....not much longer now....oh yeah....almost....." Sophia gasped, and then screamed, her orgasm taking over. Warren kept pumping right through her orgasm. As she gasped and moaned, he built up to his own cum, which quickly came.

"Shit," Sophia said after Warren climbed off of her. She touched her stomach. "I wonder what Sprout thinks off all this bouncing around?"

Warren laughed. "Sprout probably got more bouncing when you were jumping up and down after we won the medal... **and** after Liz won the medal..... **and** after we got engaged."

Sophia laughed. "You got a point, darling."

"Just as long as Sprout knows how much Daddy loves Mommy, that's all that matters."

Sophia leaned over and kissed him. "You're still so sweet!"

THE POLITICS OF DANCING (Novel 104)

Warren and Sophia did make it to the bookstore, in a mall near campus. They bought all kinds of books on pregnancy and parenthood. Warren bought a couple of romances to read on the plane to London for Worlds.

"You're the only guy I know that reads romances," Sophia giggled.

"Hey, I like 'em."

They went to the food court to get some lunch.

"Ah, this is so nice," Sophia said as they sat down with their meals. "Just to take an afternoon to go shopping. Since we got back from the Olympics, we've done nothing more than study and practice skating for Worlds."

"Yup. But Worlds is the week after next, and then we'll get to rest a bit. Especially when school ends."

"Yeah, then I just get to have a baby. Some rest."

"True, but you'll get to rest **before** the baby comes. You'll have me to wait on you hand and foot, remember."

"Oh goody!" She took a bite of her salad. "Olga and Nikolai aren't going to Worlds, that's been confirmed. They're pros now."

"Which makes us the favorites."

"Yeah, but I don't count on that. Not until I see the judging panel," Sophia said.

"Good point."

"Hey, look over there!" Sophia said.

"What?"

"A maternity shop!"

"You want to look around after we eat?"

"Yeah! I do need maternity clothes."

"Sure, if they've got the summer ones out."

They did, and Sophia found quite a few things. "You know, some of this stuff is cute!" Sophia said. "I figured I'd be looking for the best-colored tent, but these are actual clothes. Bigger, but actual clothes."

"Yeah, you picked out some good stuff. Of course, you'd look good in a burlap sack."

"You just keep remembering to flatter me when I get all fat and uncoordinated."

"Won't forget it for a second."

Sophia was 3 1/2 months pregnant by the time Worlds started, but she still felt fine. "No problems," she told a group of their friends at lunch before the competition started. "The morning sickness is gone, and I'm not big enough to get any of the aches and pains yet, and my energy is fantastic."

"And we've been skating really well," Warren added.

They nailed all their practices, and were ready for the compulsories. They finished second, behind the Canadians Damphier and Gaudler, in the first compulsory.

The second compulsory was the quickstep, one of their better ones, but it was also a good one for Renee and Christian. "Second would be fine," Warren said. "We'll be right where we want to be."

They didn't finish second. They didn't finish first. They finished fifth. They skated perfectly, a compulsory that a month earlier had defeated every couple here except Renee and Christian--and, here, it finished fifth.

"Fifth! They've got to be kidding!" Warren fumed backstage.

"Look at the panel," Kathy, one of their coaches, said. "Russia, France, Germany, Ukraine. On a CD panel with only seven judges, that was enough. The other three judges had you in second."

"In other words, it was rigged," Sophia said.

"You got it."

"Thus endeth all hopes for a world championship," Warren said disgustedly.

The judging panel for the OD and free dance ended up with enough judges from the Judging Mafia to control the panel. Warren and Sophia managed to finish second in the OD, but still weren't happy. "No way that OD should **ever** lose to Yatsereva and Vaglach unless we fall down three times," Sophia said.

"Yeah, and they set it up so that the French can beat us in the free dance, and drop us down to third."

That's exactly what happened. Yatserova and Vaglach won the gold medal, with the French in second. Warren and Sophia finished third.

"Unbelievable," Warren said.

"The good thing is, I heard a couple of officials from the USFSA making one hell of a stink," Kathy told them. "Won't change the results, but....."

"Sometimes this sport gives me an ulcer," Sophia said.

They were fairly mild-mannered in the television interview, but admitted they were "disappointed and baffled by the results," as Sophia put it.

"Do you think that there is collusion amongst certain judges?" the interviewer asked them.

"What we think is that the ISU should be asking those questions, that's what we think," Warren said.

"When do you think you'll be back skating after the baby is born?" the interviewer asked. "By Nationals?"

"Definitely by Nationals, if not sooner, but that's **if** we decide to come back," Sophia said.

"You might not?" the interviewer said, surprised.

"We need to decide if the aggravation is worth it," Warren said.

Flying home from London, they were determined not to get down about it.

"Hey, we won a silver medal at the Olympics, so it's been a good year," Warren said.

"Yeah, and we'll knock 'em dead with Riverdance next year!" Sophia said.

FUTURE PLANS (Chapter 105)

Sophia and Warren weren't back from Worlds long before Warren's phone rang. It was Curtis Ingalls, the president of the US Figure Skating Association.

"Warren, were you guys serious?"

"About what?"

"About not coming back next year."

Warren sighed. "Well, you know Sophia's pregnant."

"Yeah, but, I thought you were going to shoot for Nationals. If you take the whole year off, it could damage your standing," Curtis pointed out.

"Oh, Curtis, if we take next year off, that would be **it** for us, for eligible competition. We'd just go to school. Or, we could go to Stars on Ice--we've already had an offer."

Curtis didn't say anything for a minute. "Wait a minute....you're thinking **retirement**? I thought you had already decided to stay in for four years?"

"That was before we got screwed at Worlds."

"That's **not** going to happen again."

"You can't guarantee that, Curtis. Not as long as the ISU is headed by that moron The Speedskater, and controlled by all the Russians whispering in his ear." The Speedskater was a derogatory term used by figure skaters to describe the head of the International Skating Union, who had come from the speedskating side of the sport.

"That's going to change, Warren. Trust me on that one, OK?"

"Curtis, I like you. You're a good man. We'll think about it, is all I can promise."

"All right. Should we schedule you guys for the Grand Prix?"

"Cup of Russia and NHK, because those are the last two. But that's tentative, we don't know if Sophia will be ready to skate by then."

"Fair enough." Curtis sighed. "Now I know what Dennis Anderson feels like."

"Dennis Anderson?"

"He's the head of the Canadian federation. Damphier and Gaudler are going pro, because they're tired of it, too."

"Damn. Well, they've been screwed for longer than we have!"

"True."

Sophia got a phone call later that week from the Canadian pairs skater Jennie Sellers.

"How are you feeling?" Jennie asked her.

"Fine. Morning sickness is gone, and I'm not in the 'I feel fat' stage yet."

Jennie giggled. "Did you hear about Christian and Renee?"

"Yeah. Truth be told, we've considered it."

"Ice dance judging can be maddening, even to those of us just watching," Jennie agreed. "Anyhow, Renee and Christian have decided to sit on their decision for a year. They are going to take next year off, do Stars on Ice and some of the pro-ams, but not do anything that would cost them their eligibility just yet."

"Ah," Sophia said. "Skate Canada putting the screws in?"

"And how. Us, too. We had originally planned to stay in, because we didn't expect to win a gold medal. Now, we're not sure, and Skate Canada is begging us to stay in, for the next four years."

"That bad?"

"Sophia, where are the next Olympics being held?"

"Ah," Sophia replied. "I get it." The next Olympics were in Quebec City.

"Yup. Defending gold medallists, going for a second in skating-mad Canada? The federation, understandably, wants that. And, with Denis being Quebecois, that's even better." Denis Poulin was her partner. "So, we'd have not just Canadian champions, but a Francophone Canadian champion, in Quebec City, defending his championship. Denis is from Trois-Rivieres, which is close enough to Quebec City. It would be a scene."

Sophia had to smile. "Jennie, you actually sound like the idea appeals to you."

"Truthfully, you're right. And it **really** appeals to Denis. We're going to take it year by year, but we're considering staying eligible. Now, if the next Olympics were anywhere else, we wouldn't. But it would be a trip, especially for Denis."

"That's a good point to consider. For us, as well--Quebec City is pretty close to Boston."

"That it is."

Warren and Sophia were on the ice, a few weeks before the end of the school year.

"Oy," Sophia said, "I may not be showing much yet, but my center of balance is definitely changing."

"I noticed," Warren agreed. "Especially during that last lift."

"You just make sure you don't drop me," Sophia smirked at him. "Precious cargo, and all that."

"You guys better think about getting off the ice soon," Kathy called over to them.

"Soon," Sophia agreed. "But I can still skate for a bit yet, and we need to get these programs figured out. If we want to make it to Cup of Russia, they have to be done before I get off the ice."

"I think you're nuts to even think about that," Kathy told them. "Shoot for Nationals."

"We might," Sophia said. "But, if we can make it to the Grand Prix, we want to. We're going to need the money," she admitted ruefully.

"And, making sure these programs are choreographed **now**, before we get off the ice, allows us to keep our options open," Warren pointed out.

"I am glad that Riverdance is almost done, though," Sophia giggled. "It's beginning to test my stamina."

"I'll bet," Kathy snorted. "That program is brutal even if you're not four and a half months pregnant!"

"You got that right," Warren agreed. "And I should know, because I'm not four and a half months pregnant." Sophia giggled and gave him a swat. "Thanks, honey," he said with a smirk. "At least the OD is more sedate." The Original Dance next year was a waltz, and Warren and Sophia were going to skate to "In Between Dances," a gorgeous slow country waltz by Pam Tillis.

"It **is** more sedate," Sophia agreed. "I can practice this for a while yet. I think we might have to skip the lifts for now, though!"

"I agree," Warren said. "I didn't bargain on lifting **two** of you."

Sophia swatted him again.

BACK HOME AGAIN (Chapter 106)

Sophia and Warren were on the Massachusetts Turnpike headed for Oceanview. It was the middle of May.

"Remind me never to drive from Wisconsin to Massachusetts with a pregnant woman ever again," Warren grumbled good-naturedly.

"Was it **that** trying, dear?" Sophia smirked at him.

"It's just that I think I wore out the brakes. I've heard 'honey, pull over' so much in the last two days that I think I'll be hearing it in my sleep."

"Fine. **You** try sitting in a car for two days with a fetus sitting on your bladder."

"For that, my dear, the person **carrying** said fetus would have to be sitting on my lap. And, as delightful as that sounds, it would, no doubt, hinder my driving."

"Pig!"

"You know it." He grinned at her. "So, now that we're at home, are we **finally** going to schedule another ultrasound?"

"Already did it. Talked to my doctor at home last week. We have an appointment next Tuesday, with ultrasound."

"Great"

"So.....are we gonna find out?"

"Find out what?"

"You know," Sophia grinned, "the ol' pink or blue thing."

Warren thought about that for a minute. "You want to?"

"I think so. It would make buying stuff easier."

"I suppose."

"Don't you agree? You wouldn't want to buy pink stuff and then have a boy, would you?"

Warren grinned. "Sophia, what color is the shirt I'm wearing?"

"Pink," Sophia said with a giggle.

"Right. I'm an ice dancer. I cry at sappy movies. I'm not a gender-role kind of guy."

"Hmmm. I never thought of it that way, but you've got a point."

"Although, I will agree, for a baby, you might have to do some of that. Because you sure as hell can't tell what they are by **looking**. If we have a girl and dress it in blue, nobody will know it's a girl and assume that we have A Boy Named Sue."

Sophia cracked up at that.

"However, I would like to know," Warren admitted.

"What do you want?" Sophia asked.

"It really doesn't matter. If I was pressed, I'd probably say girl."

"Really?"

"Really. I like girls."

"Uh-huh," Sophia smirked.

"Boy would be fun, girl would be fun. I don't care. What about you?"

"The same. As long as it's healthy. I would like to know, though," she grinned, "so we can play the what-to-name-it game."

"True."

They pulled up in front of Sophia's house. Ellen and Kate were there to greet them.

"Well, if it ain't Grandma and Aunt Kate!" Warren teased.

"You just stop it," Ellen grinned at him. "Hi, honey," she said to Sophia. "How are you feeling?"

"Not bad, considering. I have, however, become on intimate terms with every bathroom between Madison and Boston. Yeesh."

"Ah, the ol' bladder pressure. I remember it well."

After Warren and Kate loaded Sophia's stuff downstairs, Ellen fixed them all lemonade.

"So, how are you adjusting to this?" Ellen asked.

"You know what? I'm getting excited," Sophia admitted. "Even with the whole we're-too-young thing, it's exciting."

"I've been excited from day one," Warren said. "Course, I don't have to carry the little bugger."

"You're right," Sophia smirked.

"Hey, Kate," Warren said, "Sophia tells me you've changed your college plans."

"Yeah," Kate said. "I'm going to the Massachusetts College of Art. I decided to try to be an actual painter before settling for teaching art."

"Great," Warren said. "What made you change your mind?"

"A lot of things. I wouldn't mind teaching, but it's not what I **really** want to do. I want to paint. Plus, Mrs. Bennett--she's my art teacher at the high school--she entered a couple of my paintings in a state-wide show for high school students, and they got raves. I also got raves from the admissions department at Mass Art. All that convinced me that I might be able to actually make a living at this."

"I think that's fantastic," Sophia said.

"Plus," Kate said with a sly grin, "I figure if two part-time scrub ice dancers can win a medal at the Olympics, anything's possible."

"HEY!" Warren shouted in mock-indignation. "I resemble that remark!"

"Listen, Missy, when you get judged the second-best painter in the world--and have a silver medal to prove it--then you can crack wise," Sophia teased.

"Well, I was judged number one in the state, in watercolors--second in oils. Of course, there were no Russian judges on the panel."

"Lucky for you," Warren grinned.

"So, how's Dave?" Sophia asked.

"Uh-oh. Touchy subject," Ellen interjected.

"Really?" Sophia was surprised.

"Things are not so good," Kate confirmed. "He doesn't agree with my career decision."

"Why on earth not?" Warren asked.

"That's a good question," Kate replied. "I can't get a straight answer out of him. I don't know if he's jealous that I have the guts to try this and he doesn't, or if he just doesn't think it's a good risk to take. He won't say, but he clams up and changes the subject whenever my painting comes up. And this is **new**, he used to be completely supportive. It's caused an enormous strain. We haven't broken up yet, but....."

"Wow," Sophia said.

"I should have seen this coming," Kate admitted. "I should have seen this coming when he was having so much problems with Dad being an ogre."

"What does one thing have to do with the other?" Sophia asked.

"Dave doesn't like upset. He's a very orderly person. He likes his ducks all in a row. Going out with a girl who had a father that didn't like him was an upset. His girlfriend throwing caution to the wind is an upset. I love that part of him--I need it, in fact--but he has trouble dealing with the fact that I am **not** always like that."

"I'll talk to him when I see him," Warren said firmly.

"Ah, Warren, I don't know if that would be a good idea," Kate said worriedly.

"Yeah, it would. Trust me. I'm more orderly than Dave. At least, I used to be. I'm not anymore. I still try to be somewhat orderly, but going with the flow can be very rewarding. Pookie over there taught me that. Dave needs to hear that."

"OK," Kate agreed. "As long as you're gentle."

"I always am!"

Sophia was helping Ellen make supper when Dan walked in.

"Dan!" Sophia yelled. "Hey! How's my favorite stepfather?" She wrapped him in a bear hug.

He barely returned it. "Hi Sophia," he said formally. "Good to see you back. What's for supper?" Ellen told him, and Sophia withdrew, confused.

He was like that all through supper--when he talked to Sophia, which wasn't much, he was clipped and restrained. Immediately after supper, he withdrew to his study.

"What's with him?" Sophia asked her mother.

"Don't get me into it. That's something you're going to have to discuss with him."

"OK," Sophia said, and walked over to his study. She knocked on the door, and entered as he yelled, "Come in."

"Hey, Dan. You up for a game of chess?"

"No, thank you."

"How about some TV? The Sox are on. Warren's at his folks, so you're the only other baseball freak around to watch it with," she joked.

"No, thank you."

Sophia thought for a minute, then closed the door. She marched over to the chair next to his desk.

"Sophia, I'm busy."

"You can be busy in a minute. Dan, what is **with** you?"

"Nothing is 'with' me. I'm just busy."

"Ah. Were you busy at supper, when you could barely say a civil word to me? Were you busy when you first came home, and I hugged you, and you reacted like I had the plague? Dan, I thought we settled things between us **last** summer."

"Yeah, that was before you went and got yourself knocked up!" Dan blurted out.

"Dammit, I didn't mean to say that. I promised your mother."

"Mom's not here. What did you mean by that?"

"I have held my tongue since you told your mother you were pregnant, and I did not mean to stop holding it now."

"Dan, I told you--Mom's not here. You want to say something to me, say it. What is your problem?"

Dan banged his desk, startling Sophia. "My problem is, a nineteen-year-old girl, my stepdaughter, who is unmarried, is careless beyond all comprehension and gets herself knocked up, and I watch everyone around me react like this is a **good** thing! Kate's all excited. Tara and Eric are all excited. Your **mother** is all excited, and I understand even your father has nary a contrary word to say! It's maddening!"

"You've known I was pregnant for five months and you never said a word."

"When was I going to say something? The only time I've seen you is at the Olympics. I'm going to say something then? Sophia, I'm not that cruel. I wasn't going to say anything anyway, you dragged it out of me."

"Well, Dan, I come home from college and, my first day back, you treat me like something you scraped off your shoe, and I'm not supposed to notice?"

"I guess I'm not a very good actor."

"No, you're not."

"I suppose it's for the best, anyway. I wasn't looking forward to a year of tiptoeing around you. Of course, everyone else does that around you, why should I be any different?"

"What are you talking about?"

"Dammit, Sophia, you've got everyone in your life twisted around your little finger!" Dan exploded. "Your mother walks on eggshells! Even Warren caters to your every whim! Your mother, all I hear is 'Sophia had a rough adolescence, we need to be careful'. And I know damn well Warren feels the same way, with the added kick that he's probably afraid you'll senselessly dump him again! And now you're pregnant. Nineteen years old--sorry, you're twenty now--and you're pregnant because you **fucked up**, and I sit here, and I wait for **someone** to tell you that you're an irresponsible **brat**! But, no, all I hear is 'we have to support her'. It makes me ill. Sophia, you're a screw-up. Nobody tells you that, and you keep screwing up."

"People tell me I'm a screw up," Sophia whispered.

"Yeah? Like who?"

"Myself."

"Huh?"

Sophia hardened her expression. She would **not** give him the satisfaction of shedding the tears that were welling up behind her eyes. "Dan, you don't know me at all. Not one little bit. You think you do, but you don't. You think you know why my mother treats me like she does, but you don't. You jump to conclusions based on only a few available facts that don't paint the whole picture."

"Then help me out, Sophia. Why **else** would your mother react with such equanimity to your pregnancy?"

"Because she got pregnant. Two years **younger** than I am, and her parents kicked her out of the house. Do you know I never met my Grandparents before they died? They disowned Mom because she got pregnant with me. She married my father because she didn't have a choice. She wasn't going to do that to me. There are worse things than your child getting pregnant too early. She knows that."

"OK. That does explain a lot."

"A lot of things have explanations, Dan, but you don't wait for them."

"Fine, but you knew all that about your mother, you know what she went through, I would **think** you'd be more cautious that the same things don't happen to you! Dammit, Sophia, I thought you were responsible. How could **you** react to this pregnancy so well?"

Sophia looked down. "I didn't."

"Excuse me?"

"I didn't. I was devastated. I was going to abort."

Dan was incredulous. "You were?"

"Yeah. Don't you think I realize that this was a screw-up?"

"I guess I didn't. I guess I figured that you were in the 'someone will fix my mess for me' mindset."

"Not even a little bit."

"What made you decide not to abort?"

"Warren."

"Warren? He talked you into having the baby?"

Sophia smiled a little. "He didn't have to. I saw his eyes when I told him. He **is** the one person in this whole thing who **did** react with nothing but delight."

Dan snorted. "What is he, nuts?"

Sophia had to laugh. "No, he's not nuts. He's in love with me. He also, let us not forget, **adores** kids."

"Oh, that's right--studying to be a pediatrician."

"Right. Plus, a lot has happened to us in the past few years."

"What does that have to do with it?"

"It's affected his mindset."

"How so?"

"He said to me, not long ago, that he's dealt with losing me, therapy because of that, being beaten and raped, therapy because of **that**, juggling a brutal class schedule and high-level figure skating, **and** the arbitrary capriciousness of Russian ice dance judges." Dan cracked up laughing. Sophia grinned, and continued, "He said, compared to all that, having a kid will be a piece of cake."

Dan laughed louder. "He's in for a rude awakening, you know."

"I know," Sophia grinned. "He'll find out."

"Yup," Dan agreed.

"Not really, though," Sophia admitted. "We both know what we're getting into. And, I must admit, I have my days when the prospect of becoming a mother scares me to death. I'm sure even Warren feels that way sometimes, although he'll **never** admit it. But, really, think about it--we're both rape survivors. I'm an abuse survivor. We lost our way with each other. We got robbed of a world championship by blind judges." Dan cracked up again. "You think about all that--and bringing a new life into the world is supposed to be a **bad** thing? I can't think that way. A premature thing, a difficult thing, the product of a mistake--yeah. But a bad thing? No way."

"My apologies. You're not thinking the way I thought you were thinking. I am sorry."

"Thanks, Dan. I appreciate it. Look, just **talk** with me about these things instead of jumping to conclusions, OK?"

"You got it. I should have done that from the beginning, you're right. However, do me a favor in return, will you?"

"What, not tell Mom about this chat? Sure thing," Sophia grinned.

"Well, no, that's not what I was thinking. I was thinking more about Kate. Don't let her think this pregnancy is all sweetness and light, OK?"

Sophia cracked up. "Oh, Dan, considering she's going to be around when I'm nine months along and fat and cranky, I doubt that will happen. Besides which, unless Dave straightens out in a hurry, I don't think you have to worry."

"I know," Dan frowned. "I **never** thought I would say this, but I hope they work things out. Despite the fact that he took my little girl's innocence, I like him. He's good for her."

Sophia giggled as she got up from the chair. "You're getting there, Dan."

"Uh-huh." Sophia walked towards the door. "Oh, Sophia? What do you plan to tell Ellen?"

"Just that we had a talk, and we patched things up."

"Thanks. You still want to watch the Sox?"

"Love to."

"I'll be out in ten minutes."

"Cool! I'll make the popcorn." She looked at him with a big grin. "You know if it's a boy, we're naming it Nomar."

Dan cracked up laughing. "Nomar Kelleher. Now I've heard everything."

"Nomar Pedro Kelleher, to be exact. Just rolls of the tongue, doesn't it?"

"Go make the popcorn, would you?"

PINK OR BLUE? (Chapter 107)

A week later, Sophia and Warren walked into Sophia's house. Ellen, Dan, and Kate were all there waiting.

"Well?" Ellen asked.

"Well, what?" Sophia grinned.

"Didn't you have an ultrasound?"

"Yup. I saw it," Warren confirmed. "We have pictures. The hands were wiggling and the feet were kicking, and everything."

"Great," Ellen said. She waited a beat, glaring at them. "Well?"

"Well **what**?" Sophia said, grinning.

"Did you find out what it is?"

"Yeah, it's a baby," Warren said deadpan.

"Oh, you!" Ellen threw a dishtowel at him.

"We had to, Mom," Sophia said, wrapping her in a hug, "but we won't keep you in suspense any longer. Congratulations, you're going to have a granddaughter."

"Oh, honey," Ellen smiled up at her.

"Yeah, they were ninety-nine percent sure," Warren supplied. "She gave them a pretty good look, and they didn't see anything dangling."

"Now can I admit that I wanted a granddaughter?" Ellen said.

"Sure. But you would have been happy no matter what," Sophia teased.

"You're right."

"I, for one, am thrilled it's a girl," Dan interjected.

"You are?" Ellen asked.

"Yup. I don't know if I could have dealt with a step-grandson named Nomar Pedro Kelleher."

"One day, you will anyway," Warren grinned at him.

"So, do you have any girls names in mind?" Kate asked.

Sophia and Warren grinned at each other, and then said, simultaneously, "Jessica!"

"Do I hear my name being taken in vain?" Jessica was walking in the door at that very moment.

"Hiya, Jess!" Sophia said to her.

"Yo," Warren said. "No, we were just deciding we were going to name the kid Jessica She-Devil Kelleher."

Jessie grinned at him. "So, I'm going to have a Goddaughter, am I?"

"Yes you are," Sophia confirmed.

"Cool. You're not really going to name her Jessica, are you?"

Sophia grinned. "Probably not. We've joked about that forever."

"Good. You don't want to give the poor kid a name that's too hard to live up to, you know."

"Of course," Warren grinned.

"Nah, you're going to be the godmother," Sophia said, "you don't get **all** the honors."

"So, what **are** you going to name it?" Kate persisted.

"Katherine, of course," Warren teased her. "I dunno. Svetlana? Yoko? Crash? Nomarita?"

"What he's trying to say--I think--is that we haven't decided yet." Sophia said.

"I still think we should go for Yoko," Warren maintained.

"Riiiiight."

That night, they were lying in bed after making love.

"I can **not** believe how horny I've been lately," Sophia exclaimed. "Thank you, Snugglebear, I needed that tonight."

"All those nasty hormones," Warren teased. He ran his hand along the slight rise of her stomach. "It really is amazing to watch little Pedroella make you grow like this."

"Pedroella???"

"Well....." Warren grinned at her.

"Go back to Yoko, I think," Sophia grinned back. She looked down at him, as he looked at her. "You really do like seeing me like this, don't you?"

"Yeah. I do. It's a turn on, I admit it. This..." he reached his hand up to her breast "... **and** these, too."

"You're incorrigible."

"Yup."

Sophia grabbed the remote and turned on the TV. "Let's see if there's anything good to watch while we cuddle." She flipped a few channels. "Oh, look! I forgot! The Champions on Ice broadcast is on tonight."

"Cool!" Warren agreed. They watched for a while, cuddling.

After a few minutes, Sophia sighed. "This is probably the only regret I have about this baby--that we couldn't do the tour."

"I know. Next year."

"Yup." They watched for a while. Liz Cushman came out to skate.

"I love this program," Sophia said. Warren nodded agreement, and they watched their friend skate on the TV. Suddenly, Warren went, "Hmmm."

"What, Snugglebear?"

"Hmmm. Elizabeth Kelleher."

"Hmmm," Sophia thought about it. "Elizabeth Kelleher. Liz Kelleher."

"No. Betsy. That's my favorite nickname for Elizabeth."

"Elizabeth Kelleher," Sophia thought about it. "Betsy Kelleher." She thought some more. "Or, even Beth. Beth Kelleher." She sat up and stared into space. "You know what? I like it."

"I do, too."

"It's sure better than Pedroella." Sophia teased.

"Pedroella Yoko Kelleher, dear."

"Oh, right."

"I suppose Elizabeth Kelleher or Betsy Kelleher rolls of the tongue better."

"No doubt."

"We don't have to decide right away, Pookie, but I think Elizabeth just went to the top of the list."

"Yeah. Liz will be thrilled if we do decide on it. And, we have to think of a middle name, too."

"Yup." They settled back into each other's arms to watch the skating.

A week later, they were coming back home from doing some shopping. Sophia's little sister Tara was waiting for them at the front door.

"Guys! Guys! You have to see this!" Tara exclaimed. "You got a **huge** package in the mail!"

"Really?" Sophia said. Tara led them through the front door.

Ellen emerged from the kitchen. "She's not kidding, guys. It's enormous. And the return address is from Moscow."

"Moscow?" Sophia said. They found the package in the living room, and tore it open. Tara and Ellen, and Kate--who had come flying downstairs--watched them. Sophia reached in and withdrew a wooden doll. She opened the hatch on the doll, and found another, smaller, doll, inside. This also opened to reveal an even smaller doll. "Look at this!" She exclaimed. There were six in all, the last one almost impossibly small.

"Matrioshka dolls," Warren supplied. "Very traditional Russian child's gift." He looked at them closely. "These are hand-made," he said in wonder. "Traditionally, they are hand-made, but the hand made ones nowadays are **not** cheap. These are fantastic."

Kate took a closer look. "Look at the workmanship in this painting! This is incredible!"

"What a wonderful gift," Sophia sighed. "What else is in there?"

Warren reached in, and giggled. "Look. Baby rattles with pictures of St Basil's Cathedral on them."

Sophia withdrew a few woolen sleepers. "These are darling!"

"Look," Warren said, "A woolen blanket, with the Russian flag on it."

"A tee shirt. What does that say, Warren?" Sophia asked, gesturing towards the writing.

"It says Moskva. Russian for Moscow. That must be the Moscow skyline."

"Look at **this**!" Sophia said, withdrawing a music box. She opened it up, and a ballerina appeared on top of it. "This is great!" she enthused. She wound up the music box, and the ballerina spun on top of it, while it played a tune. "Swan Lake!" Sophia realized.

"Check this out!" Warren said to her. He held up a tiny baby-size version of the traditional Russian fur hat.

"Wow! Look at all this stuff!" Sophia said. "Is there a card? There's got to be a card."

Ellen and Warren reached into the box. Ellen found a card, withdrew it, and opened it up. "Well, yeah, there's a card, but it seems to be in gibberish."

Warren peered over her shoulder. "Nope, that ain't gibberish, it's Russian. Different alphabet and all that. Let me see." Ellen handed him the card. "OK, I think my translation skills are up to this. 'Dear Warren and Sophia. I see.....no, I **hear** I am to have a new American niece. This is to'.....hmmm...I think it means 'this is to make sure that my new American niece is a little bit Russian.' Yeah, that's it. 'I hope everything is well with you, and you will make sure to let me know when the baby comes.' Or something like that." Everyone laughed at that. "'And you send pictures of new baby!' And then it is signed, 'Love, Olga Bradochkina.'"

"Wow." Sophia sighed.

"Olga Bradochkina? Olympic Champion Olga Bradochkina?" Ellen asked in amazement.

"The same," Warren replied. "She is one special lady."

Sophia sighed and then stared into space suddenly. "Warren." Warren looked at her. She turned to him and smiled. "Elizabeth Olga Kelleher."

"THAT'S IT!!!

A TOUR VISIT (Chapter 108)

Warren walked into Sophia's house, grabbing the mail on the way in. It was a warm sunny day towards the end of June. He found Sophia and Ellen in the kitchen.

"Hi, folks. Here's your mail. Champions on Ice tickets came, Pookie."

"Good ol Ted," Sophia commented. Ted Kantor was a former show skater who ran the COI tour. "He came through."

"Yup," Warren agreed. "Six tickets for the Boston show next week."

"Who are you going to take?" Ellen asked them.

"Jessie and Crash, for sure," Sophia supplied.

"Yeah, we've turned them into quite the skating fans. Even Crash," Warren joked.

"I'm sure Kate would like to go," Sophia commented.

"Yeah," Warren agreed. Just then, Kate walked in the door.

"Hey, Kate! We got tickets for Champions on Ice. Next Thursday. You and Dave want to go?"

Kate gave Sophia a rueful look. "I'd love to go. However, there won't be any Dave."

"Huh?" Sophia asked.

"We broke up last night."

"WHAT?" Sophia was incredulous.

"Yeah," Kate said. "It just wasn't working. It wasn't going to work. We've both changed so much in the couple of years we've been going out, and we just don't want the same things anymore."

"That's rough. You OK?" Warren asked her.

"Yeah, I'm OK. It's for the best, it really is." She looked up with a sad little half-smile. "I'm just not looking forward to going through the summer lonely."

"Oh, Kate," Ellen sighed.

"No, really, Ellen. I'm OK. It had to end. Neither of us have been happy for some time." She brightened up, and looked at Sophia. "I'd still love to go to COI, though. Does that leave you with an uneven number of tickets?"

"Yeah," Sophia said. "We've got one left, if Jessie and Crash go."

"Can I make a suggestion, honey?" Ellen asked.

"Sure."

"Tara would love to go."

"Good idea," Sophia grinned. "She would. We're going back stage and everything. OK with you, Snugglebear?"

"Absolutely," Warren agreed.

"I'll go tell her." Sophia ran up to Tara's bedroom upstairs. A few minutes later, the folks downstairs heard a delighted scream.

A week later, they were at the Fleet Center in Boston, trying to get back stage.

"Look, we have backstage passes, right here," Warren said.

"That's not good enough," the guard at the door said. "You have to be on the list. One of the skaters had to put you on the list. Which skaters are you friends with?"

"**All** of them!" Sophia shouted. "These tickets didn't come from a skater, they came from Ted Kantor."

"Who's he?" the guard asked.

"The guy who **runs** the tour! We know every skater in this show. We **are** skaters! We're the Olympic silver medallists in ice dance, and we'd be **in** this show if I wasn't pregnant!"

"That's a good story," said the guard.

"JESUS!" Sophia was really working herself into a snit.

"Hold on, Pookie." Warren picked up his cell phone. "I hope she has hers with her....it's ringing....Liz! It's Warren. Not only are we coming, we're here, but some dunderhead guard won't let us in. Yes, we have back stage passes, but, evidently, we were supposed to be on some kind of list, too. OK." He looked at Sophia and the guard. "Liz is on her way." When she arrived a few minutes later, it was with Ted Kantor.

"What the hell is going on here? Why aren't you letting my guests in?"

"They're not on the list," the guard said stubbornly.

"Jesus, I sent them backstage passes. Now, let them in."

"Who are you?"

"I'm the boss. I'm Ted Kantor, I run the tour. Now let them in."

They finally got in, got wrapped in a hug by Liz. They thanked Ted, as he walked off to go back to organizing the show.

"How are you doing?" Liz asked.

"Great," Sophia said. "You know these guys, right?"

"I've met Jessie and Crash, and your sister Kate....."

"Ah. You've never met my other sister, Tara."

"Cool! Hi, Tara!" Liz shook her hand. Tara was awestruck.

"Hey, Liz, we have something to tell you, but we need to tell you and Olga. Is she around?"

"Olga Bradochkina? Yeah, she's in the locker room." Liz led them to the door, and then went in and got Olga.

"Warren! Sophia! Darlings! How are you?"

"Great, Olga, how are you?"

"Wonderful. We just get back to tour, we took break."

"We know. You went back to Moscow. Thank you **so** much for the package, it was wonderful," Sophia told her.

"You are welcome. Baby is good, da?"

"Da," Warren smiled at her, "Listen, we wanted to show you two something." Sophia dug into her purse and took out an ultrasound picture.

"Cool!" exclaimed Liz. "Pictures before birth!"

"Well, we wanted you to see them," Sophia said with a huge grin, "because we wanted to give you an early introduction to Elizabeth Olga Kelleher."

Liz and Olga looked at each other, dumbstruck, and then at Warren and Sophia.

"You're kidding," Liz whispered.

"Nope," Warren said with a smile.

Olga reached over and wrapped them both in a bear hug. "You are too sweet. It is, how you say, an honor."

Liz still couldn't believe it. "I'm so touched. I think I'm going to cry."

Warren laughed. "Well, you should know we're going to call her Betsy, not Liz."

Liz smiled up at him. "My father calls me that occasionally. I'm still touched. You two are something else."

The show was great, and the six of them joined the cast for the after-show get together backstage. Warren and Sophia were sitting with Liz and Andrea Wallach.

"You guys have a good time?" Liz asked.

"The best. And it's so cool to see everybody. I only wish Renee and Christian and Jennie and Denis were here." Sophia said.

"Yeah. They're cool people. They are all doing Canadian Stars on Ice right now, though." Liz said.

"Hey Pookie," Warren said, "have you noticed that Crash and Jack Garrison are getting on like a house afire?"

"Yeah, and Jessie's making fast friends with his wife."

"Did you see your sister? The little one, Tara?" Liz asked.

"Yeah. She's being thoroughly charmed by Olga."

"Where's Kate?" Warren asked.

"Over there, being hit on by Yuri Kadrachenko, the Ukranian pairs skater. I don't think she minds," Liz giggled.

Liz sighed. "I wish you guys were here."

"I second that," Andrea agreed.

"We do, too," Sophia said. "Ah, well. Next year."

"You should have skated anyway," Christine said. "You could have done 'Having My Baby,'" she added with a smirk.

"Or 'A Child Is Born' from Messiah," Liz added.

"At this point, the only thing I'd be qualified to skate to is 'Fat' by Weird Al," Sophia said with a laugh.

"When are you due?" Liz asked.

"Second week of September. Not too much longer."

"Good, because I wanted to ask you guys something," Liz said. "How would you two like to choreograph my long program for me? We can do it in August, I can fly out here."

"Us?" Sophia asked, surprised.

"Yeah, you. I need something different. I want you guys to pick the music, even. I'll pay you, standard fee for choreography, of course. You guys know my skating, but I need someone with a different approach. I want to do something different this year."

"I don't know, Liz," Warren said. "This would be very different for us, because we've only choreographed for ourselves, and you're not a dancer. We've never had to worry about jumps and spins."

"Oh, I can help with that part," Liz said. "I can tell you what jumps and spins I want to do, and help you place them--it's the actual choreography that I want your ideas for. And the music--I'm in a musical rut."

"You know what? It could be fun. Even if I have to do my bit from the stands," Sophia said.

"You think so?" Warren asked. Sophia nodded, smiling. "OK, Liz, we'll do it."

"Great!" Liz enthused.

"Yeah, that is great," Andrea interrupted, "because Liz beat me to it."

Warren laughed. "You and Brett want us, too?"

"Yeah. For our short program. We want to do big band, but we don't know **what**, exactly, and you guys know big band like the back of your hand, and can choreograph it. Same deal as with Liz, we'll fly out here, and we can help with the tricks."

Sophia and Warren looked at one another. "What the hell--this could be a second career!" Sophia enthused.

"I wouldn't doubt it," Liz agreed.

HORMONES (Chapter 109)

It was early August. Sophia was seven and a half months pregnant, and was feeling and showing the effects.

"I'm a whale. I'm a beached whale," she complained to Warren one night as they lie in bed, watching TV.

"Best looking beached whale I ever saw."

"You're biased," Sophia pointed out with a giggle.

"Who, me?"

"Yeah, you." Sophia looked down at herself. "I'm so fat."

"You're not fat, you're pregnant."

"Yeah, well, I'm huge. And my back hurts."

"Of course it does." Warren maneuvered on the bed so that he was behind her. "Lean forward a little bit." She did, and Warren started massaging her back.

"Oh, honey, that feels good," Sophia moaned. "Oh, my back is so sore."

Warren rubbed her back for a while, then snaked one hand around the front of her body and grabbed a breast.

"You cheat!" Sophia laughed. "Mmmm, I think I like this better than the backrub."

"Uh-huh," Warren smirked. "You know what? These things are huge."

"Why do you think my back hurts? It ain't all baby, honey. This bra is a double D, and it's **tight**. My normal D-cup ones are useless at the moment."

"Hmmm. Looks like this kid will be in no danger of going hungry, eh?"

"Warren, you're a sick puppy."

"That's my job."

"And you do it so well," Sophia giggled. "I just hope I lose some of these things after the baby's born."

"You probably won't, not if you breastfeed, which you said you wanted to do. And why would you want to lose them, anyway? Spoil my fun?"

"You're a sick puppy **and** a pig. Listen, dear, **you** try skating with these things on your chest. I have to wear a damn sports bra, which is binding and uncomfortable, and I still have to hope I don't take an eye out during the footwork. And that's with my normal boobs, not these baby-inflated ones."

"I suppose you've got a point."

"You're damn right I've got a point," Sophia snorted. "And we're skating to **Riverdance** this year? These things are going to be bouncing around to beat the band. Now I know why ice dancers have no tits."

"Hmmm. There should be something we can do. Maybe something with costuming. We have to wait until after the baby to fit your costume, though."

"I can't think of anything besides a sports bra that would help." She looked up at Warren with a wry grin. "Of course, I can't think of much of **anything** at the moment, not with where your hands are. They might be too damn big, but **boy** are they sensitive right now."

"Well, that's a bonus."

"Uh-huh." Sophia sighed. "Considering how sensitive they are, and how worked up my hormones are at the moment, if you keep getting me all wired up, you'd best be prepared to do something about it."

"Aren't I always?"

"True." Sophia settled back onto the pillow, as Warren's hands moved down to slip under her top. He lifted it up over her abdomen to get at her breasts. She giggled. "Less room in there now, huh?"

"Well, I do have to work a little harder."

"Honey, you ain't seen nothin' yet."

"Oh, really?"

"You'll find out."

"Hmmm." Warren had her top pulled up around her neck, and was unhooking her bra. He quickly went back to work on her breasts, using a hand on one and his mouth on the other

"Oh, Snugglebear, that feels heavenly."

Warren looked up. "I don't know what was such hard work about that."

Sophia giggled. "Wait until you try to get the pants off."

"I'll leave that to you," Warren teased, and leaned back over her breast.

"Oh, thanks, how generous of you."

"Fine. You want I should stop what I'm doing to pry your pants off?"

Sophia giggled. "OK, point taken."

"I thought so." He leaned back down into her breast, and came back up again, licking his lips. "I do believe there's a wee bit of something coming out of these things."

"Really?"

"Just a little."

"Keep it up and there might be more than a little, with all that stimulation you're giving them."

"That could be fun."

Sophia stared at him. "Fun?"

"Sure."

"You wouldn't care if you got breast milk out of me?"

"Why should I?"

"Hmmm. I never thought about it."

"I'm actually rather looking forward to it," Warren grinned.

"Oh, you're going to make Elizabeth **share**, huh?"

"Nah. There will be excess."

"Uh-huh."

"Really."

"Hey, guess what?" Sophia asked.

"What?"

"Managed to get my pants off while you were doing that."

"Very smooth," Warren said appreciatively.

"I thought so. So, what are you going to do about it, big boy?"

"Hmmm....." he reached down and undid his own pants button. "This, perhaps?"

"I think that's a good idea." She reached down and helped him slip his pants off, and grabbed his cock. "Hmm. I still turn you on. That's good to know," she smiled impishly.

"Are you kidding? You have no idea how sexy you are like this, do you?"

"Pregnant women never feel sexy, Warren."

"Well, you should."

"Hmmm." Sophia pushed him back on the bed, and straddled him. "I think this is the only way this is going to work, now, Snugglebear."

"Well, we could try from behind."

"Nah. I always liked this better." She sank down onto him. "Oh YEAH!" She rocked up and down on him, while he grabbed her hips to help her leverage. "Oh, this feels so good...." She was moving slower than usual, because of the added weight, but neither she nor Warren minded. They built it up slow, which made it particularly intense when they both came almost simultaneously.

"Oh, damn, I needed that," Sophia said after she had rolled onto her side next to Warren.

"How's your back?"

"Remarkably fine."

"You're one sexy woman, you know that."

"Keep telling me. Keep doing **that** to me. I might even believe it," she grinned at him.

"I don't know how much longer we'll be able to do that, though. Don't want your back to go out on you."

"Hey, just keeping those muscles toned for skating, right?"

EARLY (Chapter 110)

It was mid-August, and Warren and Sophia were at the Oceanview ice rink with Liz Cushman.

Andrea and Brett had already been out, and Warren and Sophia had choreographed them a short program to "Opus One" that they were thrilled with. Warren and Sophia had originally tried to find a big band piece that **they** had never skated with, but, as Sophia said, "There's so **few** of them!" "Opus One" really suited Andrea and Brett's skating, plus Sophia and Warren had skated to it years ago, when they were still juniors. Everyone loved the program when they were done.

Liz had come out next. It was a Thursday, the fourth day of them working together, and they had planned a fifth, then Liz would go back to California to finish the program with her coach. The choreography of it had to be done this week, and they had made great progress.

Warren had hit on a piece of music for her, a surprising one--"Finlandia" by Sibelius. It was different from the more lyrical pieces that Liz had skated to in the past. She was surprised at first, and then decided she loved it. "It's dramatic, moreso than my usual, and a lot more punchy. I like it--if we can come up with a program."

They had, and were working on fine-tuning it by the time Thursday arrived. It was about eleven in the

AM, and Warren was on the ice with Liz trying to fine-tune a transitional section before they broke for lunch. Sophia was in the stands, adding her input.

"Guys," Sophia said, "is there any way she can turn in that section, so that she's facing the other way when she comes out of the triple flip? I think that's the big problem, the abrupt turn after the flip."

"Oh, you mean change direction in the transition steps, so I do the flip going the other way?" Liz asked.

"Yeah. Because you need to be going the other way to set up the spiral sequence. That quick turn after the flip is screwing everything up. If you can turn during the steps leading to the flip, and do the flip so that you come out heading up-ice from the corner instead, it would be smoother."

"I have an idea," Warren said, "and I think it will work, but will you have enough room to set up the flip going the other way?"

"Let's see," Liz smiled at him. "What did you have in mind?"

Warren showed her. "Hmm," she said, "I think that would work."

"Hey, Pookie, music?"

"Coming right up. Starting it from the spin." It started, Liz picked it up, and did the sequence, including the flip.

"I think that worked!" Liz said.

"Looked good to me. We should do it again, though," Warren said. "Hey, Soph, rewind the music, would you please? How did that look to you?" Warren looked over, and saw Sophia sitting behind the boards, on the stands, looking down at her feet. "Soph, you OK? Did you see that sequence?"

"Huh?" She looked up.

"What's wrong with you, Sophie?"

"Ummm.....well.....it seems my water just broke."

"WHAT?"

"I was sitting here, watching Liz start the sequence, and I realized my pants were getting soaked. And it ain't pee. My water definitely broke."

"SHIT! We got to get you to the hospital!" Warren took an abrupt, ill-thought-out step in Sophia's direction, forgetting he was on ice skates. He ended up on his butt.

"WARREN!" Sophia yelled.

"I'm fine," he said as he scrambled to his feet. "Just think, you'll be able to tell the kid that her father bruised his tailbone getting her mother to the hospital because he forgot he was on skates."

"There's a story," Sophia grinned. "We have time, Snugglebear. I have no contractions yet. Go get your skates off. I'll call the doctor with my cell phone."

"Can I help?" Liz asked.

"Yeah, go get your skates off, too," Warren grinned. "Don't want the blades scuffing up the hospital floors."

They were in the car driving to the hospital.

"Are you OK?" Liz asked from the back seat as Warren drove.

"I'm fine," said Sophia. "No contractions yet."

"So, you're not actually **in** labor?" Liz asked.

"No," Sophia replied.

"Well, color me confused."

Warren laughed. "She's not in labor, but she's going to have to be. Once the water breaks, the baby needs to come out, or there's an increased risk--of complications for the baby, and of an infection for the mother. If she doesn't go into labor on her own in the next few hours, the doctor will induce it."

Suddenly, Sophia yelped, and hunched forward in the seat. "Oh shit," she gasped. "Well....don't think we need inducing....." She attempted to catch her breath.

"Contraction?" Warren asked.

"Oh, yeah. And this wasn't one of those puny Braxton Hicks ones, either."

"Hey, Liz, got a watch? You mind timing those for me? Can't do it while I'm driving," Warren asked.

"Sure. Damn, Warren, I can't believe how calm you are."

"Well, I had one moment of not being calm, and fell on my ass on the ice. I figure I'd **better** stay calm or I'll really do some damage." Even Sophia managed to laugh at that.

They drove along for a bit, chatting about Liz's program, moving quickly but safely towards the hospital. They had hit a bit of traffic when Sophia cried out again.

"How long, Liz?" Warren asked when it was done.

"Thirteen minutes."

"Plenty of time, and we're almost there. How you holding up, Soph?"

"Thank God you have a van. I wouldn't want to be contracting and be all squooshed in something like that damn tiny Geo I drive."

"Hey, Liz, when we get to the hospital, you want me to get someone to drive you home?" Liz had been staying the week at Warren's parents' house.

"Um, well.....if you want....."

Warren glanced at Sophia, who grinned at him. "Liz, you're welcome to stay. We'd love you to. But only if you want to. If you don't, I'll get you home."

"I'd like to stay."

"That's settled. You can herd the troops in the waiting room once they all show up."

"No problem," she grinned.

They got to the hospital, got Sophia checked in and up to the delivery room. Warren got on the phone and called all the relatives.

"You guys want me outside?" Liz asked after Sophia was settled.

"Not yet," Sophia grinned. "The real action hasn't started yet. You can help keep me company while Warren calls everyone. "

"I'm glad I was here for this," Liz admitted.

"We're glad you were, too," Sophia grinned. "Although I must admit that I wish you weren't, only because I'd rather not be going into labor more than three weeks early."

"Ah, everything should be fine," the nurse interjected. "Three and half week preemies usually don't have any problems."

"I know, but it's still a little worrisome," Sophia admitted.

"Hey. Think happy thoughts. Elizabeth will be fine. How could she not be, with her namesake here to see her grand entrance?" Liz joked.

Warren hung up the phone. "That's everyone. Mom and Dad are on their way, as are your mom and Kate, and they are trying to get a hold of Dan. I got Michelle, she's going to call your Dad at work, and they'll head up, although it will take them a couple hours. And Jessie is coming, and she's trying to reach Crash."

"I hope that's a big waiting room," Sophia joked.

Three hours had passed. Everyone has shown up, and had been into the room to check on Sophia. Warren and Liz were still there. Things were moving rather slowly--in fact; Sophia had been coherent enough to watch a videotape of Liz's practice with Liz and Warren.

"Good thing we still had the video camera, it gave us something to do," Warren joked.

"Just as long as you don't get any crazy ideas about taping the birth," Sophia joked.

"How we doing?" Warren asked the nurse.

"Still 8 minutes apart, but slowly getting closer. She's dilated about a centimeter. It will still be a while."

"Why don't you guys go get something to eat? I'll be fine," Sophia told them. "Warren's going to need his strength!"

When they got back to the room, Sophia's doctor, Vicki Mullins, had arrived. "Everything's fine," she told Warren, "but we might want to try to speed this up a bit. Why don't you guys take her for a walk around the floor? That helps. Go to the waiting room, say hi to your family."

"You up for that, Pookie?" Warren asked.

"Sure, why not? Just be prepared to hold me up during those contractions!"

Warren helped Sophia out of the bed, and they started walking around the floor. As they moved, slowly, they noticed a woman looking at them. "I think we just got recognized," Warren told Sophia.

"Well, I ain't in no condition to be signing autographs!"

They heard the woman who was staring at them talk to a companion. "Look over there. Isn't that..."

"Yes!" Warren turned to her and interrupted. "Yes, we are. I'm Bruce Springsteen, and this is Stevie Nicks!" Sophia practically doubled over with laughter.

"Bruce Springsteen and Stevie Nicks?" Sophia sputtered.

"Hey, it was the best I could do at short notice."

They walked into the waiting room.

Six long hours later, after a couple of walks and a trip into the tub, Sophia was finally in serious labor.

"This is more tiring than skating that damn Riverdance program, three times in a row," Sophia said in between contractions.

"You just remember that when we're skating Riverdance three times in a row," Warren quipped.

"YEAUUGGGHHHH!!!!" Sophia screamed as another contraction hit.

"Breathe, Pookie."

"All those childbirth classes, and all you can think of to say is 'breathe, Pookie.' Lovely," Sophia muttered as the contraction passed. Warren just grinned at her.

"You're doing fine," Vicki told them. "Dilation is almost at ten centimeters. Not long now."

"Good," Sophia said. "This has been way too long."

A couple more contractions passed. Vicki checked Sophia, and said, "OK,. Sophia, everything is great, you can start pushing with the next one."

"Oh, finally," Sophia panted.

"You're doing great, Sophie," Warren told her.

Three pushes, and it was all over. Vicki held up their daughter for them to see, as she let out a healthy cry.

"She's a little small. 6 pounds even, but she's perfectly fine," Warren told the assembled throng in the waiting room a half hour later. "They're taking her up to the nursery to clean her up, and then you can all go and see through the window."

"How's Sophie?" Ellen asked.

"Great. They're taking her up to her room now, you can see her in a little while, too."

After everyone had left, the nurse brought Betsy into Sophia's room. "Time for the first feeding, Mommy. You think you need any help? There's a breastfeeding expert on staff if you need it," the nurse told them.

"I'll give it a shot myself and call for help if I need it," Sophia grinned.

"Good enough," the nurse said and left.

"She's so tiny," Sophia said in wonder. "I still can't believe we made this."

"Pretty amazing, isn't it?"

BACK ON THE ICE (Chapter 111)

"I did it! I finally got through the thing, every day this week!!" Sophia was exultant.

"Yup. And with time to spare," Warren said.

"I still can't believe you got back this quick," June, their coach, commented.

It was the beginning of October. Sophia had given birth only a month and a half earlier, and had pushed herself to get back on the ice right away. It was painful and difficult, but it had worked. They were almost right back in form, with over a month to go before Cup of Russia. They had been working hard at their Riverdance free program, as it required a lot of stamina. Sophia getting through it for five days in a row was an accomplishment.

"The OD is fine, we just need to nail down those compulsories," Sophia said.

"Did you hear?" June asked. "This is the last year for compulsories."

"Really?" Warren was surprised.

"Yeah. They just voted on it. Starting next year, there will be two original dances with different rhythms, each worth 25 percent," June told them.

"Wow. Talk about playing into our strengths!" Sophia giggled.

"Yup," June agreed. "Now, about this year—are you sure you're OK, Sophie?"

"Yeah, I'm fine. The only problem is that I'm feeling.....well.....top-heavy."

"Moreso than usual, you mean," Warren quipped.

"You goof! Yeah, moreso than usual. Plus I keep **leaking**, that's damn annoying!"

“Maybe you should try to stop breastfeeding,” June said.

“Nah. I can deal with it. It’s healthier for Betsy. It’s just that, with the damn things overinflated, I have to wear a really tight sports bra so I don’t give Warren a black eye,” Sophia said with a grin.

“Yeah, but what a way to get a black eye!”

Sophia and Warren were at home one Saturday when they got an unexpected couple of visitors.

“Meggan? Josh? Hi!” Sophia greeted them.

“Hi, guys! We wanted to come say hi, see how you were doing,” Meggan said.

“Great,” Warren told them. “Home for the weekend?”

“Yeah,” Josh confirmed. “Meggan suggested we come up and visit. And get my Mom to do my laundry!”

“Better than **me** doing it,” Meggan grumbled. “We go to different schools, for goodness’ sake, and he keeps bringing his laundry over to my place!”

“That’s only because it’s cheaper. I still **do** it. BU seems to think that laundry is yet **another** way to make money off of their students,” Josh grumbled.

“I keep telling him to transfer to Northeastern,” Meggan joked.

“Just for the laundry, mind you. BU has better food.”

“Is it a pain going to separate schools?” Warren asked them.

“Nope, not really,” Josh said. “There’s a bus route that goes from BU to Northeastern that takes all of, like, 15 minutes. We’re very close, it’s not a problem at all.”

“It’s actually kind of neat,” Meggan agreed. “We split the time, where we go, so it’s almost like going to two schools, socially. I’ve made friends at both places, and so has Josh. But, enough of that. Where’s the **baby**?”

“Upstairs,” Warren smiled. “Gramma’s got her. We actually just got up about 20 minutes ago.”

“We had a really rough night last night, she kept us up all night, so Gramma took her for the morning so we could sleep a bit,” Sophia added.

“Oh. Did we come at a bad time?” Meggan asked.

“No, of course not!” Sophia told her. “We’re awake now. If we weren’t, we wouldn’t have answered the door!”

“In fact,” Warren said, standing up, “I’ll go see if Gramma wants a break, so you can see the kid.” He left to do so.

“So, you’re back on the ice?” Meggan asked Sophia.

“Yup. Mom quit her job, you know. She didn’t have to work anymore, anyhow. Dan—my stepfather—makes really good money. So, she quit her job, she was sick of it anyway, but she also volunteered to watch Betsy when we’re practicing and competing and all that.”

“That’s great!”

“Yeah, it is. She’s really enjoying being a Gramma. The only problem is that we occasionally have to drop the kid off with Warren’s parents so they don’t get bent out of shape about not having equal baby rights,” Sophia giggled.

“Is it that bad?” Meggan asked.

“No, I’m just kidding. They’re terrific. They just want time with their granddaughter, that’s understandable. We take her over there a lot. So, enough about us—how are **you** guys doing?”

“Wonderful,” Meggan said.

“Yup. Couldn’t be better,” Josh confirmed.

“School’s good?”

“Yup.”

“No....ah....problems, Meg?”

“Nope,” she confirmed. “No backlash, no nightmares, no nothing. I’m not a victim any more.”

“Good for you. And it’s nice to see you two still together,” Sophia told them.

“Yes, it is, isn’t it?” Josh smiled.

“How is it that, in our little circle, so many high school romances managed to stay together?” Meggan asked. “Us, you and Warren, Jessie and Crash. It defies the laws of probability.”

“Screw the laws of probability!” Sophia cried. “Actually, you know why? I think it’s because most of us had really, really bad relationships before we got into our present ones. All of us except Warren, actually.”

“Warren just got lucky on the first try,” Josh joked.

“Do I hear my name being taken in vain?” Warren asked, as he and Ellen walked back into the room.

“Of course, Snugglebear,” Sophia joked. “Hi Mom. You remember Meggan and Josh, right?”

“Sure do. Hi, kids. I got something here that Meggan wanted to see.” She handed Betsy into Meggan’s outstretched arms.

“OH!” Meggan gasped. “She’s darling!” Betsy was wide awake, and looked up at Meggan with her big brown eyes, wiggling a little. “How old is she now?”

“Two months,” Sophie confirmed. “A couple days ago.”

“Boy, she’s a good baby, isn’t she?” Josh said. “No crying or nothing.”

“She’s a real good baby,” Ellen confirmed.

“Yeah,” Sophia agreed. “If she cries, there’s a reason. She’s a very happy baby most of the time.”

“So, when do you make this kid’s parents all legal-like?” Meggan joked.

“August 9th of next year,” Sophia told her. “Oh, that reminds me. I haven’t asked you yet. Would you like to be a bridesmaid?”

“Me? I’d love it!”

“Great. I have a ton of them. Jessie’s my maid of honor—then I have you, my sister Tara, my stepsister Kate, my friend Karen Laskovich, my friend from college Caitlin, and Liz Cushman.”

“Liz Cushman the **skater**?”

“Yup. That’s who Betsy is named after, you know,” Warren told her. “She’s one of our best friends.”

“She was actually here for Betsy’s birth, that was cool,” Sophie said, then explained the circumstances.

“Wow. Do you have any famous ushers, Warren?”

“Jack Garrison and Evan Pogdar. Crash is my best man. The others are my brother Ryan, my friend Papa Bear from college, my cousin Pete, and Rick Kenney from my neighborhood crew.”

“And plans for the big nuptials are well underfoot!” Sophia crowed.

“Oh, and Meg, you’d better get used to big skating stars being around. They’re all invited,” Warren smiled.

RENEWAL (Chapter 112)

“So,” Warren said one evening in mid-November, “have you checked out these Grand Prix results?”

“No, what’s up?” Sophia asked him.

“Yatserova and Vaglach won Skate America. Shawna and Evan were second, and a couple from Ireland, of all places, were third.”

“Ireland? Yeah, there’s a well-known ice dance power!” Sophia giggled.

“Right. Now, the French won Skate Canada, with a new Russian team in second, and the Brits in third.”

“New Russian Team. Arggghh. That’s all we need.”

“Yeah. Yelena Kuznetsova and Dmitri Vasilyevskiy, they won Junior Worlds last year. Moving on to Nation’s Cup, Yatserova and Vaglach won that, also. Italians in second and the Hungarians in third. And, Lalique just finished, and the French actually **lost** it, to Brenneman and Watts, the Brits. The Irish couple were third again.”

“Ah. So there seems to be a wee bit of a shakeup.”

“Somewhat, yeah. And now we get to go to Russia the day after tomorrow and jump into the fire.”

“Yeah. I’ll be glad to get back on the ice, but I’m worried. We’re barely ready.”

“Ah, we’ll be fine,” Warren assured her.

“I hope so. I just seem so out of sorts. Jeez, my boobs started leaking in the middle of practice today. And that’s not getting into that they’re **bigger**. That’s one thing that you don’t think about—how breastfeeding will affect your ability to ice dance.”

“Maybe you should stop. You’ve been breastfeeding for three months now. Maybe we should switch to formula,” Warren said.

“I’m thinking about it. I’d rather not, though, if I can help it, not yet.”

“Is everything else OK?”

“Yeah, the muscles are responding,” she said. “I feel fit. No more pain, either.”

“Good.”

“Oh, yeah, and something else seems to be coming back, too.”

“What?”

“My libido,” she giggled. “It’s been a while,” she said softly.

“Yes, it certainly has.”

“You’ve been patient.”

“I’ve been **masturbating**. A lot.” Sophia giggled at him. “But I know that you’ve been tired, what with the skating and Betsy waking us up in the middle of the night, so I wasn’t going to push it.”

“And I’m grateful, but the doctor said six weeks, and I’ve shut you off for three months.” She looked over at him, they were sitting side by side on the couch. “Betsy’s upstairs?”

“Yeah, your Mom and Kate are tag-teaming her.”

“Good.” She leaned over and kissed Warren. “It’s time to reward my loving fiancé for his patience,” she giggled.

“Is that door locked?” Warren asked.

“Yes. Now kiss me, you fool!”

He did. They necked for a while, and then Sophia smiled at him, stood up, and grabbed his hand, leading him from the couch to the bed. He quickly tackled her, making her giggle, and took her mouth in his. As he did so, his hand fluttered lazily on her breast.

“Oh, I missed this,” Sophia breathed. Warren just smiled, and kissed her again, as his hand unbuttoned her blouse. That and her bra were quickly removed, and Warren kissed his way down her neck and then went right for her breasts.

“Oh, honey, that feels wonderful, but you might get a surprise,” Sophia giggled.

He did. Sophia could feel the breast milk flow out of her and into Warren's mouth. "So, how's it taste?"

"Good, actually. Sweeter than I expected," Warren told her. He went back to it.

Sophia laid back and enjoyed it. It felt wonderful. Not only was it arousing as usual, but she had felt a little full, and he was taking care of that in a hurry. She started softly moaning and gasping, and she felt his hand go down to her jeans, undoing the snap. She raised her hips to aid him in sliding her jeans off. In no time, she felt his hand sliding up and down her pussy.

"Oh, **boy** did I miss this!" Sophia gasped.

"You weren't ready until now," Warren told her.

"True, but I am **really** ready," Sophia laughed. "OOOOHHHH!!!" she moaned as he slipped a finger into her pussy. "Oh God that's good. Unnnngggghhhh...Oh, I'm so pent up this won't take long!"

Warren laughed at that, and kept up the pressure with his mouth on her breast as he slid two fingers in and out of her pussy. "OHGODOHGOD!" she yelled, and quickly came. As she did, Warren felt his mouth fill, and felt a warm "splootch" on his right cheek.

Warren sat up, bemused, and waited, as Sophie came back down to earth. Her eyes fluttered open and she smiled up at him. Then she noticed the wetness of his cheek.

"What happened?" she asked.

"You squirted. When you came. From both of them, but my mouth was on your right one. Your left one got me in the cheek."

Sophia broke up in laughter. "Hmm, who knew lactation could be so fun, huh?" She reached up and pulled Warren towards her. "Here, let me help you with that," she joked, kissing and lapping at his cheek. "Hmm, you're right, it **is** sweet," she giggled. She looked into his eyes, kissed him, and said, "Warren, I need your tongue."

"Of course you do. And what, may I ask, do I get in return?"

"More milk in your eye?" she giggled.

"I'm not sure that's a fair deal." He crawled down beneath her legs anyway.

"OK, let me think, I'll come up with something," she smirked. "Oh jeez," she moaned as his tongue hit her pussy. "Oh, Warren, OH, I missed **this**!"

He looked up at her with a gleam in his eye, and just kept at it. It didn't take long before she was cumming, and not long after that she was cumming a second time. Warren crawled up beside her to let her calm down, and noticed the wetness on her breasts. He bent down to lick it off.

"Hmmm," Sophia purred. "Oh, you are the master."

"Thank you, mistress."

Sophie giggled. "I'm not quite sure about this breast milk squirting all over the place when I cum thing, though."

"It's fun."

"As long as you don't mind."

"Why would I mind?"

"It's a wee bit messy."

Warren reached down and stuck his finger in the pool that had collected between her legs, and rubbed a little on her thigh. "What, and this **isn't**?"

"Good point," Sophia laughed. She reached up towards his shoulders, and pushed him down flat on the bed, climbing up on top of him. "You've waited long enough for this, Snugglegear." She went to straddle him.

"Taking over, eh?"

"You betcha." She bit her bottom lip. "Uh, I don't know how this is going to feel, so I wanted to control it. I know you're gentle, but....."

"Fine by me, love," Warren grinned at her. She grinned back, and lowered herself on to him.

"OOOF!" she cried.

"Oh my God," Warren exclaimed. "Are you **sure** you just had a baby?"

She giggled, though it was strained. "Hey, it's been three months. I think I'm a little shrunk."

"I'll say. Easy does it, Pookie."

"Uh-huh." She lowered herself down a little more. "Now it's easing up a bit."

“Oh jeez. It’s been three months and with you tightening up on me, I am **not** going to last long,” Warren groaned.

“I figured,” Sophia grinned. Then she lowered herself down all the way. “OH GOD it’s in....oh my,”

“Oh my is right. Go slow, Pookie.”

“Good plan.” She started to rock gently back and forth on his dick, raising herself up just a bit. “Oh, fuck, it feels so good to have you back inside me again.”

“Don’t I know it,” Warren leered.

Sophia rocked gently on him for a bit, then started to pick up speed.

“OH, fuck, Warren, not long now...OOH!”

“I’m going with you, Pookie.” He pulled her down on top of him, her hips still pistoning up and down on his. He took one of her breasts in his mouth.

“OH SHIT!” she screamed, and started spasming. Her breast squirted into his mouth—the other one hitting his shoulder—as she came, hard. He joined her almost immediately.

“Oh, that was **explosive!**” Sophia said after flopping down on top of Warren.

“I’ll say. You OK?” Warren asked her.

“Perfectly peachy,” she giggled. “Love you.”

“Love you, too.”

“Now that I’ve relieved us of our enforced celibacy, maybe we’ll skate better,” Sophia said with a gleam in her eye.

Warren exploded with laughter, “It sure can’t hurt!”

A NEW SEASON (Chapter 113)

Sophia and Warren, plus Ellen and Betsy, got onto a plane to head to Cup of Russia.

“Lessee,” Warren said after they had arrived, “Boston to New York. New York to Paris. Paris to Moscow. And with a three month old. We must be nuts.”

“We already knew that, dear,” Sophia teased him.

“I’m just glad your Mom is here,” Warren smiled at Sophia and Ellen.

“Hey, I always wanted to be a world traveler. Russia and Japan in two weeks, I love it,” Ellen said.

“Yeah, but did you always want to be a Nanny?” Warren teased.

“For my first-born granddaughter? You betcha!”

One of their biggest problems was trying to schedule Betsy’s feeding time around practices. Sophia could pump, and have Ellen feed Betsy, but, as Sophia said, “That doesn’t do anything for me feeling full, and feeling full in the boobs is not conducive to good ice dancing.”

Their second practice there, they had a problem. They had managed to finish the run-through of their long program, but were still on the ice, working on some moves, when they heard the screaming.

“Is that ours?” Sophia asked Warren down on the ice.

“I do think so,” Warren said. Sophia got off the ice, yanked off her skates, and ran into the stands. Ellen and a clearly hungry Betsy met them.

“I’ll take her. Snugglebear, got my skates?” Sophia asked Warren, who had come up behind her. He lifted up the skates. “Good, I’m going to take her into the locker room and see if I can find a quiet corner.”

She went down to the locker room, and settled on a bench out of the way. Unbuttoning the front of her practice dress, she opened her breastfeeding bra and Betsy latched on.

She sat, for a few minutes, but someone must have heard Betsy’s suckling, because a small blonde, about sixteen, peered around the corner.

“OH! Sorry, I did not know.....”

“That’s all right,” Sophia laughed. “We’re all girls here. I figured somebody would spot me.”

The young blonde looked at her. “You Sophia Daniels, yes?”

Sophia smiled at the halting English and clear accent. “Yes, I am.”

“I am Yelena. Yelena Kuznetsova.”

“Ah, yes, the new Russian team. You guys won Junior Worlds last year, right?”

“Da. We love you, your skating. We big fans.”

“Thank you. That’s always nice to hear.” Betsy had stopped suckling. “Ah, I think somebody’s done.” Sophia pulled her away and refastened her bra and buttoned her dress. She chuckled to herself at seeing Yelena turn away.

“Done. You need a burp, sweetie,” Sophia said, holding Betsy’s stomach with her hand and gently patting her back.

Yelena had turned back. “That....that your baby?”

“Yeah. Betsy.” Betsy let out a large burp. “That’s a girl. Let’s change you while we’re at it.”

Yelena looked at the baby. “She very beautiful. Betsy?”

“Betsy. It’s short for Elizabeth. Elizabeth Olga Kelleher.”

“Olga?” Yelena asked. “Baby has Russian name?”

“Yeah, a Russian middle name. She’s named after Olga Bradochkina. Her first name is after Liz Cushman, the singles skater.”

Yelena’s eyes boggled. “You name baby after **Bradochkina**?”

“Olga’s a dear friend of ours.”

“You **like** Bradochkina?” Sophia nodded. “Wow. I never meet, but I hear she is....I don’t know English....I hear she is suka.”

“Suka? Yeah, I know what that means. In English, it’s bitch. Warren speaks Russian,” Sophia giggled. “No, actually, Olga is **not** a suka. That’s all an image. She’s really very sweet. I’ll show you something.” She rummaged in Betsy’s bag. “When Olga found out I was pregnant, she sent us a whole bunch of stuff.” She pulled out the rattle with St Basil’s Cathedral on it—Betsy’s favorite. “Y’see, I’ve got a Russian rattle, and”...she kept rummaging...” **this!**” She pulled out the baby-sized fur hat.

“Wow a baby Russian hat!” Yelena exclaimed. She sat next to Sophia as Sophia placed the hat on Betsy’s head. “Olga send this? It’s so cute!”

“It’s still a little big for her,” Sophia chuckled, “but by next winter, it will fit perfectly.” Betsy was swatting at the hat which was covering her eyes. “Keeps her warm in this cold Moscow weather, though.”

Yelena laughed. The two chatted for a while, then Sophia went to join Warren.

“I just met Yelena Kuznetsova,” Sophia told him. “She’s a nice kid.”

The competition at Cup of Russia was decent for Sophia and Warren. They finished second, behind the defending World Champs Yatsurova and Vaglach, which was fine with them. They weren't completely at full speed yet. Kuznetsova and Vasilyevskiy beat out Evan and Shawna for third.

"They're good, but beating Evan and Shawna was a gift," Warren commented.

"Of course. They're Russian," Sophia agreed cynically.

They flew right from Moscow to Sapporo, Japan, for the NHK trophy. Having done their programs in front of an audience had helped, and they were better at NHK, winning the event. A big surprise at that event was the Italians defeating the French for second place.

Sophia and Warren pocketed their prize money, and prepared for the Grand Prix Finals, which their results in Russia and Japan had qualified them for. It would be held two weeks after the NHK, in Salt Lake City.

The ISU, in their infinite lack of wisdom, had come up with a new format for the Grand Prix finals this year. There would be no compulsories. There would be an original dance, and **two** free dances. Most of the skaters thought it was ludicrous, but such was the ISU. The idea was so that the fans wouldn't get bored watching the same free dance all season. Of course, **everybody** used a free dance or long program from a previous year, so they were old programs anyway.

Most used last year's programs, but Sophia and Warren decided to go further back than that—they pulled the Glenn Miller program out of mothballs. "We did that our first year at Worlds, we've never done it on a true world stage," Sophia reasoned. They spent most of the two weeks between NHK and the finals polishing it up. They felt they had Riverdance down, they felt they had their OD down, and they expected to win this competition.

It didn't get off to a glittering start. They did their OD on a Friday morning. Three judges **did** put them in first—but the other six put them in fourth, behind Yatsurova/Vaglach, the French Borisina/Dravouche, and Kuznetsova/Vasilyevskiy. Those six judges were from Russia, France, Italy, Germany, Ukraine, and Hungary. It looked like the usual suspects working together again. The Brits, Brenneman and Watts, whose OD had been getting raves all year, were down in sixth. The crowd heartily booed the results.

"It's ridiculous. If it were Brenneman and Watts, I could see it. Even if we were second to Yatsurova and Vaglach, although I wouldn't agree with it. But the French sucked and the other Russians are not up to our level," Warren told June, their coach, and Sophia.

Things changed that night, however, in the first free dance. Sophia and Warren were **livid**, and went out and did the Glenn Miller program in a fury. They were clearly the class of the field, and the German and Hungarian judges must have decided they couldn't

in good conscience mess with the standings. They joined the American, British, and Canadian judges in placing Warren and Sophia first.

The same thing happened the next day, in the second free dance, with even the Italian judge joining in. Warren and Sophia won, with Brenneman and Watts second, Kuznetsova and Vasilyevskiy third. Yatsenova and Vaglach, the world champions, could do no better than fourth.

“Did you see the Russian judge afterwards? He looked like he was going to bust a blood vessel,” Sophia giggled to Warren after it was all over.

“Yup. Oh, and I heard something interesting. Evidently he was seen afterwards **screaming** at the German and Italian judges. And I also heard the ISU is investigating **that**,” Warren told her.

“Hmmm.”

They had been home for about a week, getting ready for Christmas—Betsy’s first. Warren had gone out to do some shopping. When he got home, Sophia was waiting for him.

“I got an interesting phone call while you were out.”

“More ISU shenanigans?”

“Nope,” she giggled. “This goes in the realm of publicity. I got a call from Maxim magazine. They want to do an interview and a photo spread on me. They even want me to do the cover. That’s a men’s magazine, right?”

“Yeah,” Warren told her.

“I told them I wasn’t sure, because they only want **me**, but they told me they were a men’s magazine and that’s why they only wanted me. I’m still not sure.”

“Why, because it’s only you?”

“Yeah,” Sophia admitted.

“Well, you shouldn’t turn it down because of **that**, but, have you ever read Maxim?”

“No, have you?”

“Yeah. If they are going to do a pictorial of you, it’s going to be very revealing. They don’t do full nudity, but they get awfully close. You’d be showing a whole lot of skin.”

“Hmmm. What do **you** think?” she asked him.

“Honestly? I love the idea.” Sophia laughed at him. “Really. You all over a magazine? Love to see it.”

“So, this mag is kind of risque, huh?”

“Yeah. Think of Playboy, only hipper, and without the full nudity. But guys read it, and, if it can get more guys to watch skating, hey.”

“That’s kind of what the guy on the phone said—they want to do it as a ‘hey, you guys that think skating’s a chick sport, you don’t know what you’re missing’ kind of thing.”

“Right,” Warren laughed. “What are they missing? Sophia’s left one, and Sophia’s right one. And, if you go to a skating show in your neighborhood, you too can get a look at this cleavage!”

Sophia doubled over with laughter. “Has any skater done anything like this?”

“Not anyone in the peak of their career, or still eligible. The only one I know of is Katarina Witt, and she did it on the downside of her career. Of course, she was in Playboy, and bared it all.”

“So, if I do this, the Powers That Be in skating are going to have a snit, aren’t they?” Sophia asked.

“I’d put money on it. You’d be corrupting their pristine little sport.”

“You don’t mind?”

“Nope. Like I said, it’s great. Let the men of America drool over your cleavage, I’m the only one that gets to fondle.”

Sophia laughed again. “I’m gonna do it!”

KATE’S STORY (chapter 114)

Chad Kozak drove home the last week of August. He was exhausted. School had yet to start—wouldn’t, in fact, for a week—but Chad was on the football team and late August was time for two-a-days.

Not only was he on the football team—he was the starting quarterback. He had been, in fact, since midway through his sophomore year. He was a talented young man who was already attracting attention from college recruiters. More importantly, to him, Oceanview High had finished the season strong last year and, having lost very few starters, were poised for a big year this year. A state championship was not out of the question.

Chad had it all going on. He was handsome, a star athlete, a good student. In other words, he was the quintessential BMOC. Unfortunately, he had realized he wasn't all that happy.

It had started to set in the past spring, at the Junior Prom. He questioned why he hadn't noticed it before then, but he guessed he was just reveling in the attention. He knew a lot of people wanted to hang around with him because he was the BMOC, but he could live with that. What he couldn't live with is that the dawning realization that people he thought were her friends, people he was close to, acted the same way.

And first on that list was his date for that Junior Prom, Brittany Coombs. She wasn't just his date, she was his girlfriend, and had been for over a year at that time. It was the stereotypical high school scenario—he was the star quarterback, she was the head cheerleader. He was tall and handsome, she was blonde and buxom. They looked great together.

The only problem was, it seemed that **all** Brittany cared about was how they looked. It got worse over the summer, as Brittany seemed to insist that every date be an opportunity for them to parade around together in public. They never talked. They were rarely intimate—they had taken each other's virginity the previous summer, but Brittany never treated sex as anything other than a chore. Chad was a typical teenaged boy—he liked sex—but making love to Brittany had become so soul-numbing that he quit trying. Everyone around them thought that they were the perfect couple, but what they had become was the perfect **public** couple—and Chad was no longer satisfied with that.

Two weeks before, he had ended it. Brittany acted crushed, but Chad knew by now that what she was really upset about was how it was going to **look**. His friends on the football team couldn't **believe** it—how could he dump the star cheerleader, the school babe? He couldn't explain it to most of them.

Chad had two close friends. Butch Ullman was on the football team—in fact, he was a receiver, and Chad's favorite target—and he had talked enough with Chad to have an idea about his dissatisfaction with his relationship with Brittany. Butch didn't understand it completely, but he understood somewhat. Chad's other best friend was Ben DiLillo. Ben wasn't a football player—in fact, he was a computer geek—but they had grown up together and had maintained their friendship. Chad had often defended Ben from teasing by the other football players. Everyone pretty much left Ben alone nowadays. Plus, Ben had written a dynamite program to chart the team's statistics.

Ben was the one guy who understood. “Chad, I never understood what you saw in her, anyway.”

“You didn't? You never said anything.”

“What, I was going to **tell** my best friend—who, incidentally, can beat me to a bloody pulp—that I thought his girlfriend was an empty-headed slave to appearance? I don't think so.”

So, at least he had one pal that knew him as more than the BMOC. He didn't know if that was enough, though, as he started his senior year in high school—a year that was primed to define the term Glory Days—very unsettled.

Chad was still unsettled on the first day of school—especially as he approached his last class of the morning, before lunch. I should have changed this, he said to himself.

Oceanview offered an elective class in Ballroom Dancing. It worked as a credit for physical education. Brittany had convinced him to sign up with her when they were still together. Now he regretted it.

He walked in. He was surprised at the number of people. It was well known that Mrs. Meyer, the instructor, insisted on an equal number of girls and boys in her class. He thought that would keep the numbers down. But there were quite a few guys milling around. Evidently, word had gotten out that the class was a good place to meet girls.

Brittany was there, of course. She called to Chad immediately, and he waved, but tried to stay as far away from her as possible. Then, Mrs. Meyer came in and the group settled down.

“OK. First thing you need to do is pick a partner. This will be your partner for at least the first week. After that, you'll have a chance to change if you want. No big deal, just pair off.”

Oh, crap, Chad thought. I don't know anyone in this class except Brittany and some of her cheerleading friends she roped in. Chad stood there, looking around nervously, when he saw Brittany making a beeline towards him. He turned around and saw a slender girl with red hair standing behind him.

“You,” he said. “I pick you.”

“Me?” the red-head said.

Seeing Brittany approaching from the corner of his eye, he said, “Yes. Please. Come here, quickly, I'm begging you.” She grabbed his hand with a questioning look. Then he heard, “Chad?”

“Sorry, Brittany, already got a partner.” She stomped off in fury. Then he looked at the redhead. “Thank you so much. You just saved my life.”

“Really? How did I do that?”

“That was my ex-girlfriend. We signed up for this class when we were still together, and she is the **last** person I want for a partner.”

“Oh, she dumped you?”

“Actually, I dumped her. She no doubt saw this as a way to try to rekindle things.”

“Aah. Breaking off a relationship is no fun.”

“You sound like you’ve been there, done that.”

“Yeah, beginning of the summer.”

“Only a month for me.” He held out his hand. “By the way, I’m Chad Kozak.”

“I know who you are, I go to the football games,” she giggled. “Katherine Thompson. Kate to my friends.”

“Ah. May I call you Kate, then?”

“Why not? If we’re going to be dancing together, we might as well be friends, right?”

They learned some of the more simple steps at first, laughing at some of their stumbling efforts. Mrs. Meyer called a break, and had some drinks available.

“Whew, this is hard,” Kate said.

“Yeah.”

“So, you took this class because the ex roped you into it?”

“Something like that. What’s your excuse?”

Kate laughed. “I just want to learn to do this. My stepsister and her fiancé are professional ice dancers, but they can also ballroom dance up a storm, and it always looked so fun.”

“Ah. Yeah, I remember two skaters from Oceanview in the Olympics. My mom and sister are figure skating fanatics, so I had to sit through the Olympics.”

“Yeah, that’s them,” Kate giggled. “Sophia Daniels and Warren Kelleher. Sophia’s mom married my Dad a couple years ago. I love Sophia to death, and Warren’s pretty damn cool, too.”

“Wasn’t, um, there some kind of scandal with them? She was pregnant or something?”

“She was definitely pregnant,” Kate confirmed. “My niece’s name is Betsy, she’s a month old. And next summer I get to be a bridesmaid at the wedding.”

“I didn’t think they were that old.”

“Sophie’s 20, Warren’s 19. But they’ve been together since they were 14. There was never any doubt in anyone’s mind that they were going to get married someday. The baby just pushed it up a couple years.”

“Together since they were 14? I can barely imagine that.”

“You have to know these two. True love.”

“That’s cool.”

Kate punched him in the arm. “Oh, so the football jock believes in true love, eh?”

“Hey, football jocks have feelings, too.”

“One learns something new every day, doesn’t one?” Kate grinned at him.

“I think we have to dance again.”

“Uh-huh.”

They danced in class all that week. They laughed their way through it most of the time, but were actually picking up some of the steps. The next Monday, Mrs. Meyer entered class and said, “OK, anyone who thinks they’d do better with another partner, please raise your hand.”

Brittany looked over at Chad. He looked at Kate. They smiled at each other. Neither of their hands went up, much to Brittany’s consternation.

“So, your first game is Friday night?” Kate asked at their break.

“Yeah. You going?”

“I always go. I like sports. Basketball’s my favorite, but I like football, too.”

“Cool. Practices have been brutal. Salem’s got a good team this year.”

“I heard. Just think, though, what all this dancing is going to do for your agility. You’ll be dancing past all those onrushing linemen. They’ll call you Twinkletoes,” Kate teased.

“Not the way **I** dance. They’re more liable to call me Step-on-her-Toes. I’m surprised I haven’t put your foot in a cast yet.”

Kate laughed. “I have strong feet.”

“With me around, you’ll need them.”

The next couple of days went by. Chad was becoming increasingly comfortable with Kate, and looked forward to their class more and more. They were at break Thursday, chatting as usual.

“Damn, look at Brittany glaring at you,” Kate said with a chuckle. “What an expression. I wish I had time to fish out my sketchpad.”

“Sketchpad?”

“Yeah. I’m an artist. I’m more of a painter, but I often paint from sketches I do during the day.”

“Waitaminnit,” Chad started, “I’m an idiot. I can’t believe I didn’t make the connection before this. Katherine Thompson. That mural in the front foyer is yours!”

“Yeah,” Kate said, pleased. “They commissioned me to do that this summer.”

“It’s great. Really brightened the place up.”

“Thanks.”

“Kate, I was wondering,” Chad said hesitantly, “if you were doing anything Saturday night? If not, I’d love to take you out. Dinner and a movie, or something.”

Kate’s face clouded over. “Chad, I just don’t think that’s a good idea.”

“Why not?”

“I just don’t.”

“You’ve got to have a better answer than that.”

“What’s the matter,” Kate taunted, angry that he wouldn’t accept her answer, “the big football star not used to being turned down?”

“I went out with the same girl for a year and a half, I’m not used to **asking!**”

Kate looked a bit sheepish, but then Mrs. Meyer called the class back to order.

When the class ended, with Kate and Chad arm-in-arm in a dance hold, Chad didn’t release her right away.

“Kate,” he said. “Eat lunch with me.”

“I don’t think that’s a good idea, either.”

“Please. Look, if you can explain this to me, I won’t bug you again. I’ll even request another partner, if you want. But we get along. We’ve gotten along since this class started. I’d like to get to know you better. I don’t understand why you’d say no right out of hand.”

Kate sighed. “OK, let’s go to lunch and we’ll talk.”

They grabbed their lunch trays and found an out-of-the-way table outside on the patio.

“Look, it’s like this,” Kate began. “I like you, I’ll admit it. But you’re the Man, the football hero, and I’m a geeky artist. It could never work.”

“I still don’t get it.”

“First of all, how would you feel walking into one of the football team’s parties with me on your arm? What would the guys on the team say? How much teasing would you get? If we started going out, you’d get tired of the novelty in a hurry, and run back to Brittany or some other cheerleader-type in a hurry. You’re a football player.”

Chad just glared at her. “OK. You’re right. Going out would be a bad idea.”

“I’m glad you—“

Chad kept talking. “Yeah, because I’m pretty sure I don’t want to go out with someone who insults me like you just did!”

“Insulted you?!?”

“You’re damn right you did.” Chad was indignant. “You just told me that I can’t pick a date without the help of my friends. You also told me that dating you would just be a ‘novelty’ for me, like I want to slum with the geeky artist or something before I go back to my usual diet of cheerleaders, seeing as I’m a football player and can’t help myself.”

“I did **not**.....um, oh shit, I did, didn’t I?”

“Yeah, you did.” Kate buried her face in her hands. “Kate.” She looked up. “Eat your lunch. Let me tell you a story. I went out with the head cheerleader for a year and a half. We were The Couple. We won king and queen at the prom last year. Now, we started going out as sophomores, so maybe it was just youth at first. But, by the end, I **hated** it. I broke it off because I couldn’t go out with someone that I had no emotional connection with anymore.”

“Now, as for teasing from my teammates, they think I’m **nuts** for dumping Brittany in the first place. I could show up at a party with your Grandmother and they’d just think it was another step down the path I’m already on. If what my teammates thought about my dates mattered, I’d never have broken up with Brittany. I’m tired of living my life based on appearances. Just because I play football doesn’t make me shallow.”

Kate sighed. "I went out with Dave for a long time. I broke it off because I couldn't change myself to please him."

"I don't want to change you. And I wouldn't be embarrassed to walk down the street with you, as you seem to be implying."

Kate got a gleam in her eye. "OK. Prove it."

"Prove it?"

"I'll go out with you Saturday, on one condition. You go out with me tomorrow first."

"Kate, I have a game tomorrow.."

"I know that. After the game. You're going to take me to Dunkin Donuts for a cup of java. I'm going to be waiting for you, in the stadium, and you're going to leave your teammates, come get me, and take me for coffee."

Chad looked at her, and then smiled. "Ah, I see. A test. I'd say you drive a hard bargain, but I'd be **glad** to take you for coffee after the game."

"I'm holding you to that."

At the end of their dance class the next day, Chad looked at Kate and said, "So, how do you take your coffee?" as he walked away. And then he winked.

Kate sat in the football stadium with her friends. She told herself she wasn't nervous, but she was lying to herself.

The game was great. Oceanview won in a rout. Kate watched the players leave, and watched the crowd file out. She knew it would take Chad a while to change. So, she waited.

"Great game, Kozak," running back Tom Evers told him.

"You too, Evers."

"You want to go out and do something?" his pal Butch asked him.

"Sorry, got plans," Chad told them. "A certain lady is waiting for me out in the stands so I can take her for coffee. And we can plan our date tomorrow night."

"You got back with Brittany?" Jack Indrusky, a lineman, asked him.

"Not on your life."

“So, who are you taking out?” Tom Evers asked.

“Kate Thompson,” Chad told them.

“KATE THOMPSON???” Jack exclaimed. “The artist? Why on earth **her**?”

“I like her,” Chad said simply.

“He can have any girl in this school and he picks Kate Thompson,” Tom said.

“Yeah, and I had to talk her into it.”

“HUH?” Jack blurted.

“Yeah. I had to convince her I wasn’t just another shallow football jock. See you guys later.” He left the locker room and headed out. Butch went with him.

“Kate Thompson? You sure?” Butch asked.

“Yeah. You know her?”

“I don’t know her. I know who she is. You got to admit, she doesn’t travel in the same social circles as you.”

“Butch, who, besides you, is my other best friend.”

“Benny.” Butch sighed. “Ah, I see your point. If you gave a damn about social circles, you would have dumped Benny years ago, instead of defending him, and bringing him into our group.”

“Exactly. Tell me, Butch, what do you think of Benny?”

“I like Ben. He’s a great guy.”

“My point exactly.”

Butch looked at his friend, and grinned. “So, where is this chick?”

Chad laughed. “In the stands. Come say hello.”

Chad saw her. She was wearing a long print skirt, a white blouse, and a big floppy hat. She was talking with someone. As Chad got closer, he realized it was Ben DiLillo.

“Hey, DiLillo, you making time with my date?” Kate looked at him, not realizing he was kidding.

“That wasn’t a very nice thing to say. Ben’s a friend of mine.” Kate said indignantly.

“Ah, Kozak’s just kidding. You’re actually going out with this oaf?” Ben said to Kate.

Kate was thoroughly confused by now. “Oaf? Better an oaf like me than a computer weenie like you.” Chad said.

“Be nice to me, star quarterback, or you won’t get no stats from me. Or I’ll doctor them so the coach can read out that you were 7 for 25 with three interceptions.”

“DiLillo, when was the last time I threw three interceptions?”

“Everett game, last year.”

“Damn. You had to remind me, didn’t you?”

“You **asked**.”

“It was a rhetorical question, you over-brained geek.”

“I’m surprised you know what rhetorical means, helmet-head.”

Kate was sitting on the bleachers, **totally** confused. She then noticed someone sitting with her—a tall African-American guy she knew was also on the football team.

“Ain’t this entertaining?” he said with a chuckle. “You must be Kate. I’m Butch Ullman, Chad’s **other** best friend. Don’t worry, you’ll get used to these two. They always do this. I just enjoy the front-row seat, myself.”

“Other best friend?” Kate asked him.

“Don’t let these two confuse you. They’ve been best pals since first grade.”

“They **have**?”

“Yeah. Hey, guys, break it up, would you? I think the lady wants some coffee, Chad, ol’ pal.”

Chad looked down sheepishly. “Sorry, Kate. DiLillo grates on my last nerve.”

“Last brain cell is more like it,” Ben said. Then he smiled. “Just kidding. Have a good time. Kate, go easy on him, he’s a dumb football player.”

“Yeah, yeah,” Chad laughed.

“Nice meeting you,” Butch said to Kate. “Hey, DiLillo, how bout I kick your ass at chess?”

“You can **try**.” They walked off together.

Kate just gaped at Chad. “You and Ben are **friends**?”

“Best friends. Since we were, like, seven.”

“But, you’re so **different**?”

“Not as much as you think,” Chad said. Kate just looked at him, as he smiled and led her out of the stadium to his car.

They got to Dunkin’ Donuts, ordered coffee and a few donuts, and grabbed a table.

“OK, so I’ll go out with you tomorrow. I warn you, you don’t know what you’re getting into.”

“Oh, really. How so?”

“I’m an artist,” Kate grinned. “We’re a little different.”

“Kate. You didn’t think I could figure that out just by the way you dress?”

“Oh, well.....”

“I like it. It’s distinctive. You’ve got a good eye,” Chad told her.

“A good artist **has** to have a good eye,” Kate said.

“That’s funny,” Chad said, looking right into her eyes, “so does a quarterback.”

Just then, Brittany appeared at her table.

“Hi Chad!”

“Hi Brittany,” he said, not very pleasantly.

“What are you doing?”

“**Sharing** a cup of coffee,” Chad said pointedly.

Brittany chose to ignore it. “Chad, I was wondering, are you busy tomorrow night?”

“I have a date,” he said, smiling at Kate.

“With **her**?” Brittany spat. “Why on earth would you go out with **that**?”

Kate smiled sweetly at her and said, “Maybe he decided he wanted a date with someone that doesn’t wear her brains in her bra?” Chad laughed so hard he spat out a mouthful of coffee.

“How **dare** you?” Brittany erupted.

“Oh, go primp, would you? Your makeup’s not globbed on enough, I can still see your face,” Kate said, waving her hand dismissively. Brittany stomped off, fuming.

Chad just looked at Kate with a gleam in his eye. “You’re a **barracuda**!”

“I told you that you didn’t know what you were getting into.”

“Kate, that was **not** disapproval.”

They just grinned at each other.

Their first date went very well. They quickly arranged a second. And a third. Even the dance class was going well. The last two dates had ended with a deep kiss, but it hadn’t gone further than that.

The next one was a little different than the first three, though. Kate got into one of her legendary painting grooves and completely lost track of time.

She flew down the stairs, finding Sophia and Betsy there. “WHAT TIME IS IT!”

“Six,” Sophia told her. “I **called** you two hours ago, at four.”

“Shit.” Just then, the doorbell rang. “OH SHIT! Sophie, can you answer that, stall him or something?”

“Sorry, I’m busy. Betsy’s got poo poo pants,” Sophia said, reaching for a diaper.

“SHIT.” Kate took a deep breath and opened the door. It was, as she had feared, Chad. “Oh, Chad, I’m so sorry. I completely lost track of time. Come in.”

He did, and gaped at her. She was wearing paint-splattered overalls and a similarly splattered tee-shirt. She had blotches of paint on her face, hands, and even a bit in her hair.

“I’m so sorry. I start painting, and lose myself. I’ll go clean up, it won’t take long.”

“You look like a goddess,” Chad blurted out.

“What? All covered in paint?”

“Yeah,” Chad told her with a silly little grin on his face. “Um, uh, yeah, go get cleaned up. No hurry.”

“OK,” she looked at him strangely. “Soph, entertain the big lug, would you?”

“Sure,” Sophia giggled. “Come on in, sit down. You must be Chad. I’m Sophia, Kate’s sister.”

“Nice to meet you. I’ve seen you skate.”

“Cool. I’ve seen you play football. I went to a game with Kate a couple weeks ago.” They chatted for a while, about skating and football.

After a few minutes, Sophia asked him, “You want something to drink?”

“Um, OK, that would be good.”

“Fine. You need to help me out, though.” She got off the couch and walked over to the other couch where he was sitting. “Ever hold a baby before?”

“Not one this small.”

“You’ll be fine. Hold her up to your chest, and just make sure you support her head.” Sophia put the baby in his hands. “Betsy, Chad. Chad, Betsy,” she giggled. “Be right back with the cokes.”

Chad looked down at the little baby. “I hope I’m holding you right, Betsy. You’re a bit bigger than a football.” Just then, the baby opened her eyes and looked up at him. “Aren’t you a cutie!” Chad exclaimed. “Boy, you’re a good baby. Strange guy is holding you and you don’t even peep.”

Meanwhile, Kate came flying down the back stairs into the kitchen. “Soph. Do I look OK?”

“You look fine. I think you broke land speed records,” she giggled.

“Great. Where’s Betsy?”

“Go see,” Sophia said, pointing towards the living room with a grin. Kate looked at her, then turned into the living room. She walked in—and stopped dead in her tracks, as she saw her big, football-playing date making goo-goo eyes at her baby niece.

If her heart didn’t melt at the goddess comment, it did then.

Sophia walked up behind her, carrying the cokes. “Isn’t he cute?” she whispered to Kate as she walked by her. “So, she behave for you?” Sophia asked Chad.

“Yeah. She’s a really good-natured baby.”

“That she is. Here, I’ll take her. Drink your coke.”

“Bye bye Betsy,” Chad cooed, as Sophia scooped her up and left the room, winking at Kate as she left. Just then, Chad spotted Kate.

“Hi. I didn’t see you there. You ready to go?”

“In a minute. Finish your drink.” She sat next to him on the couch. When he put his drink back on the table, she wrapped her arms around him and kissed his cheek. “You’re a dear, you know that?”

“What was that for?”

“Lots of things. Finish your coke.” He did, bemused, and they got in the car. They started driving to the restaurant. “I have to tell you something,” Kate began.

“OK, shoot.”

“I dated a fellow artist for two years. He was used to seeing me paint-splattered. My Dad’s seen it all my life.” She took a deep breath. “I’ve never been called a goddess before.”

“I just blurted it out.”

“But you meant it,” Kate persisted.

“Yeah, I meant it.” Chad took a deep breath. “I can’t explain it. It was like I had a glimpse at your soul.”

“That might be the most beautiful thing anyone’s ever said to me.” She looked at him. “I think I had a similar experience.”

“Huh?”

“When I saw you holding my niece.”

They pulled into the restaurant’s parking lot, and smiled at each other. They had a wonderful meal, and enjoyed the movie afterwards. When he took her home, their good-night kiss was longer and deeper than ever before.

When Kate got home, Sophia was still upstairs, watching a movie.

“Where’s Warren, by the way?” Kate asked her.

“I gave him a night off,” Sophia giggled. “Actually, he’s over his parents, helping his Mom and Dad with some remodeling project in their dining room.”

“Cool. We can hang out,” Kate giggled.

“Sounds good to me,” Sophia agreed. “So. Chad, huh? I got to tell you, he’s a **hunk**.”

“That he is,” Kate giggled. “At first, that was the major appeal, I’ll admit it. However, I’m starting to discover that there is so much more to him than that.”

“Yeah, I twigged onto that when I saw him holding Betsy,” Sophia agreed.

“You too, huh?” Kate said. “Did you hear what he said when I opened the door in my overalls?”

“No,” Sophia told her. Kate repeated the goddess comment, and then told her what Chad had said in the car. “Wow, he knows the way to **your** heart, doesn’t he?” Sophia giggled.

“Yeah. It seems that way.”

“Could’ve been a line, though, Kate.”

“Yeah, it could have been, but every instinct tells me it wasn’t. You should have seen the **way** he said it—like he was just discovering something. And if it was a line designed to get me into bed or something, you’d think he’d be **trying** to get me into bed. He’s been a perfect gentleman. Too much so, if I’m being honest,” Kate giggled.

Sophia looked at Kate. “You really like this guy, don’t you?”

“Yeah, I really like this guy.” Kate looked off into space. “Going out with him is like painting something really good.”

“OK, you’re going to have to explain that one.”

“The longer I do it, the more I see. The more colors I add, the longer I work, and the painting starts revealing itself in ways that I didn’t expect. You have something in your mind, and then you work on it, and it becomes so much more than what you originally expected.”

“Wow,” Sophia said.

“Wow is the word,” Kate agreed. “Soph, I am falling for this guy and in a hurry. I had every guard I own up, because of what happened with Dave, and he’s still getting through them.”

“I don’t have a game this Friday. We have an off week,” Chad told Kate at dance class that Monday.

“Are you requesting the pleasure of my company on Friday as well as Saturday?” Kate teased.

“Yeah. But, the thing is this—there’s a party. The team. We always have a party on our off week. I want you to go with me.”

“Do you really?”

“Absolutely. I was afraid **you** wouldn’t want to go.”

“Yes. Absolutely.”

“I need to warn you, the cheerleaders generally go, so Brittany will be there.”

“Fuck Brittany.”

“Nah, done that, it wasn’t much fun.” Chad clapped his hand over his mouth, as Kate’s eyes opened wide. “Oh, shit, did I say that out loud?” Kate cracked up laughing.

“Don’t worry, dear, your secret is safe with me.”

As Friday approached, Kate found herself becoming more apprehensive. This is what she had been afraid of—him taking her to a football party and her not fitting in, and him figuring out that they weren’t right for each other.

He picked her up, and she found she was **really** nervous. Chad picked up on it.

“You OK?”

“Yeah.”

“You’re nervous, aren’t you?”

“Yeah.”

“Don’t be. It’ll be fine.”

“Easy for you to say.” She looked down at herself. “I should have dressed normal. I wasn’t thinking.”

“Normal? You?” He looked at her. She was wearing a black-and-red-plaid tartan skirt, a white shirt with a black leather eighties-style skinny tie, and a black fedora. On anyone else, it would have looked ridiculous. On her, it looked just right. “If you dressed like

everybody else, I wouldn't know who you were. Besides which, you look fabulous. The fedora is a nice touch."

She giggled. "Of course, this is from a man who likes paint-splattered overalls. I should have worn **those**."

"I'd go along with that."

"You really are something else," she said softly.

They got to the party and made their way inside. Kate could sense all the eyes on her. Chad just gently led her in, his arm possessively around her waist, greeting his friends and making introductions. They found their way to a couch. Kate still felt self-conscious.

"Hey, man." Butch had appeared and slapped hands with Chad. "Hiya Kate. You look **fine** tonight. You got style."

"Thanks," Kate beamed. "I kinda feel like a freak."

"You **are** a freak," Butch teased her. "But that's a **good** thing. Too many cookie cutters around here. I'm not dressed like all the zombies, either."

"You're right, you're not."

"Of course," he whispered, "all the white guys **expect** a black man to dress funky. You don't have that excuse."

Kate cracked up laughing. "No, I'm an artist, that's my excuse."

"Works for me. I'll be back, children." He sauntered off to greet someone else.

"Butch is really nice," Kate told Chad.

"That he is."

Kate loosened up a bit, but was still uncomfortable. Chad, to his credit, did everything he could to make her more comfortable. A bunch of guys from the team had gathered around him and were discussing the last game, a victory over Medford that was close and difficult.

"I still don't know why they were getting to you so often," one of the guys told Chad.

"The weakside blitz," Kate piped up, without thinking. The guys just turned and stared at her. "Well, that weakside linebacker was getting a free lane right into Chad. He was only getting caught when you guys had the fullback out on the wing. I'm surprised Coach Torrance didn't pick up on that earlier. And when one of the linemen was picking up the weakside 'backer, one of their ends was getting in. I don't know why Coach didn't call a

few screen passes to Tom, there, you had **gaping** holes on the weakside out in the flat, because they were bringing that backer almost every play.”

Kate was so caught up in her dissertation that she didn’t notice until she had finished that jaws were hitting the floor. She grinned sheepishly. “Hey, I know football. I was screaming ‘throw the damn screen!’ from up in the stands.”

The guys on the football team were still stunned, until Tom Evers looked at Chad, looked at Kate, looked back at Chad, and finally said, “Jesus. Don’t let this one get away, would you, Chad?”

Kate loosened up considerably after that. Chad was delighted.

When Chad picked her up the next night, he said to her, “You know what? You know football, you go to all of my games, but I don’t think I’ve ever seen one of your paintings, except for that mural in the foyer at school.”

“Do you want to?”

“Yeah.”

“My best one is downstairs. Come here,” She led Chad into the kitchen, and pushed an intercom. “Are you guys decent? I want to bring Chad down there to show him something.”

“Yeah, we’re decent,” Chad heard a male voice chuckle. “C’mon down.”

They went downstairs and Kate knocked on a door. Chad could see Sophia open the door. Chad walked in behind Kate and found himself in a small apartment. “You’ve met Sophia and Betsy,” Kate giggled. “This is Warren, my future brother-in-law. Warren, Chad.” They shook.

Kate pointed to a wall, where the painting she had done a couple years back of Warren and Sophia skating was hung. “That’s at least one of my best.”

Chad stared at it for a minute. “Wow,” he said finally. “That’s fantastic.”

“We liked it,” Sophia told him.

When they got in the car, Chad told Kate, “You’re really talented. Are you planning on studying art in college?”

“Yeah, I plan to go to Mass Art, in Boston.” She looked at him. “What about you, plan on being a football jock in college?”

“Looks that way. I’m getting recruited, from schools all over the country. However, Boston College is still the front-runner.”

“Good,” Kate giggled.

“Hm, you seem happy that we’re planning on attending college in the same city,” Chad teased.

“Yeah, I am,” Kate said softly.

“Good. So am I,” Chad agreed. They went in and ate, and had been planning on going to a movie, but Chad decided he wasn’t in the mood. Instead, he drove to the beach.

“You planning on going swimming? In November?” Kate teased him.

“No, it’s just that nobody’s here, the view is nice, and I wanted to talk.”

“OK.”

“Look, we’ve been taking this slow, kind of feeling our way around each other. I understand why. It was a good thing. We both just ended relationships, we were both wary, and we wanted to get to know one another better. So, I didn’t mind taking it slow.” Chad said.

“But you don’t want to take it slow anymore,” Kate said.

“No. But I’m not just talking about physical.” He took a deep breath. “Kate, I’m falling in love with you.”

Kate inhaled sharply. “You are?” she managed to get out.

“Yeah. Is that so crazy?”

“Yeah, it’s crazy.” Kate laughed and launched herself over the front seat towards him, wrapping her arms around him. “Wonderful crazy. We’re the most unlikely couple in all of Oceanview High.” Her voice dropped. “And I’ve been falling in love with you for a while now.”

“Oh, I’m so glad you said that,” Chad said with real relief.

Kate giggled, and looked up at him, taking her face in his hands. “Chad?” Their eyes locked. “Stop going slow.”

He blinked, and then **devoured** her. His lips were on hers, his tongue in her mouth, kissing and nibbling at her in a frenzy. She felt like she was drowning. But then she pulled away.

“Dammit, this steering wheel is killing me,” she said.

Chad looked at her. “Back seat.”

“Good idea.” They made it back there in a flash, and were all over each other again. Their lips clashed, tongues tried to invade, and she ran her hands all over his back, through his hair. He broke from her lips to kiss all over her face and down her neck. His hands were working the buttons on her blouse. He had them undone in no time, slipped her shirt off, and reached around and undid her bra. He cupped her breast in his hand, and Kate moaned. She reached out to him, attempting to pull his shirt over his head, until he pulled back long enough to let her. She stroked his muscular chest as he kneaded his hand into her tit. Their lips were locked, and Chad could feel Kate moaning through the kisses.

He kissed down her neck and took one of her nipples in his mouth. She whined, and moaned, and writhed in the seat. His hands were all over her, and one crept up her legs under her skirt. She lifted up so he could pull her panties off, and his fingers were all over her. He plunged one deep inside her and she jumped, letting out a little scream. He slid his finger in and out as she bucked on his hand and sobbed. Her hands had been rubbing his chest, and now they moved down, clawing at the button on his pants.

He helped her, and his pants were down in a flash. Her hands wrapped around his cock, and she moaned, and then looked down. “My word, you’re big all over, aren’t you?” she said. She sat up in the seat, and maneuvered him so he was kneeling in front of her. “Chad, I want that big boy in me, and I want it **now**.”

“Um, wait a minute, I need something.” he said, groping on the floor for his pants.

“No you don’t,” Kate grinned at him. “I’m on the pill. Fuck me.”

He looked at her. She was flushed all the way down her breasts. Her green eyes were sparkling. She was breathing heavy. Chad couldn’t believe it. Brittany had been unresponsive and cold. Chad had never seen anything like this spitfire sitting in his back seat begging him to fuck her.

For Kate’s part, she was on **fire**. Sex with Dave had been fun and satisfying, but nothing like **this**. His kisses burned into her. His touch burned into her. His hand on her tit almost made her go into orgasm right then. She was in a frenzy.

“Do it,” she whispered to him. He lifted her skirt up out of the way, and aimed his cock at her slit. With one stroke, he plunged in to the hilt.

That was all it took. Kate screamed, and started cumming with that first long stroke. Chad looked at her, astonished, watching her back bow and her chest heave, feeling her pussy clamp down on his dick. Her frenzy reached him. He had wanted to go slow and easy, but that didn’t last long. Before he knew it, he was pounding into her relentlessly. She put her legs around his waist and set her feet along the back of the front seat behind him, so she could get more leverage. She was pounding back at him just as relentlessly. His hands

pawed her tits, as she put hers on his ass, pulling him even deeper into her. “YES! YES! FUCK! YES!” she screamed on every stroke. When she bucked and howled and spasmed again, Chad hit his limit. He jammed into her hard one last time, and came into her harder than he ever had in his life.

Kate flopped over onto the seat like a rag doll as Chad slipped out of her. For his part, Chad sank down on the floor of the car, astonished.

“What the hell just happened?” he mumbled to himself.

“An explosion?” a voice giggled softly from the seat.

“Something like that. Are you OK?” he asked.

“What a silly question.” She sat up on the seat, and patted next to her. He scrambled up from the floor and sat there. “Just don’t expect me to be coherent for, like, three days,” she laughed.

“You’re an animal,” he said in wonder.

“Uh-huh,” she agreed, still giggling. “It either comes from my passionate, artistic nature or my red hair, depending on which issue of Cosmo you read.”

He laughed, and then sobered. “I’ve never seen anything like that in my whole life.”

“You sound like you’re in shock.”

“I think I am.” He looked at her. “I never knew it could be like that. You’re aggressive.”

“And the big football jock isn’t used to aggressive girls.”

“As I once said to you before, Kate, that was **not** disapproval.” She giggled, and he continued. “You have to understand. Brittany was passive to the point of catatonia. We didn’t make love at all for the last six months we were going out, because I got tired of watching her lie there like a blow-up doll while I got myself off on her. It was unsatisfying. It got to be borderline pathetic. **This**,” he pointed vaguely to the seat, “was..... **amazing**.”

Kate absorbed that for a minute. “Brittany had sex with you because she felt obligated to.” Chad nodded agreement. “I had sex with you because I wanted to. I love you. And I’m not going to lie, I enjoy sex. Although, I must admit, not like **that**.” She laughed. “Dave wasn’t as hopeless as Brittany apparently was, but I’ve never felt like **this** in my life. I’m still tingling all over. And speaking of aggressive, you’re no shrinking violet. I thought your dick was going to pop out of the top of my head at one point.”

Chad laughed. “I fully intended to go slow and easy and gentle. I really did. I couldn’t help myself.”

“Neither could I, I wasn’t exactly letting you ease up. I think I put fingernail-sized indentations in your ass,” she laughed. “Which is fair, because you did the same to my tits.”

He looked down and saw the red blotches on her breasts. “Oh, Jesus, did I do that?”

“You sure did. And I loved every minute of it.”

“Damn, I sure didn’t mean to leave bruises.”

“Bruises? Those are love marks.” She looked at him. “I’m glad we got to know each other before we had sex. I’m glad I started to fall in love with you before we had sex. And I’m glad we didn’t wait a second more than that before we had sex.”

“Me, too,” he agreed, “to all of it. I love you. And you are the sexiest creature I’ve ever seen in my life.”

“I love you, too, and you’re pretty sexy yourself, hunk.” She ran her hand up his arm. “All these delicious muscles.”

“I’d accuse you of trying to get me going again, but I don’t think that’s possible.”

“Ditto. I’m just admiring the view.” She looked around. “We should get dressed, but I have no idea what happened to my **bra!**”

“So go without,” he teased.

“I just might,” she grinned at him.

Oceanview won the state championship—over St. Michael’s. “Damn you, beating my alma mater like that,” Warren teased Chad the next time he saw him.

The day after the state championship was the weekend of the Grand Prix finals. Kate had the house to herself that Saturday, and Chad spent the whole day, neither of them wearing too many clothes most of the day. Kate had painted Chad, in football gear, releasing a pass, and he was stunned at how good it was. He spent a long time in bed showing her how appreciative he was. They took a few breathers to eat, and to watch Sophia and Warren win the Grand Prix.

Chad found himself spellbound by their Riverdance program. “I never thought of skaters as athletes, especially ice dancers,” he said to Kate as they sat in her bed, eating Chinese food and watching the skating. “I was wrong. That program was hard. I don’t skate, and even I could tell how hard it was.”

“They’re the best,” Kate said. “And, yeah, they are definitely athletes. They’re artists, too.”

“That I got right away,” Chad said. “I have a soft spot in my heart for artists. One in particular.”

“That’s funny, because I have a soft spot in my heart for athletes. One in particular.”

“Eat your spare ribs. I want you again.”

She dumped the rest of her plate in the trash, and put all the food on the floor. She wrapped herself around him. “Screw the spare ribs,” she said with a gleam in her eye.

THE END OF THE BEGINNING (Chapter 115)

It was a few days before Christmas. Sophia and Ellen had taken Betsy with them to go do some shopping. Warren was downstairs at Sophie’s, in their apartment, reading a book. Suddenly, he heard the doorbell—the one from the door that led directly into the basement. He went outside the apartment and to the door, and opened it.

“Jess! Hey!”

“Hi Warren. What’s up?”

“Not much. Come on in.” He led her through the basement into the apartment. “If you’re looking for Sophie, she’s not here.”

“That’s fine, you’ll do,” she giggled. Warren took her coat and they sat down on the couch. “I’m just looking for a shoulder to cry on.”

“You know mine’s always available. What’s wrong?”

“Have you talked to Crash?”

“Not in the last two weeks or so. He’s due home tomorrow. Why, what’s up?”

“Well, it’s over. Crash and I, I mean. We broke up last weekend.”

“**Excuse** me? He hasn’t said a **word**!”

“He wouldn’t. You know Jason. To be truthful about it, I haven’t said a word to Sophie either. I guess we were just hoping it’d work out and didn’t want to alarm anyone, especially you two since you have your hands full with that baby,” she grinned. “But this has been coming for some time.”

“What happened?” Warren asked.

“Well, it started a year and a half ago. You know, the year we spent apart.”

“Yeah, and I thought being apart for that year pretty much **killed** both of you.”

“It did. At the time,” she said. “What happened was, we got back together that summer and things seemed OK. But when I went out to Wisconsin-Milwaukee last year, that’s when it started to dawn on me. Look, we were **closer**, but we weren’t **together** all the time. We were still at separate schools, so there were gaps in between our seeing each other. Maybe that’s the way I was able to see what was happening.”

“The thing is,” she continued, “is that I grew up and he didn’t. Actually, forget that, that’s too harsh. I **changed** and he didn’t. I wanted different things out of the relationship than he did.”

“What do you mean?” Warren asked.

“It started with sex. We haven’t had sex for months, you know. That was deliberate, because I thought our problems were with sex. I was wrong, sex was just part of it. But that’s where I first noticed it. Jason’s great at fucking—actually, that’s too harsh again, because I think it was both of us **together** that were great at fucking, but we’re not great at making love. And I’ve come to the point in my life where I need someone who is willing to make love to me.”

“We **tried** changing it, we’ve been trying for some time. The problem is, we only went a certain distance. That was enough for him. It was probably even enough for **me**—for a while. Then it ceased to be enough.” She looked at Warren. “We haven’t spent much time together the past couple of years. I mean, first I was here and you were there, then when we were closer you had the pregnancy and the Olympics, and then you’re here and I’m there. But I have changed a **lot** in the past few years.”

“I need love, Warren. I need to be cherished. Jason and I are too much alike. I need someone sweet and gentle to smooth away my rough spots.”

“When Jason and I first hooked up, we set each other on fire. That was great, for a while. But I don’t want that anymore. I want someone to make me melt.”

Warren thought about that, and then something popped into his head. And he looked at Jessie in amazement. “Oh my God, this goes back to the cabin, doesn’t it?”

“Yes, it does,” Jessie admitted with a sad smile.

“This all started....I mean...” Warren couldn’t say it.

“That first night you and I made love. Yes,” Jessie admitted. “That’s what started it.”

“Jess, how many **years** ago was that?”

“It was the **start**, I said. It’s been building since then.”

“I thought you and Crash **fixed** all that, right then!” Warren exclaimed.

“We did. To a point. But we didn’t go past that point, and I **needed** to go past that point. I thought we were on the right track—then it stopped.” She took a deep breath. “That night with you, well...as I said, Jason and I haven’t had sex in months. As you might have guessed,” she said with a smirk, “I play with myself a lot. And I **haven’t** been thinking of Jason when I was doing it. I’ve been thinking of a night in a certain cabin up in Maine. I think that’s when I realized that Jason and I were doomed.”

“This is a **hell** of a thing to drop on my head!” Warren said.

“I know. I’m sorry,” she said. “You’re my best friend’s fiancé. You’re the father of her child.” Jessie’s voice dropped to a near-whisper. “And I’m in love with you—and I have been for some time.”

“Oh God,” Warren said.

“I can’t help it,” Jessie said in a voice of despair. “Do you know how long I’ve been **fighting** this?”

“Jess, you have to **keep** fighting it,” Warren asserted.

“I know. But I can’t.”

“Jesus, Jess, where’s that Jessica Reidel fighting spirit? Where’s the She-Devil?”

“The She-Devil is gone,” Jessica said with finality. “She’s been gone for some time. That’s the **point**. That’s the whole point.”

“You know,” Warren said, “when Sophie and I, last year, decided to call a halt to our experimentation, it was because we were afraid that one of our dalliances was going to come back and bite us on the ass. This is the **last** one I expected to do that.”

“Why?” Jessie said. “You should’ve expected this. You’re every bit in love with me as I am with you.”

Warren looked at her like she was insane. “Jessie. I’m in love with Sophia. Remember her?”

“It’s possible to love two people at the same time,” Jessie said.

“No it’s not. Not the same way,” Warren asserted.

“I didn’t say it was the same way. I’m quite sure it’s not even to the same degree,” Jessie admitted. “If there’s, I don’t know, a scale of being in love, Sophia’s higher than I am on

it with you, and I know it. But you're in love with me all the same." She sighed. "If I didn't know for sure that you were going to get back with Sophia when you broke up freshman year at Wisconsin, I probably would've dumped Crash then and there. But I **did** know you and Sophia were going to get back together. Had no doubt about it, in fact, if you recall, I **wanted** it to happen."

She looked at him plaintively. "I know, I **know**, I'll always be number two. I don't mind."

Warren's head was reeling. "Jess, you're saying—what, exactly?"

"I'm saying that I love you. And I want to be with you. When Sophia isn't. I want to be your second girlfriend. And I want to make love to you, right now."

"WHAT? NO!" Warren burst out.

"Warren, we've done it before."

"With Sophie's approval. And participation, remember. She was there. We can't do this behind her back. And, if you forget, we did all that **before** I put a ring on her finger."

"I don't want your ring on my finger," Jess said. "Someday, I'm going to meet someone to spend my life with. I have no doubt he's going to be a lot **like** you," she grinned, "but it won't **be** you. Sophia's going to spend the rest of her life with you. I just want whatever I can get for right now."

Warren looked at her in shock. "Jess, this just isn't **like** you."

"I've changed, I told you."

"The Jessica Reidel I know would never settle for second best," Warren pointed out.

"I've been settling for second best for some time now. Why do you think I'm doing this?" she asked. "You are **not** second-best. And I'm not settling for second-best, I'm settling for being second **choice**. There's a difference."

"You deserve someone all your own."

"I agree," she said. "But he ain't here. So, for right now, what I **deserve** is to make love with the one man who managed to steal my heart when neither of us were looking."

"And what does Sophia deserve?" Warren asked pointedly.

"You. And she **has** you. I'm not going to interfere with that."

"That's exactly what you're doing!"

“No, it’s not. She’s not **here**, is she? I’m not taking you away from her. I’m filling in the blank spots, the in-betweens.”

“It’s not that easy, Jess.”

“OK, fine. Warren? All you have to do is say that I’m wrong, that you don’t love me. If you can say that, I will get up off this couch, walk out your door, and we will forget we even had this conversation.”

“Good,” he said.

“Fine,” Jess agreed. “So say it. Tell me that you don’t love me. And I’m gone.”

“I–,” Warren started. Then his head fell into his hands. “I can’t say it. Because it’s a lie. Oh, **fuck**.”

“This isn’t any easier for me.”

“Of **course** it is! What do **you** have to lose?” Warren blurted angrily.

“My best friend, and my other best friend,” she said sadly.

“OK, you’re right,” Warren said. “But **you** pushed this.”

“Yes, I did,” she admitted. “Because I couldn’t keep it to myself any longer. Warren, I **need** you. Do you know how fucking **lonely** I am right now?”

“Jessie, I can **not** do this!”

“Warren, just kiss me. Please?” She moved closer to him on the couch. “We can start there and see what happens.”

“I can’t do this. I can’t.”

“Yes, you can.” She slid onto Warren’s lap.

“Oh, Jesus, Jess, **please**. I can’t do this, but I also can’t hurt you, you know that.”

“Warren, nobody’s going to get hurt.” She took his face in her hands, and leaned down to kiss him. He tried to pull away.

“Jessie. I love you.”

“Oh, goody, you said it! Now kiss me again!”

“Jess, as I was about to say, it doesn’t matter if I love you or not. This is just wrong.”

“No. No, it’s not. Sophia will understand.”

“I doubt that. Jessie, somehow, you’re not thinking straight.”

“Yes, I am. Look, Sophie’s **never** been possessive.”

Warren sighed. “You don’t know what happened after I took Liz Cushman’s virginity. That was very hairy for a while. We worked it out, but that’s when we decided we weren’t going to fool around anymore. She’s not possessive if **she** can control it. When she can’t, she **is**.”

“Warren,” Jessie sighed, “I’m not Liz Cushman. I’m Sophie’s best **friend**. Don’t you think she wants me to be happy?”

“If you’re so sure of that, then we wait until she gets back and we **ask** her.”

“That’s not necessary. We can tell her afterwards. That will be fine.”

Warren was in complete turmoil. He **couldn’t** do this, not to **Sophie**. But he **did** love Jessie. Not like he loved Sophie, but he did love her. And he’d **never** seen tough, strong-willed, take-no-prisoners Jessica Reidel in this much **pain** before. He wanted to make the pain go away.

“Jess, when on **earth** did you get so needy?”

“When I realized what I needed,” she said softly. “When I realized what my life had been missing.”

“Dammit, Jess, I’m too weak for this.”

“That’s kind of what I was counting on,” she giggled. “Warren, take me in your arms. Take me to your bed. Make love to me.”

“Jessie, you need to get off my lap.”

“No, I don’t. I need to kiss you.” She did.

Warren, caught between surrendering and throwing her on the floor, off his lap, heard the door open before he saw. His heart sank right to his knees.

My life, he thought, is **over**.

“What the HELL is going ON here?” Sophia demanded.

JESSIE HITS THE JACKPOT (Chapter 116)

“Hi, Soph!” Jess chirped.

“Hello, Jessie,” Sophia said, sitting down in the chair across from the couch. “Welcome home. Now, do you mind telling me why you’re sitting in my fiancé’s lap kissing him?”

“I’m trying to get him into bed,” she giggled.

“Oh, that did **not** help,” Warren moaned.

Sophia’s mind boggled. She was prepared to believe she had walked into something innocent—until Jessie said that. “You’re trying to get Warren into bed,” Sophia said. “What about Crash?”

“We broke up,” Jessica said. “For good. It’s over.” She climbed out of Warren’s lap and sat next to him on the couch. “This has been building for some time.”

“So, you’ve lost your boyfriend, so you’re going to try to make time with **mine**?” Sophia blurted. Then she turned to Warren and said, “GodDAMN you! How could you **do** this to me?”

“Wait a minute, Sophie,” Jessie said, “Warren didn’t do a damn thing. He’s been trying to fight me off. I’m not making it easy for him.”

“I could’ve fought you off harder,” Warren admitted. “I was trying not to hurt her,” he said to Sophia.

“Why would fighting her off hurt her?” Sophia asked.

“Because I’m in love with him,” Jessica said quietly. “And he can’t hurt me because he’s in love with me.”

“Oh, that didn’t help **either**,” Warren moaned.

“What?” Sophia croaked out. Her eyes were wide open, and her bottom lip was trembling. “You **love** each other?” She looked back and forth between them. “So, what’s this mean? That’s it? Warren, you’re going to leave me for my best friend?”

“Not in a million years,” Warren said.

“He’s not leaving you. Not a chance. Not going to happen, and I wouldn’t let it,” Jessie added.

“I don’t get it,” Sophia said, the tears starting to drip down her cheeks.

When Jessie saw the tears rolling down Sophia’s face, she realized something. “Dammit. You’re right, Warren, I fucking blew this. Sophie, you don’t get it because I fucked up.”

She took a deep breath. “Sophie, Warren loves me—but **not** like he loves **you**. I know that. I accept that. But I **do** love **him**, completely—and I love you, too. I wasn’t trying to take him away from you. I was just trying to, I don’t know, be with him, occasionally, for a while.” Jessie sniffled in her own tears. “Not forever. Not all the time. Just once in a while. And just until I find someone of my own who can treat me the way Warren does.” She sniffled again. “And it was selfish and stupid and greedy and thoughtless. And I’m sorry.” She stood up from the couch. “I won’t bother you two again.” And she headed for the door.

“Jess, **wait!**” Sophia yelled. “Stop. Don’t go.”

“I think it’s best that I do,” Jessie said sadly.

“Jessica. SIT,” Sophia demanded, pointing to the bed. Jessie did. Sophia stood up. “Wait right here. Nobody move. I’ll be right back.” She left the apartment.

“What the **hell** is she doing?” Warren asked.

“I don’t know,” Jessica said. “Maybe I should leave now, while she’s not here.”

“I have a funny feeling that if you leave you’ll be in **bigger** trouble with her,” Warren smirked.

“Well, unless she’s gone upstairs to get a meat cleaver to chop off my **head**,” Jessie said.

“My dick, more like it,” Warren said.

“Nah. She **needs** that. Well, I suppose she **could** chop off your dick as long as she left you your **tongue**.”

Warren laughed. “Jess, you’re incorrigible.”

“Of course I am.”

Just then, Sophia came back in. “OK. I just went upstairs to check with Mom. Betsy’s all set, she’s napping, Mom’s got her, we won’t be bothered for a few hours.” She locked the door.

“Warren, she doesn’t have any sharp objects in her hand,” Jessie said. “That’s a good sign.”

“Huh?” Sophia asked.

“I figured you went to get the meat cleaver to chop off my head,” Jessie said.

“Not hardly,” Sophia grinned. “Come here, Snugglebear,” she said, pulling Warren off the couch. She wrapped him in a long, sweet, gentle kiss. Then she dragged him over to

the bed by his hand, and gently pushed him so he ended up sitting on the bed next to Jess. Looking very satisfied with herself, she sauntered back over to the couch and sat on it.

“Well?” she said.

Warren and Jessie just looked at her blankly.

“Jess, you got him in bed. You gonna do something about it?”

“Huh?” Jessie said.

“You heard what I said.” Her expression got a little harder. “Listen to me. This only **ever** happens when I’m here. This **never** happens behind my back. Do you understand me, Jessica Reidel?”

“Yes, ma’am,” Jessie said contritely.

“That’s why I was pissed.” She smiled. “All you ever had to do was ask.” Warren looked at her in amazement. “Why so surprised, Snugglebear? We’ve done this before.”

“We’ve had fun diversions before, not quite the same thing,” he said, not wanting to say the rest.

“Ah,” Sophia said, understanding. “You thought I’d be mad because she loves you. And you love her.” Sophia looked at him. “You forget something. I love both of **you**, too. Warren, she’s my best friend. The only cure for what ails her is **you**.” She took a deep breath. “I can live with that. There’s enough love in this room to go around, you know.”

“Sophia, you’re incredible,” Warren said.

“I know,” she grinned. “Well?” she said to him, gesturing at them on the bed. “Did you forget **how**? Jeez, Warren, it’s only been a few weeks.” Jessie looked at her in surprise. A few weeks, for **those** two? “Yeah, we haven’t had sex for a few weeks. Between training and Betsy running me ragged, I’ve been beat to hell. She’s still waking up at all hours of the night, and, since I’m breastfeeding, it’s all up to me. And Warren’s been very understanding, but he’s also very horny. So, Jess, **you** had better take care of him, **too**! Now, get **going**! I’m going to count to ten and by the time I get done, I’d better at **least** be seeing some **kissing**!”

“And what are **you** going to be doing over there?” Jessie smirked.

“Watching. At the very least,” Sophia grinned. Jessie grinned back, turned to Warren, leaned in—and then they kissed. Then they **really** kissed, sprawled on the bed.

Sophia sat back on the couch with a big smile on her face. She’d watch Warren make love with someone else before—Jessie herself, and also Alexa. The only thing that

bothered her was, back then, she was more of an active participant. But she knew Jessie wasn't at all into girls, and there was no Jason to divert her this time. So, she watched.

Jessie was completely beside herself—both with a few months of accumulated lust, and with the sheer euphoria of being in bed with a man she thought she'd never be able to have again. They kissed, furiously, rolling around on the bed, lips caressing each other while their tongues danced. Warren reached his hand for Jessie's boob.

"Hmm," he said, breaking the kiss. "You've grown in the past three years."

Jessie laughed delightedly. "Well, I'm about 15 pounds heavier than the last time you had me in a compromising position. Luckily, it all went to my tits and ass."

"Good," Warren laughed, and leaned in to kiss her again, his hand on her tit through her shirt and bra. Then he lifted her shirt from the bottom, and pulled it up over her head, only breaking the kiss long enough to get it off. Then, her bra was off. His hand descended back onto her boob. She moaned into his mouth.

He cupped her boob, and ran his fingers over her nipple, which quickly stiffened for him. "Oh, God, Warren, you're so gentle it's driving me **crazy!**" she moaned. He grinned at her, then lowered his mouth to her boob. He surrounded the erect nipple with his mouth, and gently sucked on it.

Jessie went berserk. Her eyes closed, a flush spread from her breasts up to her face. She had one hand snaked in Warren's hair, the other was fisting open and closed by her side. "Oh God. Oh, God, it's like a **feather**. Oh...", she moaned. Her hips rose and fell. "Warren, my pants...please...my pants," she gasped. Warren got the message, and quickly undid the button and zipper on her jeans, and slipped them off her, her panties going with them. She raised her hips to help. He never lost contact with her breast.

"Oh, please, Warren, touch me," she gasped. He put his hand down between her legs, and couldn't **believe** how wet she was! He covered his finger with her juices, and then moved up to her clit, swiping it lightly with his fingertip. "OH FUCK!" she howled. She grabbed his hair with her hand, and practically tore the sheets with her other hand, and he kept up the light pressure on her tit with his mouth and her clit with his hand. In mere seconds, she was stiffening beneath him, her head thrashing from side to side, a deep moan coming from her lips.

"Oh my FUCK," she said. "I can't remember the last time I had a cum like that! From just **that?** Oh my." Warren just grinned at her. "That was incredible. It was so **light!** I've never felt anything like that." She grinned at him and pointed down past the end of the bed, to the couch. "Did that chick sitting over on the couch playing with herself teach you that one?"

Warren looked behind him, and saw Sophia sitting on the couch, her pants and panties down by her ankles, her legs spread, and her hand in between them. She grinned

sheepishly and blushed at the same time. “No,” Warren said, “actually, she usually likes rougher titty play than that. I just had a funny feeling about you, though.”

“Good guess,” Jess giggled. “I’m glad **she’s** enjoying herself, too,” she grinned, pointing at Sophia.

“Not yet,” Sophia said from the couch. “Only one person in this room has cum so far.”

“Well, I think she needs more of a show, eh?” Jessie laughed. She reached for Warren’s belt buckle as he pulled his shirt over his head. Quickly, she had his pants and underwear off. She pushed him back onto the bed, crawled between his legs, and slurped his cock into her mouth.

Warren had gotten a blowjob from Jessie that time in the cabin, but it wasn’t like **this**. That blowjob back then was fast and furious and almost desperate. This wasn’t. Jessie still got a firm grip on Warren’s dick with her mouth but she wasn’t trying to tear the skin off. And her hands were running up and down his chest and legs as she made love to his dick with her mouth.

Warren was getting close, Jessie knew it. She stopped for a minute, and said, “Hey, does Sophie like cum? In her mouth, I mean.”

“Sophie likes cum in her mouth a whole lot,” Sophie giggled from behind them.

“Good. That makes two of us,” Jess said. Just then, Jess had an impulse. She knew Sophia hadn’t cum yet—Jess would’ve heard her. She also was feeling very grateful that Sophia had allowed her to do this. And, she was feeling wild and just a little bit kinky.

She increased her pressure on Warren’s dick. It didn’t take long, and he came in buckets into her mouth. She swallowed some of it, but not all. Then she went with her wild impulse.

Sophia could tell that Warren was cumming right into Jessie’s mouth. She saw Jessie swallow, and heard Warren’s grunt. She had her hands all over herself, one with two fingers curled inside her, the other rubbing her clit. She couldn’t believe how hot it had made her to watch them.

Then, Jessie jumped off the bed, and headed towards the couch. She made a waving motion to tell Sophie to keep playing with herself. Just as Sophia said, “What?” Jessie leaned over, grabbed the back of Sophia’s head, and planted her lips right over Sophie’s.

Sophia was **shocked**. Jessie didn’t like girls, at all! Then, Jessie’s tongue snaked its way into Sophia’s mouth. The kiss was shocking enough. A tongue kiss practically floored her. And then she realized that there was something **on** Jessie’s tongue, and it was now being spread all over her own tongue.

Oh, God, it was Warren's cum. Her best friend was kissing her with her fiancé's cum in her mouth. Part of Sophia went into complete shock—but the other part **came**, and hard, her fingers furiously working over her pussy as Jess shared Warren's cum with her. Sophia howled into Jessie's mouth.

When she was coming down, Jessie withdrew her lips from hers, and sauntered back to the bed. "There. She had one at least," Jessie said to Warren, self-satisfied. He looked at her, puzzled. "I still had your cum in my mouth."

"You didn't!" Warren hooted.

"Oh my God yes she **did**," Sophia gasped. "Jess, what the hell got **into** you? You **kissed** me! You don't like girls!"

"Yeah, but I love you," she said. "Now," she continued, "Warren, it's your turn." She settled back onto the bed, on her back. "Eat my pussy, Warren."

"But of course," Warren said with a grin.

Sophia sat on the couch, her mind whirling. She couldn't believe what Jessie had done. It was such a shock. It was also **such** a turn-on. She couldn't believe what a turn-on it was. She sat there, watching Warren do his usual expert job of lapping at Jessie's cunny, while in her mind replaying that cum-covered kiss. Her hands moved furiously over her pussy. Jessie was quickly bouncing up and down on the bed, as Warren did what he does best, and Sophia came again, quieter than the first one but still very nice.

Meanwhile, Jessie was having a **wonderful** time. If there's one thing she missed the most about Warren—sexually, that is—it was his tongue. And his tongue was even better than she remembered. "Oh, Warren, it's been **so** long since somebody did this to me!" she gasped.

"What a pity," he chuckled, and then went back to it. After a few minutes, Jessie was practically in continuous-orgasm mode, and yelling, "Oh, God, Warren, fuck me!"

"Gladly," Warren said, as he crawled out from between her legs.

Sophia, meanwhile, had gotten herself completely naked and then brought herself to a third orgasm—and, feeling pretty well satiated, got a very strange idea in her head. Warren and Jessie had put themselves on the left side of the bed, facing it from the bottom—Warren's side, Sophia noted with satisfaction. Sophia got up out of the couch, and walked around to the other side of the bed. She climbed in, just as Warren had gotten himself into position. Jessie was on her back, legs splayed wide, as he ran his dick all up and down her pussy. Sophie got on her side, and nudged herself over so she was right next to Jessie, lying on her right side. She took her left hand and grabbed Jessie's. She pressed her breasts into Jessie's left arm, leaned her chin on Jess's shoulder, and took her other hand and started stroking Jess's hair. Just then, Warren started to inch his dick slowly into Jessie's waiting pussy.

Jess realized both of these things almost simultaneously. She had been anticipating Warren entering her, and she hissed “Oh, I’ve waited too **long** for this!” as he did. But then, she realized where Sophia was. Right next to her, cuddling up to her, playing with her hair. “Oh, God, **Sophie?**” she said.

“Shh, Jess, it’s OK,” Sophia whispered.

“Oh, God,” Jess moaned. “I mean...oh GOD.” Warren was entering her oh so slowly, and her pussy was clutching his dick like it was hugging a long-lost friend. When he hit bottom, Jessie sighed. Then he started moving in and out of her, slowly and deliberately.

To Jessie, it seemed like the sensitivity of her nerve endings had tripled, **everywhere** in her body. Not just in her pussy, where she could feel every square millimeter of Warren’s dick as it entered and exited her. No, her arm, which Sophie was cuddling, felt like it was on fire. Her hair. Sophie kissed her shoulder, and it felt like an electric shock.

Warren was making love to her—**really** making love to her, with gentleness and care. She was reeling. She hadn’t felt like this since—well, since the last time she was in bed with Warren. And Sophie?

Jessie never expected **that**. They’d been best friends since they were **seven**, for goodness’ sake, and the only time they’d **ever** touched was the odd hug. Fully clothed, of course. And not too many of those. But it felt **good**. It kind of made what Warren was doing to her feel that much better. Jessie opened her eyes and turned—and stared into Sophia’s.

“Oh, **God**, Sophie!” she murmured. She didn’t know what was happening to her. She didn’t know what she was feeling. She especially didn’t know what she was feeling when Sophie leaned over and lightly kissed her on the lips. And then did it again. Then started planting little light kisses on her lips, her cheek, her neck, her shoulder. They were light and airy and not particularly sexual. But that, combined with the sweet love she was getting from Warren, had Jessie reeling.

Sophia had seen something. She knew that the Jessie she had walked in on wasn’t the Jessie she knew. There was something wrong. Jessie was needy and desperate—and hurting. **Badly**, much worse than she was letting on. “It’s OK, Jess, we’re going to make it all better,” she whispered.

Warren, for his part, had come to the same conclusion that Sophia had. Jess needed this, for a deeper reason than he could identify. As he slowly moved himself in and out of her, he looked at Sophia cuddling up against her—and again marveled at what an incredible person his fiancée was.

“Warren, faster, please?” Jessie moaned. Warren obliged, but not too much, just picking up the pace enough. When he did, he moved his hand up and started gently caressing Jessie’s boob, remembering what that had done to her a few minutes before. She moaned, and started bucking up to his thrusts more vigorously.

She was getting closer, when Sophia whispered in her ear, “Is Jessie going to cum?” Jessie just moaned. “Do I get to see Jessie cum?” Sophia went on.

“Oh, God, yes,” Jessie moaned.

“Can I help?” Sophia asked softly. Jess opened her eyes and just looked at her hazily. “Can I help?” Sophia repeated, and then started kissing—starting on Jess’s shoulder and working her way down her chest, leaving no doubt where she was headed, giving Jess plenty of time to stop her. Jess didn’t stop her, and as Sophia gently snaked her tongue around Jessie’s nipple, Jessie screamed, “Oh, God, **yes!**”

It didn’t take much longer before Jessie went supernova. Her hips blasted off the mattress, her pussy slamming onto Warren’s dick. She howled. Her cheeks flushed, and she couldn’t see anything. Her hand, still entwined with Sophia’s, almost ripped Sophia’s fingers off. Her pussy spasmed wildly, clamping down hard on Warren’s dick, and bringing him over the edge with her.

Warren, not wanting to crush her, slipped down on the bed next to her—not that there was a lot of room there with Sophie on the other side of the bed, but he managed. And then he said to his barely-coherent lover, “I love you, Jessie.”

From the other side of her, Sophia said, “I love you too, Jessie.”

Jessie, still having little aftershocks and feeling like a wet dishrag, wasn’t able to speak. So she just grinned at them.

A little while afterwards, they were lying on the bed, cuddling. They had scootched on the bed to make room for all three of them. Jessie was in the middle.

“It’s been a long fall, actually, it really started in the summer,” Jessie said. “It was towards the end of the summer that I asked Crash to hold off on sex for a while. So, obviously, I was having problems last summer with our relationship.”

“What gradually became apparent to me is that, while sex was the most troubling aspect of our relationship to me, it wasn’t the whole problem. I also realized that sex was the only thing that Jason **liked** about our relationship. He went along with me in calling a halt to sex, but I now realize that was a ‘yes, dear’ moment. I fully believe he was **not** celibate when he went back to school, but that’s not really the point.”

“We got together a few times this semester. I went to Northwestern or he came up to Milwaukee. And things weren’t good at all. We didn’t fight—I’d almost prefer if we **did**. But we didn’t talk, either. We didn’t do much of anything. It was neglect—and every time I tried to warn things up, he’d say ‘I thought we weren’t going to do that’. Jesus, I never

said no **kissing**! Or no holding hands! But, if he wasn't getting in my pants, he didn't want any touching at all."

"I went to Northwestern two weeks ago, in a last-ditch effort to fix things. He wasn't welcoming. He acted like I was a burden. When I brought up the possibility of maybe trying to jump start our sex life, **then** he got interested. I let him start to try, but after one lousy kiss and a couple of boob squeezes, he started ripping my clothes off. And was ready to go, right then. When I asked him to slow down and take his time, he got pissed."

"I told him I needed to be loved, and he said that he was going to do just that. I said, no, I need to be loved, not fucked, and he said that there was no difference. I tried to explain to him what I wanted, and he just said, 'that's just a stupid girl thing. You were never upset before, why now?'"

"I reminded him that I **was** upset before, back at the cabin. He thought we had gotten over that. I did, too, but he hadn't changed. He fell back into the same old pattern, and I **had** changed."

"Then, he said to me that he had gone out with me in the first place because I was low-maintenance. He said if I was going to turn into one of those weepy, needy, 'make **luuuuuv** to me!' high-maintenance types, than he didn't want to deal with it."

"So I put my clothes back on, told him he never had to deal with it ever again, and left."

"I just felt **so** rejected. And neglected, and used as well. So I came here. Actually, I came here looking for Sophia primarily, because I figured a good cry might help. When I found Warren here, well—I'm sorry. I lost my mind."

"No harm, no foul," Sophia said.

"Do you feel better?" Warren asked Jessie.

"Oh, you have **no** idea," Jessie sighed. "Thank you. Both of you."

"You're welcome," Warren said.

"Jessie, did you mind when I, you know...." Sophia faltered.

"No. I didn't," Jessie said. "I actually liked it, a whole lot. Imagine that." She looked up at Warren and grinned. "I've know this girl for 13 years. If I'd known she was that good at sucking tittie I would've let her do it long before this."

Everyone laughed at that, but then Warren got serious. "I have to say, the way Crash treated you makes me a little ill."

“Damn. I probably shouldn’t have said anything to you,” Jessie said. “I keep forgetting you are his best friend. But, Warren, it was between **us**. The relationship just got too combustible.”

“I still can’t believe he was that callous.” Warren took a breath. “Even so, I’d prefer it if he never knew about this.”

“Good plan,” Jessica said. “I agree completely. Anyhow,” she grinned, reaching down for Warren’s dick, “How’s this big boy recovering?” She stroked at it, and it started to become erect.

“Very well, if you keep **that** up,” Warren grinned. “Looking for round two?”

“Nope,” Jessie said. “Just getting you ready for this gorgeous thing on the other side of me. I think your Pookie needs a fuck, Warren.”

“Oh, God, it’s been **too** long,” Sophia moaned.

“See?” Jessie grinned. “Well, **you** are all set,” Jessie said, looking down at Warren’s erect cock. “Let’s see about **her**.” Jessie flipped over, and, to Sophia’s complete amazement, ran her finger up and down Sophia’s pussy. “Well, almost, but she needs a little help,” Jessie said, and diddled Sophia’s pussy gently.

Sophie started moaning as Jessie slipped a couple fingers into her pussy. “Yep, Warren, she’s getting there. Hmm. How about this?” she said, and started lowering her mouth to Sophie’s nipple.

“Watch out, Jess. Don’t forget. She’s still lactating,” Warren laughed.

“Hmmm,” was all Jessie said. She lowered her mouth to Sophie’s nipple and started sucking, experimentally. Then she sucked harder. Sophia looked at her in utter shock as she felt the milk flowing out of her nipple. Jessie pulled off, said, “Yup, she’s lactating all right,” and then went back to it. Sophia was actually pretty full, so this felt wonderful. She couldn’t believe it was **Jessie** that was doing it, though.

Warren looked at them in bemusement. “She’s remarkably enthusiastic, isn’t she?” he said to Sophia.

“Hey. I was a bottle baby,” Jessie said in between sucking. “Didn’t know what I was missing.”

Sophia almost started laughing, but held it in. She felt the wonderful release from her boobs and the equally wonderful caresses from Jessie up and down her pussy. She just looked at Jessie and said, “Jess. You do realize that **you**, the most relentlessly heterosexual girl I know, are making love to another woman, right?”

Jessie stopped sucking, and looked up, seriously. “No, I’m not. I’m making love to **you**. Sophia Daniels. Who I love. Body parts are almost irrelevant, not after what you and Warren just did for **me**.” She got a wry grin on her face. “Though, I must admit, I like this whole lactating thing. Does that turn you on?”

“When you do it, it does,” Sophia said. “When Warren does it, too. You know, when I feed Betsy, it’s just feeding, but when **you** guys do it, it is a turn-on.”

“Ah,” Jessie said. “Anyhow, I’m not really making love to you. I’m just working you up.” She reached behind her and grabbed Warren’s cock. “OK, Prep Stud, stick this thing where it belongs.”

Warren grinned, and crawled around Jessie on the bed, positioning himself in between Sophia’s legs. He lined his dick up with her pussy, and easily slid into her. Jessie went back to milking Sophia’s boobs. Warren was kneeling in front of Sophia as he pumped in and out of her, upright, so Jessie went for the other boob, the one furthest away from her, sprawling all over Sophia’s torso as she reached her mouth toward it.

Sophia was tingling all over. First of all, this was the first good fuck she’d had in a few weeks. Second of all, yes, it had been a turn-on, and a big one, when Warren had milked her. But he’d never been able to do that while he **fucked** her, he wasn’t enough of a contortionist for that. But, now, she was being fucked by Warren while Jessie milked her.

Jessie, of all people!

Sophia was gently running her hand up and down Jessie’s back while Jessie lovingly sucked on her breast. It was just wonderful. Sophia was building up to an orgasm, but she also felt so **content**.

Jessie, for her part, felt very content herself. Yes, she surprised herself with how much she was enjoying this, but she was. It was very warm and loving and intimate. As was Sophia’s hand running up and down her back. Wow, she thought, who knew when I woke up this morning that I’d spend the afternoon doing **this**?

Warren had kept up the pace, and Sophia was moaning and bucking underneath him. “You close, Pookie?” he asked.

“Uh-huh,” she moaned.

“Look out, Jess,” Warren warned, “she squirts when she cums.” Jessie just giggled and kept sucking. Suddenly, Sophia howled and went over, jerking and spasming. And Jess was **amazed** as the first blast of milk rocketed off the back of her throat. Sophia’s other boob was spraying all over Jess’s arm and back. Jess just sucked harder, until she sensed Sophia coming down.

She pulled off and sat back up next to Sophia, grinning. “Wow, that was **something**! It was almost like a guy cumming in my mouth, except it tastes better,” she giggled. “I’d better leave some for Betsy, though.”

“You’re back’s covered in it, you know,” Warren pointed out.

“Cool,” Jess said. Warren just laughed. Jessie looked at him, amazed—he was still fucking Sophia, and he wasn’t even close. “Warren, you’re a stud.”

“Jess, this’ll be my third, in, what, an hour and a half? Of **course** I’m a stud, **now**.”

Jessie just giggled, and then sat cross-legged beside Sophia on the bed. She looked down at Sophia, who had come down off her first climax and was building up to her second.

“She’s beautiful when she’s cumming, isn’t she?” Jessie said.

“That she is. So are you, you know,” Warren smiled. Just then, Sophia started howling. Jess looked down, bemused, at how much noise she made. Knowing Sophia was close, Jess bent over and started sucking on her boob again. The milk flowed into her mouth as Sophia came again.

Just then, Jessie noticed that Warren had started grunting. “Can’t hold out forever,” she said, bemused.

“She’s got...ungh....great control. And she’s **using** it,” Warren managed to get out.

“Good,” Jessie giggle, sitting out, Sophia’s breast milk still on her lips. Suddenly, Sophia’s hand shot out from her side, and headed right for Jessie’s pussy. Jessie squeaked as Sophia’s fingers probed her opening, and groaned as one slipped inside. Jess looked down, and saw Sophia grinning at her.

“Oh, **jeez**, Sophie!” Jessie groaned, as Sophia’s finger snaked in and out of her pussy.

Sophie withdrew her hand and hissed “Kneel!” at Jessie. Jessie kneeled in front of her. Sophia’s hand went back to Jessie’s pussy, and her other hand grabbed the back of Jessie’s head and pulled her back down to her boob. Jessie gladly started milking Sophia again, as Warren pounded into Sophia. Sophie went first, howling in her climax, thrusting her fingers wildly into Jess and squirting into her mouth, which quickly brought Jess off. All **this** going on was too much for Warren, and he poured himself into Sophie.

15 minutes after they had stopped, still sprawled in a heap on the bed, their intercom rang.

“Sophie?” It was Ellen.

Sophie ran to the intercom. “Hi, Mom, what’s up?”

“Betsy’s awake, and she’s hungry.”

“Be right up.” Sophie reached for her clothes and started to throw them on.

“Do you have anything **left**?” Jessie giggled.

“Oh, sure,” Sophia said. “I think cumming causes me to make more, or something. Besides which, the more I get out, the more I make.”

“I think I like that system!” Jessie laughed.

After Sophia had come back down with Betsy, they had a little chat.

“So, what does this mean?” Jessie said.

“Well, I think it means that you’re welcome in this bed whenever you want,” Sophia said. “Warren?”

“I agree. Most of the time, anyhow. If it’s been a while and Sophie’s all pent up, we might tell you to go sit on the couch and play with yourself for a while.” They all laughed at that. “But, mostly, yeah.”

“Especially now,” Sophie said. “You’re going back to Milwaukee in a month, and for the last week of that time we’re going to be at Nationals. We won’t see you until the summer, and that’s after **we** get off tour. Even next year, you’ll be in Milwaukee and we’ll be in Madison. We’re not going to see much of you. So, when we **do** see you, I want you here with us whenever you’d like to be.”

“What about people finding out?” Jessie asked.

“That’s up to you,” Sophia said.

“It shouldn’t be,” Jessie maintained. “If word gets out that we’re having a little menage a trois, the story in the Enquirer is going to be about the big-time skating stars, not the humble nursing student.”

“True, but I’ve already had worse things written about me in the Enquirer,” Sophia laughed.

“I’m worried about people **figuring** it out, not telling anyone,” Warren said. They looked at him. “Soph, you know me. I’m a cuddler. Say we went upstairs right now and sat on the couch right in front of your mother. Say you two sat on either side of me. What do I **always** do in that situation, Soph?”

“You put your arm around me and cuddle,” Sophie smiled.

“Right. And I’d do that to you and **not** to Jessie? I could do it, but it somehow doesn’t seem fair. To **any** of us. And you’re the same way, Soph. You’re going to be sitting next to Jessie some day and **not** touch her? After what just happened? It’ll be tough.”

“Hmm. He’s right. I think we have to think about this,” Sophia said.

“Well, my limited availability should prevent a lot of that,” Jessie pointed out. “I mean, right now we only have to pull this off for three weeks, right?”

“Right,” Warren said. “If we tell anyone, it should be Sophie’s mom, though, because she’s here.”

“Who probably would just chuckle, shake her head, and accept it,” Sophia laughed. “But I need to think about that one, too.”

Jessie ended up staying the night. “To catch up, I’ll sleep on the couch,” all that. Jessie didn’t sleep on the couch. After the explosions of the afternoon, their lovemaking was gentle and intermittent, but very satisfying. The three of them spent a lot of time just cuddling and talking. They went to sleep early, Jessie in the middle, all intertwined with each other.

At 2 AM, predictably, Betsy whined, waking them all up. She was hungry, but not **that** hungry, so, after Sophia had put her back into her crib, Sophia was still feeling full. Jess was more than glad to help out.

After she had drained Sophia completely, Sophia laughed, “You know what? If I didn’t feel like a cow **before**, I do **now**.”

“Soph, if it bothers you...” Jess started.

“No, of course not,” Sophia said. “I’m just kidding. Actually, it’s kind of exciting. Moooooooo.”

Jessie cracked up and said, “It’s funny. I’ve always enjoyed sex, but I’ve always been pretty vanilla. I didn’t even get into BDSM, which, knowing me, should’ve been a natural, right? Nope. Jason and I tried it and it did nothing for me. Now, look at me. I finally pick up a fetish, and it’s **lactation**, of all things!” Warren and Sophia cracked up. “How long you going to breastfeed that kid?”

“We talked about that,” Sophia said. “We were thinking about stopping now, because it really does make skating a bit more difficult. But it’s not **that** bad, so I decided to breastfeed until Betsy hits a year old. That way we can put her on whole milk and avoid the formula completely.”

“So, you’ll still be breastfeeding when I get home for the summer?” Jessie asked. Sophia nodded. “Goody!”

“Oh, Jesus, I’m going to have to wean **both** of them,” Sophia exclaimed.

“And something tells me Betsy’s going to be easier to wean,” Warren laughed.

“You’ll have to just keep knocking her up, Warren,” Jessie joked.

“No **way**,” Sophia said. “Not for at least another three years. I am **not** skating pregnant ever again. We don’t even **discuss** this until after the next Olympics.”

“I’ll just have to knock **you** up, Jess,” Warren joked.

“Oh **don’t** tempt me!”

They woke up the next morning, still intertwined. They really had worn one another out the previous day and night, so they just cuddled for a while. Warren went up to fix breakfast, and brought it down for all of them.

After breakfast, they were chatting, and the phone rang.

“Hello,” Warren said.

“Hey, it’s Crash. I just got in late last night.”

“Hey, Crash, what’s up?” Warren said. Sophia and Jessie looked at him.

“Hey, can we get together and talk today?”

“Sure. What’s up?”

“Jessie and I broke up,” Crash said. Warren didn’t say anything. “Actually, she broke up with **me**. I knew we were having some problems, but I didn’t think they were **that** bad.” Warren shook his head, realizing that Crash had been pretty blind the past while.

“Yeah, I knew you broke up, Jessie told Sophia,” Warren said. Well, it **was** true, right?

“I figured. Listen, I need your help.”

“What with?”

“I need your help coming up with a plan,” Crash said. “I know some things went wrong, and I made some mistakes, but I need your help. Warren, I’ve got to get her back, I’ve just **got** to! And I need your help doing it.”

Warren just sat down in the chair, pale, holding his head.

--end of chapter---

BETWEEN A ROCK AND A HARD PLACE (Chapter 117)

“He really wants to get back together with me?” Jessie asked incredulously.

“That’s what he said,” Warren confirmed. They were sitting at the table in Sophia and Warren’s basement apartment. “Oh, **this** ought to be an interesting conversation. ‘Sorry, Crash, I can’t help you get back together with Jessie because Sophie and I are doing her.’”

“Tell him he can have me back when he starts lactating,” Jessie giggled. “Seriously, Warren, I’m upset that you’re in the middle of this, but I’m **not** going back with him.”

“I’m just surprised that he’s that vehement about **getting** you back,” Warren said. “From what you told me, Jessie, I didn’t think he’d care.”

“Me either,” Jessie said. She noticed Warren looking at her. She smiled at him. “Go ahead, you can ask it, I won’t be offended.”

“You didn’t embellish how he was treating you to make us more sympathetic.”

“No,” Jessie smiled. “Look, it’s **my** side of the story, and I know you need to hear **his**, and that’s fine. But I don’t think I embellished anything. If at all, I left stuff **out**. More background stuff, but still....”

“What do you mean?” Sophia asked.

“Well,” Jessie started, “remember, freshman year I was at Umass. I didn’t like **classes** there—too big and impersonal—but I had a fairly decent social life. Plenty of kids from Oceanview out there, and they introduced me to other people. I went to Wisconsin-Milwaukee, and I didn’t know **anyone**. The classes are better, and that’s good, but....” She sighed. “I don’t know anyone. I’ve had trouble making friends. I’m very isolated, and my social life has boiled down to waiting for the one or two weekends every month I was going to see my boyfriend. Now I don’t have a boyfriend. And the **only** reason I’m **out** there a thousand miles away from home is because of the boyfriend!”

“So, I have no friends out there, and the boyfriend who was the reason I went out there in the first place abandoned me. You know what? ‘Lonely’ would be too mild a word to describe how I’ve felt the last four months. ‘Shattered’ would be more accurate.”

“Oh, Jess,” Sophia said.

“You two are my rock, you really are,” Jessie said. “I don’t know what I would’ve done if you hadn’t been there for me yesterday. I’ve been so depressed.” Warren was just staring at her. “What?” she asked.

“I’m sorry, Jess. I’m just amazed at how different you are. And a little bit upset by it, too. Needy and vulnerable is new for you.”

“Tell me about it,” Jessie said, summoning up a wry grin. “Look, I’m still the same ol’ Jess, mostly, and most of the time. I just get these **weepy** moments far more often than I used to. One thing I’ve realized is that I rely on my friends more than I ever knew. Which is a **good** thing—except when I can’t find a friend. Believe me, it is **very** hard for **me**, Jessica the She-Devil Reidel, to admit that there are days where I just want to be taken care of. And that those days, lately, come more and more frequently.”

“We’ll take care of you as much as we can,” Sophia smiled at her.

“I know you will,” Jessie smiled. “Anyhow, I’m going to leave. Crash will be here soon. Besides which, I have to let my parents know I’m still around.” She got up, gave Warren a nice long kiss, gave **Sophie** a nice long kiss, and headed for the door. “Call me when Crash leaves, OK?”

“Will do,” Sophia told her. She left.

Sophia and Warren looked at each other for a minute after she left. Then Sophia said, “So, what are you going to do?”

“Try to talk him out of going back after her, without quite telling him **why**.”

“Ah,” Sophia said. “Do you want me here when you talk to him?”

“Completely up to you, Pookie.”

“I don’t know. I might kill him.” Sophia sighed. “Warren, Jessie’s in rough shape.”

“I know.”

“I think I understand the whole lactation fetish thing,” Sophia said. Warren looked at her. “Well, you know, it **is** a turn-on, and I think that goes for both of us. But, even to **me**, it’s very warm and comforting. Imagine how **she** feels.”

“When she first did it, I was a little busy,” Warren said with a smirk, making Sophia giggle, “but, when she did it in the middle of the night last night, I watched you guys. It was the most stunningly intimate thing I’ve ever seen.”

“That’s how it feels, too,” Sophia said. “I have to tell you, if you had **told** me that this was going to happen, my first reaction would’ve been, ‘eeew, that’s too **weird**!’ Especially last night, when we **weren’t** in the middle of sex when she did it. But, somehow, it’s not weird at all. If it was anyone other than Jess—or you, of course—it would be. But it’s not.”

Warren looked at Sophia and decided to ask it. “How long have you been sexually interested in Jess?”

Sophia looked up at him in surprise. Then she smiled. “For quite a while. Even before I ever experimented with girls, I felt something for **her**. I just never thought she’d go for it, so I put it out of my mind.” She looked at Warren. “What would’ve happened yesterday if I hadn’t come in the door?”

“Well, OK, I admit it,” Warren said. “I gave in a little on the kiss. But it would **not** have gone any further than that, I promise you.”

“I believe you,” Sophia smiled. “How long have you known that you were, you know, in love with her? Since the cabin?”

“If not before that,” Warren admitted. “It was easier when she was with Crash. And you **know** you’re number one and I’d **never** do anything to jeopardize that. And I struggled for a long time with the thought of being in love with two people at the same time. But it’s been there for quite a while.”

Sophia looked at him. “You feel closer to her than you do to Crash, don’t you?” Warren nodded. “And you have for a while.”

“That’s the thing that’s killing me,” Warren admitted. “I’ve always called Crash my best friend. But I’ve been closer to Jessie for some time.”

“I’d actually noticed that,” Sophia said. “Look, I’ll stay here when he gets here. You’re going to need the help. And I won’t kill him.”

Crash showed up about an hour later.

“She talked to you?” Crash asked Sophia.

“Actually, she talked to both of us,” Warren admitted. “She was here most of yesterday.”

“OK. So, tell me. What do I have to do to get her back?” Crash asked.

“I don’t think you can,” Warren admitted. “Crash, she’s pretty much done with it. I don’t think you have a chance.”

“That’s **ridiculous!**” Crash said. “Look, **you** should know that! You broke up with Sophie, but you got back together.”

“I just think this is different,” Warren told him.

“We broke up because I wasn’t in my right mind,” Sophia said. “I don’t think that’s the case with Jessie.”

“Look, Jay,” Warren said, “she told us some pretty bad things about how you’ve been treating her lately.”

“Oh, great,” Crash said. “Did she also tell you she shut me off?”

“You mean from sex?” Warren said. “Yeah, she told us that. But she also said that there was a reason for it.”

“Yeah, girls and their little games, that was the reason,” Crash said. “She was trying to prove something, to someone—don’t ask **me** to understand it.”

“Jay, she was having a problem with your sex life,” Warren told him. “She was trying to find out if that was the **only** problem. That’s what she was doing. She also said you went along with it.”

“Yeah, because I figured she wouldn’t be able to do it for long,” Crash said. “Unless she had someone on the side at school.”

“She didn’t, I know that for a fact,” Sophia said.

“She thinks **you** did, by the way,” Warren said. “Though that’s **not** why she broke up with you.”

“I did. What do you expect me to do?” Crash asked.

“Try to patch things up with **her**?” Warren asked. “I mean Jesus, Crash. You keep going on about how you wanted to fix things, and how you still want to be with her, and you were fucking around on her?”

“Look, we were at separate schools, OK? It’s not like trying to patch things up with her was 24/7. When I was with her, I **did** try to patch things up with her.”

“That’s not the way she tells it,” Warren says.

“I can believe it,” Crash agreed, “but that’s because **her** idea of trying to patch things up was trying to make me someone that I’m not.”

“Someone who loves her?” Sophia snorted. “**That** is what she was trying to make you into.”

“Bullshit,” Crash snorted back. “She **knows** I love her. The problem was, she wanted me to run through all kinds of tests and games and shit to **prove** it. Jessie doesn’t love unconditionally. She constantly wants reassurance.”

“Everybody needs reassurance,” Sophia told him.

“She didn’t **used** to!” Crash asserted. “She used to be as cool about this as **I** was.” He turned to Warren with a murderous glare in his eye. “Until that night in the fucking **cabin**.”

“What?” Warren said.

“I thought we had fixed that, you know, for about a year after. But it keeps coming back to haunt me. Oh, she doesn’t come right out and **say** ‘make love to me the way Warren did,’ she just **hints**.”

“Jay,” Sophia said, “I thought that that night had affected **you**, too. You k now, when you were with me.”

“It did, to a point,” Crash admitted. “But only to a point. Hey, great sex is great sex. I’m not going to deny for a second that I learned a lot from you that night, Soph. But I don’t want Jessie to **be** you.”

“And you think Jessie wants you to be me,” Warren said.

“Exactly right. And I refuse to give her the fucking satisfaction.”

“Then **why** do you want to try to get back with her?” Warren asked.

“Because I still **love** her!”

“No, you don’t,” Sophia said. “You love someone that doesn’t exist any more. She’s changed.”

“Yeah, and that’s all **his** fault!” he screamed, pointing at Warren. “You motherfucker! **You** are the one that fucked her up!”

“Be that as it may,” Warren said, “it happened, we **all** agreed to it, and we can’t take it back. You have to deal with the **now**, Crash. She wants more from you. If you’re unable to give it, you should just let it be.”

“Whose side are you **on**?” Crash demanded.

“Nobody’s,” Warren said.

“Bullshit. Jessie came down here with her little sob story, and now you’re all on her side. Shit, I’m surprised she didn’t try to get you into **bed**, so she could relive her wonderful little cabin experience.”

“Well, Sophia was here,” Warren said, not exactly lying.

“Like **that** would make a difference,” Crash grinned. “Sophie probably would’ve told you to go for it while she sat on the couch playing with herself. I know Sophie well enough.”

Warren tried to hide the flash of astonishment that flitted over his face. He wasn't completely successful.

Crash looked at him in horror. "You **didn't**. You DID! You fucked my girlfriend!"

"No, I didn't," Warren said. "You don't **have** a girlfriend. She broke up with you."

"Because of YOU!" Crash howled.

"No, because of **you**," Warren countered. "You are perfectly capable of treating her the way she deserves to be treated. If you didn't do that, that is not **my** fault."

"Oh, yeah, right. How can I compete with **you**? You fucked her up for me, admit it."

Warren was starting to lose his temper. "Listen to me, you unfeeling asshole. Jessie stood in this room yesterday and told me she was in love with me. Do you know how much that **cost** her? I'm her best friend's fiance, and she **knew** she was **never** going to be able to break Sophie and me up. And you could've made all that go **away**! She'd **rather** be in love with you! It was a lot easier that way. Even after the events in the cabin, she **still** wanted to be with **you**!"

"And you fucking blew it. Don't blame **me** because **you** blew it. When she came into this room yesterday, she was pathetic. You have **no** idea how depressed she is, do you?"

"Oh, she's so full of shit," Crash said. "Whine whine whine, that's all she does lately. Depressed, my ass."

That was the last straw for Warren. "You know what? When she came into this room yesterday afternoon, she was depressed. When she left—which was this **morning** by the way—she wasn't. Because she was with two people that love her, and want her to be happy."

"Jesus **Christ**, you **stole** my fucking girlfriend and you're getting all sanctimonious about it?!?"

"I didn't steal your girlfriend," Warren countered. "I have one of my own. Jessie needed **us** yesterday. Not the other way around. And we both love her, so we let her have what she needed. And **you**, who have been with her for all those years, were incapable of letting her have what she needed. And you say you're in **love** with her? Fuck that. You don't deserve her."

The next thing Warren knew, he was flat on his ass on the floor, bleeding profusely from his mouth. And Crash was on his way out the door.

"Warren!" Sophia screamed, rushing over to him. "Are you all right?"

“I don’t know,” Warren said. “That went **so** well, didn’t it?”

About two hours later, Jessie got a phone call from Sophia, telling her to come over. When she got to the basement door, Sophia was waiting for her there, outside the apartment.

“I have to prepare you. Warren looks pretty bad. We just got back from the emergency room. He’s got stitches in his lip.”

“What happened?”

“Crash slugged him,” Sophia said.

“Oh NO!” Jessie wailed, and rushed into the apartment. She ran over to Warren, who was sitting in a chair, an ice bag held to his face in one hand, Betsy in the other. “Warren, I’m so sorry!”

“Why, you didn’t hit me,” he said bemused.

“No, but I got you into the middle of this.”

“Jess. I’m where I want to be. Got that?”

“Yeah,” she smiled. “Thanks. What happened?”

“You tell her, Sophie, my mouth hurts.” Sophia told Jess all that had happened.

“So, he knows,” Jess said after Sophia was finished.

“Yeah,” Warren said. He had the ice pack off for a minute. Betsy was starting to fuss, so he walked her over to Sophia, who was sitting on the bed. “Here’s Momma, sweet thing,” he said to Betsy.

“Warren, I can’t help but feel bad. I mean, it sounds like you just lost your best friend,” Jessie said.

“Feh. My best friend is over there on the bed, feeding our kid. My **second** best friend is **you**. I tried to be calm and rational about this, and keep things sane. But he **really** pissed me off. I wasn’t kidding—he doesn’t deserve you.”

“But if I had never come over here yesterday.....,” Jess started, and then began sobbing.

“Jess. Listen to me,” Warren said. “You came over here yesterday because you **needed** to. I love you, remember?”

“You love Crash, too, though,” she sniffled. “I know guys don’t admit that because it makes them sound gay or something, but you do.”

“Under normal circumstances, I’d admit it just fine,” Warren grinned. “But the Crash that was in here this morning? I didn’t even **like** him.”

“Yeah, but that’s **still** because of **me**.”

“In a way, but I don’t care. Look, Jessie, he was just fine before you dumped him, wasn’t he? **You** were the one that was hurting. In fact, I don’t think he’s hurting at all—except his ego.” Warren sighed. “Look, when you become close with someone, it’s because you connect with them on some level, right? And I think that if that happens, you can ignore some of the less savory parts of a person until they directly affect **you**. Remember when Soph dumped me? I should’ve seen that coming, because I knew what she was like. But I didn’t.”

“Crash is selfish. Always has been. The times that he was selfish with **me** have been few and far between, so I’ve ignored it, because there were so many other things I liked about the guy. But he’s been selfish with you for some time, it seems. I probably should’ve seen **this** coming, too.”

“There’s another problem. You’ve met Crash’s mother. That woman doesn’t have a life that doesn’t revolve around Crash. That’s the way he was raised. The only needs that count are Crash’s needs. He expects you to act the same way.”

“Yeah,” Jess said sadly.

Jessie was still sobbing—which was bad enough, Jessie was **not** a crier. “Honey, could you take Betsy?” Sophia asked. “She’s all done.” Warren grabbed her and put her back in her crib. “Jessie?” Sophia said, patting her lap. Jessie sniffled, sighed, and went over to where Sophia was on the bed. Jess put her head in Sophie’s lap and gently began suckling on her boob. In short order, Jessie’s sniffing stopped.

After a minute, Jessie unlatched herself, looked up at Sophia, and said, “Soph? **Why** doesn’t this freak you out?”

“I don’t know,” Sophia said. “It just doesn’t.”

“Breastfeeding a grown woman who happens to be your best friend doesn’t freak you out,” Jessie said in amazement.

“It’s exciting. It’s warm and comforting. Hey, doing it doesn’t freak **you** out.”

“Yes it **does**,” Jessie laughed. “But I also love doing it. But, yes, the fact that I love doing it **does** freak me out.”

“It’s OK. Really. It’s just the three of us. Don’t get freaked out,” Sophia said. Jessie smiled at her, and went back to sucking on her boob. Sophie found herself gently stroking Jessie’s hair.

“You get all blissed out when she does that, you know,” Warren said to Sophia, amused.

“Blissed out and horny,” Sophia giggled.

Jess pulled off and said, “**You’re** horny?” and then went back to it.

“Hmm. I think I have to help somebody out here. But who? Hmmm,” Warren teased.

“Well, I’m comfortable, and you can get at her easier than me, so…” Sophia said.

Warren laughed, and headed towards the bed. Jessie was lying on her side, but Warren flipped her over on her back. Sophia put a pillow under Jessie’s head so she could still reach Sophia’s breasts. Warren took Jessie’s pants off.

“Sorry, Jess, I can’t use my mouth today,” Warren said. He lined his cock up with her pussy, used his cock to spread her wetness around, and entered her. Jessie groaned into Sophie’s boob.

Warren was gentle, partially because Jessie needed it that way, but also partially so he wouldn’t thrust Jessie’s face into Sophie’s boob too hard. Sophie took her arms and wrapped them around Jessie’s head, snuggling her into her boobs. Jessie moaned into her boobs as Warren plunged in and out of her, gradually picking up the pace. It didn’t take too much of that before Jessie came—and Warren followed suit shortly thereafter.

After Warren pulled out, Jessie disengaged from Sophie’s boob. Then, almost in a trance, she got off Sophie’s lap, turned, and started undoing Sophie’s pants. Before Sophie knew it, her pants and panties were off and Jess was crawling up between her legs. “Jess?” she said in surprise, and then, “Ooooooh!” when Jessie’s tongue lapped the length of her pussy.

Sophia spread her legs further to give Jess easier access, and Jess dove in, running her tongue up and down the length of Sophie’s pussy, experimentally.

Warren saw that there was enough room between the headboard and Sophie for him to squeeze in, so he did, pushing Sophie up to a sitting position and getting in behind her. He pulled her back towards him and she snuggled back into his chest, his arms around her waist, while Jessie went to town on her pussy.

And Jess was going to town! She nibbled on Sophie’s inner labia, making Sophie jump, then snaked her tongue all up and down. Then she curled her tongue up and thrust it into Sophie’s opening, gently pushing it in and out. She took it out, and went up the length of her pussy, using gentle back-and-forth motions. She got to the top, and circled Sophie’s

clit. She teased it repeatedly with her tongue, then brought her lips down around it and sucked in into her lips.

Sophie **jumped**. She started quivering in Warren's arms as Jessie sucked on her clit. Then Jess took two fingers and thrust them into Sophia's pussy. She curled them up, looking for that wrinkled pad of skin she knew would drive Sophie wild. She found it easily. Sophie's got a much more prominent G-spot than I do, the lucky dog, she thought. Then she drummed her fingers on the sensitive pad, with her lips still sucking on Sophie's clit.

"Oh, God, she's almost as good as **you** are," Sophie gasped to Warren. Jessie smiled to herself, knowing what a compliment **that** was, and kept up her work. She took Sophie's clit into her mouth, and gently flicked it with her tongue, timing the flicks with her fingers drumming on Sophie's G-spot. Sophie bucked and howled, and came all over Jessie's face and hand.

After Sophia came down, she looked and gasped at Jessie, "Oh my God! I **never** thought you'd ever do **that**!"

"I'm just full of surprises, ain't I?" Jess grinned—to Warren and Sophia's relief, much more like herself.

Jess left shortly after that, having errands to run. Warren and Sophie had practice that afternoon. Afterwards, they headed home to eat with the family.

Afterwards, they, Betsy, Ellen, Dan, and Kate were all in the family room when there was a knock on the door. Ellen opened it, and in walked a very upset-looking Jess, along with her mother, Corinne.

"Hi, Jess. Hi, Corinne. What's up? Come in, sit down." They did, Jess looking very uncomfortable, and Corinne looking upset.

"I want to know what's going on over here," Corinne said.

"Excuse me?" Ellen asked.

Corinne sighed. "Look, Jessie's been very upset. The last month she was at school, I was calling her every day just to make sure she wasn't doing something drastic to herself. She came home three days ago, I pick her up at the airport, and she looks like the night of the living dead. She's home that night, doesn't say anything, just mopes. I was worried as can be. I made an appointment for her to see a psychologist, that's how worried I was."

"Then, she comes over here yesterday, stays all day and all night, and comes home today—and it's the old Jess! Talking to me, cracking wise, being her usual self. I want to know what the hell happened here!"

“I keep telling her that just hanging out with you guys cheered me up.”

“You haven’t needed ‘cheering up’ for the last month. It went deeper than that.”

“Crash was treating her like shit, and then they broke up,” Sophia put in.

“I **know** all that. What I **don’t** know is what **changed** when she was **here**.”

“Why should that matter?” Jessie asked. “If I’m my old self again, why should you care about the reason?”

“Because I **know** what it is, Jess,” Corinne said. “There’s only one thing that makes you go from suicidal to euphoric overnight. And we’ve been down this road before with you, and we can’t do it again.”

“**What** are you talking about? Jessie asked.

“Drugs, Jessie!” Corinne spat out. “You’re taking drugs again, aren’t you?”

“No, I’m not.”

“The three of you,” Corinne maintained.

“Mrs. Reidel,” Sophia said, “As far as I know, Jessie hasn’t done drugs in a few years. I haven’t done drugs in longer than that. **Warren** has **never** done them. There were no drugs here.”

“There **had** to be,” Corinne maintained.

“Dammit, Mom, there were **not**!”

“Then **what** was it?

“Love and support,” Jessie maintained.

“I try to give you that, Jess!” Corinne said. “And it hasn’t worked.”

“It’s different.”

“Why, Jessie? Love and support is love and support, isn’t it? There has to be something else.”

“OK, Dammit,” Jessie said. “Great sex! Love and support and great sex. Are you happy now?”

“I thought you were here yesterday,” Corinne said. Jessie nodded. “Then who could you have great sex with?”

“THEM!” Jessie howled, pointing at Warren and Sophie. “I had sex with **them**. **Both** of them. And it was euphoric.”

“What?” Corinne choked out, shocked.

“You know, Jess and I **really** have to stop shooting our mouths off at inopportune moments,” Warren said wryly.

“You had sex...with Warren....and **Sophie**?” Corinne asked, still stupefied.

“We invited her into our bed,” Sophia said quietly. “And, by the way, that’s an open-ended invitation, and she knows that.”

The room went deathly silent. Until the silence was broken up by delighted laughter. It was Kate.

“Oh, I love it!” Kate burst out. “My sister is having a menage a trois with her fiancé and her best friend! How cool is that? You guys are **nice** and kinky, aren’t you?”

“Excuse me?” Dan said.

“Well, Dad, it **is**,” Kate said, still giggling. “Sounds like fun, actually.”

“Jesus, Kate, I **knew** being around Sophie was going to give you ideas,” Dan grumbled—though not entirely.

“Oh, I’ve been having **that** idea since Chad introduced me to his friend Stacy. And she was wearing a skintight halter top and short shorts,” Kate giggled. “I’m usually not one for girls, but I took one look at her and went ‘hmmmmmm’.”

“KATHERINE!” Dan yelled—but he couldn’t help the grin that was threatening to break out. “Ah, to hell with it,” he said. “I give up.”

“You gave up a long time ago,” Kate grinned, tickling him on the arm. He turned to Sophia. “Do you know that when I first went to bed with Chad, I was actually able to **talk** to him about it without him taking my head off?”

“You’re older,” Dan said. “And I know you’re responsible. And, I guess, I **have** changed some of my attitudes.” He grinned wryly. “In **this** house, it was either that, or be **completely** grey instead of only partially. Not to mention the ulcer I’d develop.” He looked at Sophia. “But isn’t this a bit, I don’t know, dangerous?”

“We don’t think so,” Sophia said.

“I guess what puzzles **me** the most,” Corinne said, “is this. Look, Jess, you know I try to be open-minded, but I didn’t think you had **any** interest in girls. Are you questioning your sexuality?”

“Nope,” Jessie said. “What I’ve decided is that I’m heterosexual, with a side order of Sophia Daniels.” The whole room chuckled at that. “It’s just her.”

“So, what does this mean?” Ellen asked.

“It means that The Couple is now a threesome. As long as Jess wants it that way,” Sophia said.

“And, at least for right now, I want it that way,” Jessie said.

“But, the wedding?” Ellen asked.

“This does **not** affect their wedding,” Jessie asserted.

“Well, yeah, it does. I think I need to find a new best man,” Warren said ruefully.

“Why?” Corinne asked.

“Well, this fat lip? Jason’s fist.”

“Oh, Jeez,” Ellen said. “I thought you told me he **fell**,” she said to Sophia.

“Well, we **were** trying to keep all this under wraps,” Sophia said.

“Wait a minute. Jason **knows**?” Corinne said.

“He figured it out. I don’t do a poker face very well,” Warren said.

“And then he slugged you?” Corinne said.

“Well, actually, no. He didn’t slug me until I told him he didn’t deserve Jess.”

Corinne laughed. “You know what? If you two made her **this** happy, then you were right, Warren.”

“We love her,” Warren said.

“We **both** love her,” Sophia added. “We just want her to be happy.” Jessie was beaming.

“But, I don’t know, guys,” Ellen added. “What about **you** two?”

“We’re **already** happy,” Sophia pointed out. “With Jess involved, we’re just happier.”

“This isn’t permanent,” Jessie said. “This is for now. We all know that. We can handle this.”

“If you say so,” Corinne said. “Just be careful, OK? Judging by the look of Warren’s lip, this little escapade has already ruined one friendship.”

“True,” Warren said, “but the three of us have talked about this. Besides which, Crash was being an asshole. To Jessie especially.”

“Well, that’s one problem you might have, Jess,” Ellen said. “Your next boyfriend better be a gem. Because I think Warren’s about to become more overprotective than **Dan** used to be about **Kate**!”

“Nope,” Warren said. “She just knows she has someplace else to go, now. He’d better be a gem if he plans on **keeping** her!”

The next day was Christmas Eve. Warren convinced Sophie to go out and do some last-minute shopping. Sophie and Jessie had always exchanged gifts, but Warren wanted to find something for Jessie from **both** of them.

They did. And when Jessie opened up the gift that evening, she broke into tears.

They had found a set of earrings. The part in the ear was a diamond stud. Dangling from the stud part were little gold hearts.

Three little gold hearts.

PHOTOGENIC (Chapter 118)

“So, tell me again,” Jessie asked Sophia as she sat in the passenger’s seat of Sophia’s car, “where are we going?”

“New Hampshire.”

“And **why** are we going to New Hampshire?”

“Tattoos.”

Jessie looked at her. “**Tattoos**?”

“Yeah, I didn’t tell you before this because I didn’t want you to spill the beans. Warren doesn’t know about this.” She giggled. “I’ve always wanted to do this, and with that Maxim photo shoot coming up next week, I decided I wanted the tattoos beforehand.”

“How many, and where?” Jess asked.

“Two. One on the small of my back, one right above the bikini line on my right boob.”

“What?”

“You’ll see,” Sophia grinned. “The one on my back is cool. I checked this out. These guys we’re going to, they have a good reputation of being able to work well from a drawing. I knew what I wanted, so I had Kate sketch it out for me, and the tattoo guy is going to copy it. It’s going to be great.”

“Just so you don’t expect **me** to get any,” Jessie snorted.

“Well, they do piercings, too. I figured we could get your nipples done. With a chain connecting the two, so I can lead you around by your tits.”

“Hmmm. Well. Hmmmmm,” Jessie said. Both girls cracked up laughing. “Nah, I don’t think so. If I did it, I’d do it after I went back to Wisconsin. I don’t want the recovery time to coincide with the too-few weeks I have here.”

“Good point,” Sophia laughed.

Jessie giggled, then got serious. “You know how my Mom said she made me an appointment with a psychologist? I kept it. Even though I’m a lot happier, my life **has** gotten very weird all of a sudden.”

“True,” Sophia grinned.

“She said a lot of interesting things.” Jessie took a deep breath. “I was worried about the lactation thing, you know. She didn’t seem to think it was a big problem. She asked me if I had ever mothered you. And I said, yeah, actually, back when you were going through all of your younger pre-Warren shit.”

“You’re right, you did,” Sophia agreed.

“So, the shrink thinks that it’s your turn to mother me, and it’s just coming out in a different way. Plus the fact that it turns me on intensifies that. So she’s not worried about that at all.”

“Good, because I’m feeling full. We might have to pull into a rest stop,” Sophie teased.

“Wouldn’t **that** be interesting if we were caught!” Jess said, laughing. “Anyhow, then I asked her about this whole threesome thing. I described a lot of stuff to her. And I told her my worry—that I thought I had to try really hard not to monopolize Warren. That I had to remember that I was number two, and not get in between you and he. She thinks I’m worried about the wrong thing.” Jessie took a breath. “She thinks that I have to be careful not to monopolize **you**.”

“Me?”

“Yeah. She thinks the bond between Warren and I is strong—but she thinks the bond between you and I is unbelievably strong.”

“It always has been,” Sophia smiled.

“And that was before we added sex to the equation. Plus—let’s face it—Warren is easygoing. He won’t fight for his rights until it gets really bad.”

“Yeah, but **I** will,” Sophia asserted. “I love you Jess—but I love him, too. And I prefer men, sexually. I love having sex with you, but I’m not going to forget Warren, believe me. You’re not **that** good.”

Jessie cracked up laughing. “True. And you’re not as good as he is, either. Except he doesn’t lactate. Anyhow, though, I wasn’t just talking about sex. I almost turned you down on coming with you today, but you were so insistent. I thought you should be taking Warren.”

“Oh, we would’ve **all** gone, except I’m trying to surprise him.”

“Yeah, I get that, now.”

“Besides which, Jess, our time together is limited. Warren and I will have plenty of time to rejuvenate. And, quite honestly, as long as you **are** here, I prefer the three of us together anyhow, not pairing up with someone left out.” She grinned. “Especially in bed. Opens up so many possibilities.”

“True,” she grinned. Then she got serious. “Crash called last night.”

“What did he say?” Sophia asked.

“I don’t know. I wasn’t there. If you remember, dear, last night I was eating your pussy while Warren fucked me.”

“Oh, yeah,” Sophia laughed. “He left a message?”

“Yeah. Says he just wants to talk.”

“Are you going to return the call?”

“I’m inclined not to, but I’m still deciding,” Jess sighed. “I just have a funny feeling it’s going to be a diatribe—against me **and** Warren.”

“Well, call him, and if he launches into a diatribe, hang the phone up.”

“Maybe. I still have to think about it.”

“I can’t tell you what to do. Anyhow, here we are.”

“Sophia Daniels getting tattoos. Never woulda thunk it,” Jessie grinned.

Warren was home with Betsy, Dan, Kate, and Kate’s boyfriend Chad.

“Quite honestly, Dan,” he was saying, “I expected you to go ballistic over this whole threesome thing. **Especially** after Kate piped up with how cool and kinky it was.”

“Hmm. So you **like** this idea?” Chad grinned.

“Do **not** get me in trouble here,” Kate laughed.

Dan laughed, too. “You know what, Warren? Sometimes, in life, you either accept what is, when you know you can’t change it, or you just make yourself ill. Nothing I say is going to stop you guys. Nothing I say is going to stop Kate. If she and Chad want to get it on with another woman, nothing I say is going to stop it. Yeah, with Kate, I could put my foot down, threaten to kick her out, yadda yadda yadda. What would that prove? I did it for too long, and I almost ruined my relationship with my only daughter beyond repair. It’s not worth it.”

“Well, well, well. When did **you** get all enlightened?” Kate said.

“You know when? Well, with you, it was when you broke up with Dave.”

“Huh?” Kate said.

“I wasn’t taking sides or saying that you should’ve broken up with him, mind you—that was between you and he. But breaking up with him was a mature, thought-out decision. You didn’t get wrapped up in ‘being a girlfriend’, you made the decision you thought best at the time. I was impressed. You ended up alone all summer—lots of girls your age wouldn’t have done that. They would’ve ‘hung on’ just so to not be alone.”

“Hmm,” Kate said. “Thanks.”

“You’re welcome,” Dan smiled. “As for **you**,” he said to Warren, “well, I must admit. I treated you and Sophie—especially Sophie—harshly over the years. And I regret that. Because I underestimated you, both of you. And I didn’t really realize it until you brought home that squirmy thing in your arms.”

“I’m so impressed by how you’ve handled parenthood, at your young ages. I know, next year is going to be tough, juggling Betsy, skating, **and** school—and with no Ellen around. I would’ve thought it would be a disaster. I don’t think so anymore. You guys can handle it.”

“Sophie’s a fantastic mother. You’re as equally as good a father. That kid’s lucky. Ellen helps, I know—and having an easier schedule helps, too. But you guys did **that**, too. Taking a year off from school wasn’t an easy decision—but, again, it was a good and mature one. And you two dote on that baby. I’ve been impressed since the day you guys brought her home.”

“If you can handle **that**, then I think you can handle your own sex life. Plus, I might have been worried more if it was some strange girl you guys brought home, but it’s **Jessie**. She’s been a part of Sophie’s life forever, and a part of **your** life for almost as long. She’s here all the time anyhow, whenever you’re all in town, so what’s the difference? You’re in bed instead of on the couch? Who cares? If you guys think you can handle it, then it’s your business.”

“Thanks, Dan. That means a lot,” Warren smiled.

“Where **are** the terrible twosome, anyway?” Dan asked.

“They wouldn’t tell me,” Warren grinned.

“Well, **I** know, but I’m sworn to secrecy,” Kate giggled. “Though, Dad, your estimation of Sophie’s maturity might go down a smidge. I think she’s **nuts**, but, hey, it’s her decision.”

“OK, **now** you’ve got me worried,” Warren said.

“Oh, no, nothing worrisome. I just think it’s **stupid**. But, then, that’s me.”

Just then, Sophia and Jessie walked in the front door. “Hi, folks!” Jessie said, running in the door. “Hi,” Sophie said. She was moving a little stiffly—especially when she took her coat off, Jessie had to help her.

“Honey, what’s wrong?” Warren asked.

“Nothing. It’s just a little painful. It’ll go away,” Sophia grinned tightly. “I knew it was going to hurt.”

“OK. **What** did you do?” Warren demanded. “Kate wouldn’t tell us what it was, but said she thought it was stupid.”

“Well **I** don’t. I’ve been wanting to do this for a very long time.” She started taking off her blouse. “Don’t worry, I’ve got a bikini top on underneath.” She got the blouse off, and pointed to her right boob, right above the bikini line. “That’s the small one,” she said.

They looked at it. It said “ I <heart> W K.”

“A tattoo?” Warren grinned. “You got a tattoo? And it’s such a sweet one. I’m touched.”

“Well, no, I got **two** tattoos,” she grinned, and turned around. “Kate designed this one, they just copied it.” On the small of her back were the five Olympic rings. Dangling from the two bottom rings were a pair of ice skates.

“That’s **fantastic!**” Warren enthused. “I love it!”

“OK, it really is impressive,” Kate agreed.

“Very eye-catching,” Dan said. “And very appropriate for you. The good thing is that one’s not one you’re going to be embarrassed about twenty years from now. Because you’ll always be an Olympian.”

“And I won’t be embarrassed by the other one, because I’ll always heart W K, too,” she giggled.

Warren started singing in a bad country-western parody, “She loved me so much, on her tittie she had it tattooed; but when I tried to kiss it all better she said I was crude.”

“You’re a nut, you know that?” Sophie laughed. “You really like them? I was afraid you wouldn’t.”

“I really like them,” Warren smiled. “You did this now because of the Maxim photo shoot, didn’t you?”

“Yup!” Sophia admitted.

The next week, after the new year, Sophia—with Warren and Betsy in tow—flew down to New York for the Maxim photo shoot.

They met the photographer and the interviewer, and Sophie signed all of the relevant paperwork. The photographer asked her, “What are my limits?”

“Huh?”

“How far can I go? With most celebrities, I get ‘don’t show this’.”

“Oh. Well, then, no limits,” Sophia said. “I know you guys don’t do full nudity, but, even if you did, I wouldn’t care. I’m not shy.”

“Great!” the photographer said.

First, they had someone do her makeup and hair. Then, an assistant handed her a bikini. “Go put this on, so we can get an idea of what I have to work with,” the photographer said. There was a place for Sophie to change, and she emerged in a very skimpy black bikini.

“Nice tattoo,” the photographer laughed.

“I have two,” Sophia grinned, and turned around to show him the other one.

“Oh, I **like** that one!” he said. “We’ll definitely get a shot from the rear. Now. Sit here and we’ll do some bikini shots.” He looked at her. “Are you **sure** you had a baby five months ago?”

Sophia laughed. “She’s right over there, with her Daddy,” she said, pointing behind the photographer to a corner of the room. “And I watched her come out, so I know she’s mine. I had to get back in shape in a hurry for skating.”

“You did that. Let’s get started.”

Sophia was there for a couple hours, taking all sorts of photos. At one point, Betsy cried, so Sophia asked for a few minutes to feed her. The photographer snapped a few of **that**.

“Somehow, I can’t see Maxim wanting breastfeeding shots,” Sophia laughed.

“Probably not, but, you know, I’ll submit them. One of them was quite beautiful.”

She enjoyed it, even thought some of them are quite revealing. She took some with no top on at all, her arm covering her breasts. A few taken from the back, with her looking back over her shoulder, were done with her wearing nothing but panties. This was going to be quite a spread, she thought.

The interview was painless. The interviewer asked her about skating, Betsy, Warren, and juggling all those things. She enjoyed it.

The issue would be out in about a month and a half—after Nationals, but just in time for Worlds. Sophie and Warren couldn’t wait to see how the skating world received it.

After they got home, they were lying in bed with Jessie, just talking, when the doorbell rang.

Warren went over to open it, and there stood Crash. “Hey, Warren. Can I come in?”

“I don’t know. Jessie’s here. I don’t know if she would want me to let you in.”

“OK. Then I’ll talk to you, at least, right here. I’m sorry I hit you.”

“Apology accepted. And I’m sorry I didn’t tell you beforehand that I slept with Jess. It just kind of happened.”

"I know." Crash sighed. "I'd like to talk to her. Actually, all of you together would be fine. Will you ask her? I'll wait right here."

"OK. Hold on." Warren went back into the apartment. "It's Crash. He'd like to talk to us."

"Is he here to blow his stack?" Jessie asked.

"I don't think so. He just apologized for hitting me."

"OK," Jessie sighed. "Might as well get it over with." Warren went back out and returned with Crash. They sat around the table.

"Jess, I want another chance," Crash started.

Jessie sighed. "Jason, I don't think that's a good idea. I'm sorry, but it's run its course. We want different things. Even **you** can see that."

"I want **you**," Crash replied.

"No, you don't," Jessie replied sadly. "You want the seventeen-year-old me, not the twenty-year-old me. She's gone, Jason. I can't live my life the way I used to."

"Don't you still love me?" Crash asked.

"God dammit, this isn't easy," Jessie replied. "No. I'm sorry. I don't. Well, I'll always love you, but I'm not **in** love with you anymore. I need more, Jason. I really am sorry. I probably hung on too long, actually, hoping for a miracle."

"I don't believe you."

"Jason, I'm trying to keep as calm as I can. A relationship has to grow. Ours didn't. My needs changed, and you refused to acknowledge that. In fact, you revolted against it. You haven't treated me well at all for close to a year. You've made me feel abandoned and alone. I went a thousand miles away from everyone I love for **you**, and you didn't care enough about me to make it work. If you really loved me, you would've given me what I needed."

"Jess, you were too demanding."

"Then I was too demanding," Jessie agreed. "You need to find someone that's not so demanding. That's not me, not anymore. Don't you see?"

"I wish we had never done that fucking swap in the cabin," Jason spat out bitterly.

"I know you do. But that's the point. I'm so glad we **did**, that I can't tell you. It opened me up. It made me a better person. It let me know that there was more to life, and love,

than what I was settling for. I **thought** you realized the same things. It took me a while to realize I was wrong.”

“It was just sex!” Jason said.

“And that’s the problem. To you, it’s **always** just been sex. You don’t understand the difference between having sex and making love. I didn’t used to, either. Now I do.”

“There is no difference!” Crash maintained.

“This is pointless,” Jessie said. “Jason, it’s over. I’m sorry, but there’s no going back.”

“I can’t accept that!”

“Crash,” Sophia interjected, “can I say something that might piss you off?”

“You might as well,” he said with a wry smile.

“You don’t want Jess back. You just don’t want to be alone. You two have grown too far apart. I think, deep down, you know that.”

“That’s not true.” He looked at Jess. “I **do** love you, you know. I’m just not capable of showing it in the way you’d like me to. If you think that’s enough reason to break up something that’s been going on for as long as we have, then I guess I can’t fight it.”

“Jay, that’s not it,” Jessie said. “It’s not that you weren’t capable. It’s that you didn’t **try**.”

“I’m willing to try now.”

“It’s too late,” Jessie said, sadly. “Goodbye, Jason.”

Jason looked around the room. Then he looked sadly at Jessie and said, “Goodbye, Jess. I’m sorry.” And then he left.

“You know, I didn’t want to break his heart. I really didn’t,” Jessie said, tears starting to roll down her cheeks. “I thought he saw what I saw. He acted like it for a **year**—that he really didn’t care what happened to us. Why does he have to start caring **now**? Damn him.”

“Isn’t him caring now enough of a reason to give it another try?” Warren asked.

“No. It’s not. Because it took me far too long to work up the courage to end it, because **I** was still looking at the illusion of three years ago. I can’t put myself through that again. And I don’t think he’s really willing to change. He’ll make a half-hearted effort, and then it will be back to the same old thing.” She sniffled. “And, you know what, I wasn’t kidding. What he’s done the past year did kill my love for him. I’m **not** in love with him

anymore, and I don't see how I could ever get that back. There's too much baggage." She sniffled again. "But, fuck, I **really** didn't want to break his heart! Fuck."

Sophie and Warren held Jessie between them as she cried for a good, long time.

THE NEW THREAT (Chapter 119)

The plane landed in Philadelphia on a Sunday afternoon. That's where Nationals were being held this year. Sophie, Warren, Betsy, and Ellen were there, of course—but Jessie had come along, too. Dan and Kate, and Warren's parents, would be along later in the week.

Jessie was thrilled they had asked her to come—and amused at one of the reasons. Sophie didn't want to get full and bloated. "And the way you've been draining me, the minute I'm apart from you for a few days, I **will**. After you go back to Milwaukee, fine, but not when I'm trying to skate!"

But that wasn't the only reason. Since Jessie had to go back to Milwaukee soon, they wanted her along. They had become very comfortable with Jessie being a complete part of their lives.

They got their hotel rooms—Ellen had one of her own, where Dan would join her in a few days, and the threesome plus Betsy shared one—then went down to the hotel restaurant for supper. As usual, they ran into some friends who had also arrived early.

"If it ain't Daddy and Mommy!" Liz Cushman greeted them, plucking Betsy out of Sophia's arms. "And how's my little namesake?" she gurgled.

"Hi, Liz," Warren said. "You remember Jessie, right?"

"Of course," she grinned. They ended up at a table with Evan, Shawna, and Liz, happily chatting and eating.

Afterwards, they invited Liz up to their room, to chat.

"So, how's Rich?" Warren asked.

Liz sighed. "I didn't want to tell you this until I saw you in person, but there is no more Rich."

"Aw, Liz," Warren said. "What happened?"

“What happened is that Rich doesn’t know what he wants. He **tells** himself he wants a successful, independent woman—but he doesn’t. I think, after I won the Olympic gold, he expected me to retire, hang around LA, go to school, and just do the occasional show. He never quite got how important skating is to me, and he didn’t like the separations. I started to see it when I was gone on tour last year. He pouted. Then when I started competing again this year, he **really** pouted. I broke up with him right after the Grand Prix Final. He couldn’t come, and got all pissy about it. That’s a skater’s life, and I’m not ready to give it up yet. I tried to make him understand, but he wouldn’t.”

“Shit,” said Sophia.

“Well, Liz, we can commiserate,” Jessie said with a strained smile.

“Weren’t you with Warren’s best friend, for a long time?”

“Was. Aren’t anymore.”

Liz laughed. “And look at us. We have to stare at The Cuddly Couple over here. It’s disgusting.” Liz grinned. “Ah, well, Jess. We’ll find someone else. There’s fish in the sea, and all those cliches.” Jess didn’t say anything, but had a strange smile on her face. “Wait a minute. You found someone already?” Liz asked.

“Jess, Liz is completely trustworthy,” Sophia told her.

Jess laughed, and said, “I didn’t just find some **one**, I went in for the two-for-one special.”

“Huh?” Liz said.

Sophia laughed. “Liz, Jessie is staying with us in this room. Did you happen to notice how many **beds** there are in this room?” There was only one.

Liz’s jaw dropped. “You’re kidding.”

“Nope. I got me a boyfriend **and** a girlfriend,” Jessie grinned.

“You guys take the cake,” Liz grinned back. “Is there room for a fourth in that bed? No, I’m just kidding. I’m a one-on-one kind of gal. So, it’s funny. Three girls in this room, and we’ve all slept with Warren.” She grinned wider. “And, I must admit, he was better than Rich.”

“A whole lot better than Crash,” Jessie agreed.

“He’s way at the top of my rather lengthy list, that’s for sure,” Sophia laughed.

“Jesus. You all are going to give me a swelled head.”

“Good. That’s what I was hoping for,” Jess grinned.

“Not **that** head, you sex maniac,” Warren said.

“So,” Jess said, “Warren, which one of **us** is the best?”

“Oh, no,” Warren spat out, “no you don’t. You are **not** getting me into **that**.”

“Come on, Snugglebear, fess up,” Sophie said.

“Nope. Besides which, it’s not a fair question. I’ve been with Sophie thousands of times. I’ve been with Jess, what, about twenty by now? I’ve been with Liz **once**. It’s just not a fair question. Besides which, Sophie was my first—and for a good couple of years, my **only**. Sophie **taught** me how to make love to a woman. If either of **you** two think I’m that good, Sophie gets a lot of the credit.”

“Aw, you’re so sweet,” Sophie beamed at him.

The next day was their first practice. They were standing in the corner, chatting with Shawna and Evan.

“Who’s that?” Warren asked, pointing to a couple he didn’t recognize.

“Courtney Rogers and Ryan Killen. Junior National Champions last year. She’s 17, he’s 20. And she is, apparently, a barracuda,” Evan told them.

“Ah,” Sophia said. They chatted a bit, then started skating around the edges of the ice.

“Oh, look, it’s the slut and the shit,” Courtney said to her partner.

“C’mon, Court. They **are** the National Champions.”

“Not for long. They’re overrated and a disgrace,” Courtney said. “They’re our targets, Rye. Let’s go introduce ourselves,” she said with a wicked chuckle.

“Court, I don’t think—“ but Courtney was already pulling him along. Ryan did what Courtney said—life was easier that way.

Warren and Sophia were gliding along the boards, when Courtney directed Ryan full-speed right into their path. Warren was too good for that, though—he saw them coming, stopped, and turned, leading Sophia and neatly sidestepping Courtney and Ryan. “Nice try!” Sophia giggled as they skated off.

“Well, we know what **their** game is,” Warren said.

“They really think it’s going to work with **us**?” Sophia snorted. “They forget who they’re dealing with.”

“Too true, love,” Warren agreed. “We don’t intimidate easily.”

Meanwhile, Courtney was livid. “Those two assholes! We almost crashed into the boards.” Ryan didn’t say anything. He knew it was their fault, but you didn’t **say** that to Courtney. Not if you enjoyed breathing. Courtney dragged him right up to where Warren and Sophia had stopped.

“We’re gunning for you,” Courtney told them straight out.

“Take your best shot,” Warren grinned.

“Oh, I plan to. You two are ruining ice dancing.”

“Is this a stylistic debate?” Warren asked. “I haven’t seen you skate yet, so I don’t know what your style is.”

“Different from yours, but, no, this isn’t a stylistic debate,” Courtney spat. “I just hate seeing a **slut** as the National Champion.”

“Hmmm,” Sophia grinned. “Slut, huh? Well, you can believe what you want. But I’m not a slut. I love **him**. We’re getting married this summer.”

“That doesn’t matter. You’re all about sex. You got **pregnant**, for goodness’ sake,” Courtney said.

“Yes, I did. You wanna see our baby? She’s beautiful, and a joy,” Sophia said calmly. “She’s the light of our lives. We’re so glad we had her—because, you know, I almost **didn’t**. Because I was too worried what narrow-minded jerks like **you** might think. Betsy was an accident, but she’s the most glorious accident ever.”

“Babies are for married people,” Courtney said.

“Well, in August, she will be,” Sophia countered. “You need to be a little less judgmental.”

“Oh, she’s going to **love** the next issue of Maxim,” Warren laughed. Sophia laughed in agreement.

“The magazine?” Ryan spoke up. “What about it?”

“I’m in it,” Sophia grinned. “In fact, I’m **on** it. And I’m not wearing much.”

“That’s **disgusting**!” Courtney wailed.

“If you got it, flaunt it,” Warren grinned. “Now, if you’ll excuse us, we have to go skate.”

“Oh, goody. Our new challengers are narrow-minded moralistic shits,” Sophia said to Warren.

“The exhibition’s gonna blow their minds,” Warren laughed.

“Jessie would **really** blow their minds!”

The competition was rather anti-climactic. The only other team in their league was Evan and Shawna, and they finished a distant second. Ryan and Courtney finished third. Liz repeated as the Ladies’ champion, as did Andrea and Brett in pairs. The men’s champion was a youngster named Tom Bellamy.

The real furor came, as predicted by Warren, with the new exhibition they had worked up. It was to an Aerosmith song called “Pink”, a song that was pretty suggestive in the first place. And the program that they had worked up was **really** suggestive. First of all, Sophia took the title of the song to heart, and dressed in a pink miniskirt and a pink spaghetti-strap low-cut top. She had dangly pink heart earrings, had her hair tied back in a pink bow—she was even wearing pink lip gloss.

The program started with Warren standing at the far end of the ice. Sophia skated alone for the entire intro, going from the near end down to Warren at the far end. She **sauntered** down the ice, rolling her hips, snapping her fingers, a sultry look on her face. And the program went on from **there** to get steamy. There were all sorts of clench-moves. There was a lift where Sophia had her arms wrapped around Warren’s neck, her legs wrapped around his hips, his hands on her ass, and she lightly humped against him. There was the sequence where Warren clearly had his hand on her breast. “Pink” was about sex—the song **and** the program. The crowd seemed delighted. The powers-that-be did not. Sophia and Warren **loved** it.

After they returned from Nationals, Jessie would have to leave for Milwaukee in less than a week. A couple of days before she was to leave, Crash called her and asked her if she’d meet him for coffee. He just wanted to talk, he said. She accepted.

“Thanks for coming,” he said as she sat down at the booth. “Look, I need to apologize. I’ve done a lot of thinking over the past few weeks. I really blew this, didn’t I?”

“Yeah, you did,” she agreed. “Look, I’ve kind of glossed over this with Warren and Sophie, because they are still your friends—but what you’ve put me through the last year, as far as I’m concerned, was verbal abuse.”

“I can’t argue with you,” Crash admitted. “I couldn’t help myself. The needier you got, the more angry I got about it. It was just like a **reaction** and I couldn’t stop it. I really am sorry.”

She smiled at him. "Apology accepted."

"And I suppose I owe you a thank-you," he smiled back, wryly. "It was a wake-up call. At least you don't hate me. If we had gone any further down that path, you would have."

"No, I don't hate you," Jessie agreed. "Jay, I still love you. I'm just not **in** love with you anymore. I don't think, long-term, that we're good for each other."

"Maybe you're right," he admitted. "It's hard to accept. We were together for a long time."

"I changed, and you didn't, though, Jay."

"That's where you're wrong. I changed. Unfortunately, in the **worst** ways." He sighed. "Now I get to change **again**."

"Change again?"

"Like I said, you dumping me was a wake-up call," he said. "I can't do this again. To you or anybody else."

"I'm glad to hear it." She smiled at him. "Jay. We **can** still be friends."

"I'd like that," he smiled.

"And you'll find someone else. And when you do, I'll be happy for you, you know."

"You will, too."

"I already did," Jessie smiled.

"What?" Crash laughed. "Half of Warren? Is that really healthy?"

"Well, it's not just Warren. Jay, all three of us sleep together. And I don't mean sleep. Though we do that, too."

Crash almost choked on his coffee. "You...and **Sophie**?!?!? Jess, you don't have a lesbian bone in your body!"

"Yeah, that's what I thought, too," she giggled. "I really don't, you know—Sophie's an exception."

"Now I've heard everything," Crash grinned. "Damn, why couldn't **that** have happened while we were still together? It would've been fun to watch."

"You're a pig," Jess laughed.

“You know it.”

Jessie smiled, then got serious. “Do me a favor, would you? Patch things up with Warren. It wasn’t his fault, you know. I practically dragged him to bed. I was even going to do it behind **Sophie’s** back, that’s how desperate I was. He loves me, and so does Sophie. It just happened. Don’t hold it against him.”

“I’ll try not to. I’ll write him a letter, that’s probably the best way. Clear the decks.”

“He didn’t break us up,” Jessie stated.

“I know.” Crash looked at her. “You have to go back to Milwaukee with them still here. That’s going to be tough.” He sighed. “Now I regret ever convincing you to go out there.”

“That was part of the problem.”

“I know.” He took a deep breath. “Look. I’m only an hour away. If you need anything, **anything** at all, you call me. As friends. OK?”

“OK,” she smiled. “Thanks, Jay. That means a lot.”

“I have to go,” Jay said. “Thanks again for meeting me. It helped.” He stood up.

“It helped me, too,” Jessie smiled. She stood up, and gave Jay a long hug. “Don’t be a stranger. You can call me, too, if you need a friend.”

“I’ll do that,” he said. He kissed her on the cheek, then let her go.

The figure skating community grumbled under their breaths about the blatant sexuality of “Pink”. However, at the beginning of February, the shit **really** hit the fan.

That’s when the “Sophia Issue” of Maxim came out.

Sophia and Warren got their copy a little in advance to the general release. They were **thrilled**, but knew that it was going to cause a firestorm.

The cover shot was one of the bikini ones—with Sophie leaning over, most of her boobs in full view. They used the from-the-back only-in-skimpy-panties shot, which not only revealed a ton of skin, it revealed her tattoo. Many of the front shots revealed her **other** tattoo. There were a couple of her bare from the waist up, covering her breasts with her arms. One from the side, with just a sheet covering her breast—and only the front, there was a clear view of the side of her breast. And one wearing a partially see-through mesh shirt, with nothing underneath it. Any shot that went below the waist, she was wearing either skimpy panties or a thong. They were as close as you could get to nude without

actually **being** nude. And, yes, to their surprise, included—though as a small thumbnail on the same page as the interview—was one of the breastfeeding shots.

The interview itself was going to ruffle some feathers. When asked what was wrong with ice dancing, Sophia had replied, “Corrupt judges, too many old farts who think it’s still 1950 at the upper echelons of the sport, and not enough sex.” When asked what she thought she and Warren had brought to the sport, she said, “Romanticism, sex appeal, musical adventurousness, quick feet, and a female ice dancer that actually looks like a **woman**.” When asked about having a baby out of wedlock, she had said, “Fuck it. Warren and I love one another, we **are** getting married, we’ve been sleeping together for a very long time, and Betsy’s the light of our lives. If anyone has a problem with it, they can get stuffed.”

The kicker was when asked about revealing her body, Sophia said, “I **like** my body. I like showing it off. I enjoy people looking at it. Heck, if I didn’t, I wouldn’t be an ice dancer. Ice dancing is all about the body—and anyone that thinks it isn’t is fooling themselves. That’s not always a sexual thing—sometimes it’s about the feet, or the arms—but sometimes it **is** a sexual thing. But, when you watch ice dancing, what you’re watching is Warren and I arranging our bodies in certain ways. That’s a **big** part of it. And don’t let the fuddy-duddies fool you—that’s a big part of the appeal, too.” When asked if her posing would make more men watch ice dancing, she had said, “I hope so! If they want to watch ice dancing to lust over me? Cool! Then they’ll give their girlfriends less trouble—because the girlfriends are **already** watching. Lusting over Warren!”

The first phone calls were from friends, and were supportive. Even friends in the community—Evan Pogdar was one of the first to call, and he told Sophia, “All right! Kick ‘em where they live!” Liz Cushman sent an email that said, “Oooh lah lah, Sophia, you sexy thing!”

Of course, the phone call that made them fall on the floor laughing was from Jessie, who called to tell them that she had bought the issue—and had to buy a second because she made the pages on the first so soggy from dripping her juices all over them!

Even Crash called. It was a brief conversation, and with Sophia, but it was nice.

After that, the unpleasant phone calls—and jabs in the media—started. Curtis Ingalls, the head of the USFSA, did an interview—and he did it with Jim Pitman, of the Boston Globe, insuring Sophia and Warren would hear about it. Curtis made plain his displeasure at the Maxim photos and article—as well as the “Pink” exhibition.

The **worst** part of the interview was that Curtis hinted that any more ‘transgressions’ by Sophia and Warren would result in the USFSA ending their ‘support’ of the duo. That couldn’t have meant financial support, because Sophia and Warren hadn’t been getting any since they started making money with their skating. Though they were sure that’s what Curtis wanted the **public** to think he meant, Warren and Sophia knew better. They took it as a veiled hint that the USFSA would engage in **judging** shenanigans. That they wouldn’t have the support of the USFSA on the judging panel.

To say that they were incensed would be an understatement.

And Curtis wasn't the only one. In fact, they got an out-and-out threat. An anonymous letter, purportedly from a judge, outright **telling** them that, if there were any more stunts like that, they'd be in fifth place permanently. There were other interviews. The head of the ISU opened his mouth. And, of course, there were plenty of disapproving letters to the editor from society's moralists.

Warren and Sophia expected a lot of this—but the threats to mess with their competitive standing really rankled.

"We need to do something," Sophia said.

"I have an idea. **If** we win World Championships next month. Because it might just wreck our career permanently. But it certainly would make our point," Warren told her.

"Tell me more," Sophia said. He did, and she agreed—it was a great idea.

But, boy, was it going to cause a **shitstorm**!

REVERSE (Chapter 120)

It was towards the end of February, and Jessie was lonely, depressed, and bored.

She'd been doing better this semester. She'd made an attempt to make friends. She had found out that her roommate was **really** cool, and they were getting along very well. But, now, her roommate had gone away for the weekend. She didn't have anything to do. She missed Warren and Sophie. Hell, she missed Jason.

So, she decided to call him.

"Hello?" he answered.

"Hey, Jay. It's Jess."

"Jess? How are you doing?"

"Lonely and bored, so I decided to call a friend."

"Well, I'm glad you called," Crash said. "Nice to hear from you."

"My roommate went out of town, so I'm alone this weekend with nothing to do."

Crash paused for a second, then said, "I've got nothing on this weekend. Are you looking for some company?"

“That’d be nice, actually,” Jessie admitted, to Jay’s surprise. He didn’t expect her to want to see him. But he happily agreed, and drove the hour and a half up to Milwaukee. It was a Saturday right around noon time, so he got there about two.

With the pressure of trying to maintain their relationship gone, they got along better than they had in some time. They went to the student union to play some pool, went out to dinner, then headed back to Jessie’s room. They were chatting, and the subject of the Maxim issue came up.

“I couldn’t believe it,” Crash laughed. “Boy, she came damn close to bearing it all. I called her and told her I admired her guts.”

“I called her and told her I was masturbating to it,” Jessie said impishly.

“JESS!” Crash burst out laughing. “You are something else.”

“I know, ain’t I?” she grinned. “They’re getting some serious flack from the Powers That Be in skating about it, though. They’ve got something up their sleeves for the World Championships, but they won’t tell me what.”

“Knowing them, my mind boggles,” Crash laughed.

“So, how are things going with you at Northwestern?” Jessie asked.

“All right. You know.”

“Dating at all?” she asked.

“That’s a tough one. There’s actually someone I’m interested in. I’m pretty sure she’s also interested. I don’t think she’s the love of my life or anything, but we could have some fun. But I haven’t done anything about it.”

“Why not?” Jess asked.

“I’m not sure I want to answer that.” Jessie just glared at him. “OK. I could only admit this to **you**, and that’s hard enough—but my confidence is shot.”

“Oh, shit,” Jessie said.

“Do **not** blame yourself,” Crash said sternly.

“Well, who else is there to blame?” Jessie said. “Wait a minute—didn’t you say you were with someone else last fall?”

“Yeah,” Crash laughed, “but that was **no** challenge. She was cheating on a boyfriend, and I think she got off on **that**. She went into spasms when I kissed her on the cheek, for

Chrissake. I could've been the worst lover in the universe and she still would've climaxed eight times."

"Ah," Jess laughed. "Well, you just need to find another one of those, and not a demanding shit like me."

"It's not that you were demanding," Crash admitted, "it's that I never knew quite **what** you were demanding." Jessie just looked at him. "You'd say things **after**. That wasn't really much help, and you were vague besides. Look, I **don't** blame you for our problems in bed—but it would've helped if you had said something **during**. You know, tell me what you wanted."

"I never thought you'd be receptive," Jessie said. "I was always afraid to bring it up during. I thought you'd get upset and it'd kill the mood."

"Well, I have to admit, you might be right," Crash said.

Jessie thought about it for a minute, and then made a decision. She thought their breakup necessary, but not for a second had she ever intended to send him on his way with his tail between his legs. "Jay?" she said. "Kiss me, please."

"What?!?!?"

"Kiss me," she smiled at him. He smiled back, and did. It was a typical Crash kiss—hard, demanding, insistent. She broke the kiss after a couple of minutes, and said, "My turn."

She gently brushed his lips with hers. She nibbled on his lips. Only then did she join her lips to his, gently, and she slowly snaked her tongue into his. He picked up on it, and kissed her as gently as she was kissing him. Jessie felt her passion begin to rise nice and slowly.

"Kiss my neck," she whispered. Crash brought his lips down from hers and gently worked his way all around her neck with light kisses. "Nibble my earlobe," she whispered again. He did, and well.

"Take my shirt off," she said.

"We are treading on some seriously dangerous ground," Crash said.

"I know. I don't care," Jessie said. "Do it anyway."

Crash slipped her shirt, and her bra off, and gently fondled her breast while he nibbled on her earlobe.

"Kiss me there," Jessie gasped. "The way you just kissed my mouth."

Jay got the hint, and went down to her breast and gently tongued her nipple. He swirled his tongue all around it, and gently nibbled on her. His hand was stroking her other nipple. Jessie flushed and sighed. Now **this** was **nice**.

More than nice, as she was slowly but surely getting worked up. After a few minutes of this, she said, “Jay? Would you go down on me?”

He looked at her. “That was one of the problems, you know,” she giggled. “You didn’t do that enough.”

“This is the first time you have **ever** asked,” he pointed out.

“Well, I thought that you would’ve figured out from the few times that we did it that I **liked** it.”

“Jess, the way you react, I thought you liked **everything**. I didn’t find out different until afterwards. Typical woman—expects the guy to be a mindreader,” he grinned.

“Just take my pants off,” Jessie grinned back.

Crash did just that, then placed his head in between Jessie’s spread legs. He slowly worked his tongue up and down her pussy, stopping to dip in into her opening every so often, spreading her moisture and his saliva all around. Then he gently brushed her clit with his tongue.

“Oh, MAN, that’s good!” Jessie moaned. “Right like that, Jay, that’s perfect,” she coached. He did that for a while, while her breathing got more and more ragged. “OK,” she gasped, “now, **more**.” He caught on and zeroed in on her clit with his tongue. “Oh, **yeah!**” she groaned. “Harder!” He did so, and in a minute she was cumming up a storm, screaming “YES! YES! YES!” as she did.

He got out from behind her legs and knelt in front of her, grinning. She opened her eyes after she recovered and grinned back. “Clothes off, Jay,” she demanded. He did just that, then got back between her legs and lined himself up at her entrance. “Slow. Easy,” Jessie demanded. He eased his way into her, as she had asked, nice and slow. When he hit bottom, she groaned, and said, “Now hold it there for a second. And come here.” She reached for him and wrapped her arms around him, pulling him down to her, and kissed him. “Now, make love to me. Start nice and easy.” He did so, using long, slow strokes. She wrapped her legs around his hips, still having her arms around his neck. She pulled him on top of her, his chest rubbing up against her breasts, and nibbled on his neck. As she started to get worked up, she whispered in his ear “A little faster.”

He obliged, and she felt herself build and build. “Faster,” she whispered again, and Jay plunged in and out of her, and she went, howling and quaking below him. Jay held himself deep in her as she climaxed around him. He waited a minute until she had finished, and then started moving in her again—back to the slow and steady pace of before.

“Oh, now **that’s** what I mean,” she gasped. “Perfect, just perfect.” Jay smiled, and repeated the whole cycle—except this time he read her clues instead of her telling him when to speed up. He read them perfectly, and, in no time, she was going over again. And, this time, as her pussy clamped tightly around him, he didn’t stop. He kept moving through it, and poured himself into her seconds later.

Afterwards, they ended up cuddled in each other’s arms.

“Now **that** is making love,” Jessie said, satisfied.

“I guess you can teach an old dog a new trick or two,” Jay said with a chuckle.

“Figures. It’s **after** we break up that we have the best sex we’ve ever had,” Jessie laughed.

Jay laughed, then looked at her. “If I ask about possibly trying again, you’re still going to say no, aren’t you?”

“Well, after that, I’d be tempted,” Jessie laughed. “But, yeah, I’m still going to say no. Think about it, Jay. This is the best day we’ve spent together in, what, over a year? And not just in bed. I had fun with you today. But I think a lot of that is because the pressure’s off.”

“I see what you mean,” Jay agreed.

“I think I need to be away from that pressure right now,” Jessie said. “I think **you** do, too. It made you into an asshole.”

“You’re right.”

“Go after that girl in school. Show her what I taught you,” Jessie giggled. “Play the field. I think we both need to do that right now.”

“Hey, I’m not the one that’s involved in a **threesome**,” Jay laughed.

“True, but that’s not exclusive, not for me. Warren and Soph made that clear. It’s my choice to be with them or not, no obligations. I still can do what I want.”

“Ah,” Jay said.

“I think that’s what I need right now. I think that’s what **we** need right now. We’re young, Jay. I’m not closing any doors, on anything. But, right now, I think we just need to be friends.” She giggled. “OK, friends with benefits.”

Jay cracked up. “You’d do this again?”

“Sure. If you’re going to be **that** attentive a student,” she giggled. “It was nice, Jay. Nicer than it’s been in a very long time. But I still need not to be in a relationship with you right now. I think if we did that again, at this point in our lives, we’d go right back to the same old shit.”

“You know what, Jess? I think you’re right.”

“Good.”

“It was nice, though, wasn’t it?”

“Very nice. You enjoyed it?” she asked.

“Yeah. Surprise, surprise,” he laughed. “You tired? I can go get in your roommate’s bed, like we planned.”

“Yes, I’m tired—but I don’t want you going anywhere.”

“Deal,” he grinned.

They fell asleep in no time, curled up around each other.

ON THE OFFENSIVE (Chapter 121)

The World Championships were held in late March. This year, they were in Amsterdam. Sophia and Warren were thrilled with that—because of what they had planned. The Netherlands was a liberal country.

The USFSA insisted that they do a press conference, to defuse some of the furor. The USFSA probably regretted that. If they expected Warren and Sophia to become all repentant and compliant, they had the wrong ice dance team.

“Sophia, why did you do the Maxim shoot?”

“Because I thought it would be fun. And it was. I don’t regret it at all. I look **good** in those pictures!”

“Warren, what did you think of it?”

“I thought it was great.”

“Sophia, what is your response to some figure skating officials who are contending that what you did is bad for the sport.”

“Bad for the sport? Tell them to check the ratings after Worlds and then come talk to me. Judging from the fan mail I’m getting—from **guys** who’ve never seen me skate but now plan to watch—I’ll bet the ratings are going to be sky-high.”

“Sophia, don’t you think that posing in Maxim is a little extreme?”

“Nope. Not at all. It was fun, and, like I said, I **love** the way it came out.”

They couldn’t make a dent in either of them. They showed no regrets about doing Maxim—or, the “Pink” exhibition when they were asked about that.

The press, of course, still sensed a good story. If they weren’t going to get any dope from Warren and Sophia, they had other places to go. A fruitful one was Courtney Rogers, who disparaged Sophie to every media outlet that asked about her. Sophia was actually amused. The papers were so desperate that they were groveling for quotes from some rookie who finished third at US Nationals. Of course, they got lots of quotes from skating big-wigs, too.

However, it seemed like the supporting quotes from such people as Evan Pogdar and Liz Cushman carried the day.

More trouble came their way during Tuesday’s practice. They had just stepped on the ice for their long-program run-through when Betsy wailed.

“We’re sixth to go, and they haven’t started yet, I think you have time,” Warren told Sophia.

“Good point.” Sophie left the ice, went to where Ellen and Betsy were—and breastfed her daughter, right in the middle of the stands. There were plenty of fans and officials and judges in attendance—and the practice dress Sophie was wearing didn’t lend itself to being discreet. She had to undo the buttons on the front to get her nursing bra undone. In other words—if you wanted to look, you’d be able to look.

She finished up, handed Betsy back to Ellen for a burp, did her dress back up—and was on the ice with about three minutes to spare.

“Everyone in this arena thinks I’m nuts,” Sophia grinned. “Hey, I didn’t have time to get to a private place.”

“That was disgusting!” Courtney Rogers said as she skated by.

“Eating is disgusting?” Sophia said in amusement.

After their run-through—which was perfect—Sophia was grabbed by Curtis Ingalls. “Sophia, it might be more prudent if you breastfed your baby in private.”

“I didn’t have time,” Sophia shrugged. “It was either do that, or miss our run-through, or let Betsy wail. And I don’t cotton to **men** trying to tell me when and where to **feed** my **daughter!**” She stormed off, a grinning Warren in tow.

“Let’s see,” Warren grinned, “how many enemies **can** we make this week?”

“Too many,” June, their coach, chipped in. “You guys need to be careful.”

“You forget something, June,” Sophia told her. “We don’t **need** figure skating, remember? We have other things to do. And our integrity is more important to us than our figure skating career.”

“Suit yourself,” June grinned.

The competition started well. They actually won the first compulsory, the first time they’d ever won a compulsory in an international competitions. They were happy to see that the American judge didn’t screw them, and placed them in first. “Figures—it’s the last year for compulsories and we finally win one,” Warren mock-grumbled.

The second compulsory was a different story. The judging panel for this one was chock full of representatives from the Judging Mafia. Warren and Sophia finished 6th. The Russians were first and third, the French second, the Italians and Germans fourth and fifth. The Brits, Brenneman and Watts, who had been second behind Sophia and Warren in the first compulsory, were down in 10th. Shawna and Evan were down in 11th.

“Same old same old,” Warren grumbled.

The original dance was different. First of all, the judging panel—drawn from the panels of the two compulsories—didn’t have too many from the Judging Mafia. The second reason was that Sophia and Warren immediately realized that they made an astute musical choice in skating their waltz to Pam Tillis’s “In Between Dances.”

“By the time the judges see us, they’re going to be so damn sick of The Blue Danube that **anything** is going to be better,” Warren laughed.

“Did you notice that those two little snots, Courtney and Ryan, are skating to The Blue Danube?” Sophia laughed.

“Yeah, and I noticed at Nationals that their long program is Carmen—the most overused skating music of all time,” Warren laughed. “If I **ever** suggest we skate to Carmen, shoot me, OK?”

They were one of the last to take the ice. The young Russian team, Kuznetsova and Vasiljevsiky, were leading. Sophia and Warren took the ice, and glided through their waltz without a flaw. And, at least the **crowd** perked up at hearing something a little different for music.

There were two teams after them. One was the Brits, Brenneman and Watts, whose original dance had been getting raves all year. They skated it wonderfully, and beat Sophia and Warren. Next were the defending world champions, Yatserova and Vaglach. Without enough of the Judging Mafia on the panel, they were whacked all the way down into eighth—and deservedly so. They were sloppy and boring.

Sophia and Warren ended the night in first place, but with almost a negligible margin over both the Brits and the young Russians. If any of those three won the free dance, they would win the gold medal.

“Well, at least it looks like we’re not getting hammered on the judging **this** year,” Warren told Sophia.

“Nope. That’ll come **next** year,” she laughed. “Especially if we go through with The Plan.”

“Oh, well. We’d better win the damn thing this year, then,” Warren laughed.

Warren and Sophia got the order to skate they wanted—dead last. A lot of skaters didn’t like to go last, because that meant there was a long time between the warm-up and when you skated. Warren and Sophia didn’t mind that, however. They were good at keeping their muscles loose backstage—and they liked going after all their competition had already skated.

The second-to-last group actually had a couple of outstanding performances. The young, surprising Irish couple, Dunphy and O’Riordan, skated an excellent program. Shortly after they were done, Shawna and Evan skated absolutely lights-out. Warren and Sophia agreed, it was the best they had ever seen their friends skate. As the final group of five skaters took the ice for warm-ups, Shawna and Evan were leading.

The first two pairs in the final group were the defending world champions, Yatserova and Vaglach; and the French, Borisina and Dravouche. Neither were impressive. Both, in fact, were placed behind the Irish pair and Shawna and Evan.

Then it was time for the three contenders. The young Russians, Kuznetsova and Vasilyevskiy, were first. They obviously had talent. But they were still sloppy and unpolished. They ended up behind the Irish and Shawna and Evan in the free dance—but were far enough ahead of both teams to still be leading them, and thus be in first place, in the overall standings.

The Brits, Brenneman and Watts, were next—and they **were** good. Very good. They easily moved into first, and Warren and Sophia knew they’d have to be bringing their A game to defeat them.

Then, it was time for “Riverdance”. It was, by **far**, the most difficult program in the field, and Warren and Sophia knew it. The trick was performing it correctly.

It started slightly slowly, with a few simple moves—but didn’t stay that way long. 40 seconds into the program and they were into their side-by-side step sequence, a sequence of incredible difficulty and speed. They nailed it.

One of the reasons previous ice dancers had had trouble getting good scores for “Riverdance” is that they took the step-dance influence too seriously. Irish step dance is performed side-by-side much of the time. Side-by-side isn’t a preferred position for ice dance, except in the side-by-side step sequence. Closed position, where the skaters are facing one another and in a dance hold, gets you better marks in ice dance. So, Warren and Sophia step-danced on ice in closed position. This is **not** an easy thing to do. They had also increased the difficulty of their lifts, the weakest part of their technical arsenal.

After the opening, and a stunningly fast and complex series of steps done in closed position—plus a few dynamite lifts—the music moved into the slow section. Though slower and quieter—and very beautiful—it contained its own pitfalls, due to the irregularity of the rhythm pattern. This is where they had programmed their other step sequence, a circular one in closed position. Again, they nailed it. They were on **fire**.

After a series of drumbeats—and another fine beefed-up lift—the music moved into the final two sections. The first of these was difficult because of the meter—4 measures of 7/8 time followed by one of 4/4. They easily danced through it. The final section was back to 4/4, but fast. They flew through it. A final lift, and then a spin, and they were done.

The applause was **thunderous**.

They came off the ice, happy, but exhausted and apprehensive. “We can **not** skate that program any better,” Warren told June, their coach.

The first set of marks came up, the technical marks. They were stunning—there were five 6.0’s, and the rest 5.9’s. The big question is, would the presentation marks go down?

They did, but not a lot. Mostly 5.8’s. As they looked up at the scoreboard for the ordinals, they found out that it was good enough. Warren screamed, and Sophie yelled “We did it! We finally did it!” as their names appeared next to the number 1.

Sophia Daniels and Warren Kelleher had just become the first ever American team to win the World Championships in Ice Dance.

It was **almost** an American sweep, and that had never happened before. Their friends Brett and Andrea, the night before Warren and Sophia’s triumph, had won pairs in a stunning upset over Sellers and Poulin, the Olympic champions. The night after Warren and Sophia had won, Liz Cushman defended her World Championship successfully,

using the “Finlandia” program that Warren and Sophia had choreographed for them. Only the men didn’t win—but the US men’s team here was young and untested. National Champion Tom Bellamy did well to finish 5th in his very first World Championship at only 17 years old.

At the competitor’s party afterwards, Liz asked the duo about choreographing her long program for next year. They happily agreed. Tom Bellamy, sitting with them, said, “That’s funny—when I found out you had done Liz’s program, I was going to ask you the same thing. My jumps are there but my choreography sucks.”

“Yeah, we can do you,” Sophia grinned, “but you have to come to Boston.”

“No problem, I train in New York—I can drive up in five hours,” Tom said.

“And it has to be in July. The last week in July, we’re doing Liz’s program—and it has to be before then, because after that we’ll be a little busy,” Sophia giggled.

“They’re getting married August 9th,” Liz told him.

“Congratulations!” Tom said. “Yeah, July will be fine.”

The day after the party was the day for the exhibitions.

The silver and gold medal winners would skate twice. They’d kick off the festivities, then the fifth through third place skaters from each discipline would skate, then the silver and gold winners would skate again. Warren and Sophia’s second exhibition would be the second-last of the whole evening, followed only by Liz Cushman.

For their first one, Warren and Sophia repeated “Pink”. If anything, they played up the sexual aspects of it even **more** than Nationals. They had a ball skating it, and it showed. In a liberal place like Amsterdam, it was well received.

Their second exhibition? Well, that was a different story altogether.

They hadn’t told a **soul** what they had planned. Not June, their coach. Not their parents or friends. They had choreographed and rehearsed this program over the past month in secret, late at night.

They took the ice in what looked to be black bathrobes. They didn’t go to center ice, but stood right near the entrance at the near end.

The first thing that the audience heard as the program started was Sophia’s voice, saying, “This is a program about love and beauty.” Then, a short series of drumbeats. During this, Sophia slipped the black robe off her shoulders, revealing her to be dressed in what looked like a large rainbow-colored sheet.

The music proper started, and the opening riff immediately identified the song to anyone who'd ever heard it—Cyndi Lauper's beautiful ballad "True Colors". As the circular riff unfolded, Sophia spun away from Warren, with Warren holding one end of the rainbow-colored sheet, making the sheet unravel as Sophia spun. As the intro ended, Sophia glided away from Warren.

And as the sheet fell away, Sophia skated across the ice—completely, stark, **naked**. Except for her skates and socks. The gasp from the audience was clearly audible.

Sophia glided around that end of the ice for the first verse, the spotlight following her naked form. As the first chorus began, she skated over to Warren, and pulled him with her—revealing that he had dropped his robe out of the spotlight while she had been skating, and he was as naked as she was.

They had choreographed this program **very** carefully. It was quite deliberately not suggestive, or salacious. It **was** about love and beauty. And acceptance. And not being afraid to show the world who you were. When they came up with the idea, they had quickly agreed that "True Colors" was the **only** possible musical choice. It said, in the music and lyrics, everything they were trying to say with the program. This is who we are. These are our True Colors. And we don't care what anyone else thinks—because **we** love each other.

Using deep edges, long glides, and the most evocative body positions they could come up with, they had created a program that was stunning in its beauty. They had marvelous, gorgeous lifts—hard to do when naked—and a fantastic spread-eagle sequence where they glided across the ice, Sophia in front of Warren, one of his arms around her waist, her arms spread out to her sides.

It seemed that the audience almost forgot—or accepted—their nakedness. They were too caught up in the program itself. Love and beauty, indeed.

At the end of the program, Warren skated to the end and retrieved the rainbow-colored sheet. As Cyndi Lauper sang her last "...like a rainbow," Warren skated to center ice, the sheet overhead. There he met Sophia. Warren put one end of the sheet around his waist, and Sophia took the other end, and spun towards him. They ended the program in an embrace, naked, surrounded by a rainbow.

They held their breath for two beats. Then **every** single person in the arena was off their feet, screaming their delirious approval.

"Damn," Warren said, stunned at the reception.

"We did it," Sophia happily agreed.

They took their bows in the nude to a rapturous reception. They grabbed the black robes, threw them on, and stepped off the ice. Liz Cushman, on their way out, turned to them, grinned, and said "I will **never** forgive you for making me **follow** that!"

June was waiting for them. “That was the most beautiful, the most stunning, the most incredible thing I’ve ever seen,” she told them. “And you guys probably just wrecked your career permanently.”

“Probably,” Warren agreed. “But what a way to go, huh? A World Championship followed by **that** program? If this is the last time we ever get near a podium, I’ll take it.”

“Too bad TV will never show it,” June told them. “You know the exhibitions are taped, to be shown next week, right? They’ll never show that.”

“We thought of that,” Sophia said. “Anyhow, word will get around.”

“That was for **us**, anyhow,” Warren said. Then he looked up. “Uh-oh. Here’s where the excrement hits the portable cooling device.” Sophia giggled, then looked up herself, to see Curtis Ingalls, the president of the USFSA, approaching them. He was **furious**.

“What the **hell** did you two think you were doing?” he bellowed.

“Nude Ice Dancing,” Sophia giggled, irreverent to the last. “It’s the new thing. We’re going to have competitions and everything.”

Curtis fumed, then grabbed a nearby policeman. “I want them **arrested!**” he bellowed.

“For what?” the bemused policeman said in accented English.

“Indecent exposure! I found that program offensive!” Curtis said.

“Sir, this is Amsterdam. We don’t consider artistic nudity to be indecent exposure here,” the policeman said. Then he turned to the duo and said, “I loved it, actually. Very nice.”

“Thank you,” Sophia beamed at him. Then she turned back to Curtis. “Why do you think we did it **here**? The Dutch are far more enlightened.”

“Mark my words,” Curtis fumed, “you two are **done**. You’ll get no more support from the USFSA. I will not have our sport turned into a freak show.”

“A **freak** show?” Warren bellowed. “Did you even **watch** the fucking program, Curtis, or were your eyes too glued to Sophie’s tits?” Curtis turned bright red at that. “That was no freak show. And what do you mean about ‘support’? It can’t be financial, we don’t **get** any of that from the USFSA and haven’t in four years. Is this a threat to engage in judging shenanigans?”

“Take it any way you want,” Curtis spat.

“You know what, Curtis? I have trouble with authority,” Sophia told him. “I don’t respect it. And when someone puts my back against the wall, I have **more** trouble with it. If

there's a **hint** that you're influencing the judging to our detriment, Warren and I will **fuck** each other in the middle of our long program at Nationals! On live TV! Even if we do get arrested for it!" Then she stormed off.

Warren turned to Curtis, who was still fuming, and said, "Oh, Curtis? You forgot to congratulate us for being the **first** Americans to win a World Championship in ice dance." Then he followed Sophie.

They dressed and headed back to the hotel. Hungry, they went to the restaurant, greeted by some of their friends—Evan, Shawna, Liz—giving them a standing ovation as they walked in. They ate with their friends, then went back to their room.

They weren't there two seconds before Sophie launched herself at Warren and started stripping off his clothes. "I am **so** horny," she purred.

"Hmmm. I think we need to ice dance in the nude more often!"

To their absolute amazement, the TV network **did** show "True Colors" the following week. It was preceded by an announcement from the commentator.

"We must warn you all that the following selection contains full nudity from both skaters. However, we have decided to show it. First of all, lots of people had heard about it, and we're getting **far** more calls demanding we show it than we are demanding that we don't. Plus, it's a wonderful program. So, we are showing it, with this warning."

"Wow," Sophia said to Warren, "I'll bet Curtis is **pissed**."

It was the first time they had seen it. To their delight, they realized that it did everything they had wanted it to do. The most amusing part was listening to the comments from Dave Burrows, the long-time color commentator for the network. When Sophia first emerged naked, Dave let out a gasp and an "oh, my word." When Warren joined her, similarly nude, Dave intoned, "Well, this takes **guts**, I'll tell you that." As the program progressed, Dave started waxing rhapsodic about the beauty of the program. And, at the end, he proclaimed, "Well done. Very well done. A winner, all around."

"I love Dave Burrows," Sophia laughed.

In the days after the telecast, the phone was ringing off the hook. Jessie called and, of course, made a joke about taping the program for "more masturbation aids." Crash called with an "awesome!" Papa Bear called from Wisconsin, teasing Warren about "not having to worry about getting a woody, what with it being so cold. You looked like it was **receding**!"

Of course, Warren replied with, "Sophie's bearing her tits to the world, and you're looking at my **dick**? I worry about you, Paul!"

Of course, there were contrary words. Mumbblings from the USFSA, letters to the editor, angry phone calls to the TV network.

“This **is** going to come back to haunt us,” Warren said.

“Probably. But it was worth it, wasn’t it?” Sophia said.

“It sure was. But figures, though—we upstage **ourselves**. First American ice dance World Champions—and all anyone’s talking about is us skating in the nude,” Warren laughed.

“Well, we don’t do anything quietly, do we?” Sophia giggled.

TOURING AGAIN (Chapter 122)

Two weeks after Worlds, Sophia and Warren were on tour.

Ellen came with them, to help with Betsy, but could only stay for a couple weeks. She urged them to let her bring Betsy back with her. Sophia and Warren resisted that—because they didn’t want to be separated from Betsy for that long, and because Sophia didn’t want to stop breastfeeding quite yet. With the rehearsals done at the beginning, while Ellen was there, they’d really only have to worry about Betsy for the few minutes they were on the ice every night. That turned out to not be a problem—they had a gaggle of willing babysitters. The skaters took turns watching Betsy while Warren and Sophia skated. Liz Cushman and Olga Bradochkina fought over her half the time!

Right before the tour started, the guy who ran it, Ted Kantor, pulled Sophia and Warren aside. “Listen, guys,” he told them, “I’m **begging** you. Do True Colors. That’s such an amazing program. I wish I could let you do it nude, but I can’t, not in this country. You’d be arrested in half the cities we visit,” he laughed. “But I **really** want you to do it, even if you have to do it clothed.”

“Minimal clothing, Ted. We’re not going to cover up entirely, not for that program,” Sophia told him.

“Fine. As long as the naughty bits are covered.”

They had two spots in the show. The first one, they were doing “Pink”. They decided to do “True Colors” for the second one. Sophia got a rainbow-colored bikini, and Warren got rainbow shorts. They did the program every night like that, to rapturous applause.

Shortly after the tour started, Liz came up to them with some dispiriting news.

“There’s a rumor that the USFSA is going to try to have you suspended for a year.”

“For **what**?” Warren said incredulously.

“A **very** loose interpretation of the ‘morals’ clause in the USFSA bylaws,” Liz said.

“Damn. Who’s the athlete’s rep on the USFSA board?” Sophia asked.

“Used to be Jack Garrison until he went pro,” Liz said.

“It’s Evan,” Warren grinned.

The three of them quickly went to Evan and told him of the rumor. “I just heard that myself,” he told them. In his capacity as the athlete’s rep on the USFSA board, he called a meeting of all of the USFSA-eligible American skaters on the tour’s New York stop—which meant all three medallists in all four disciplines, plus Christine Arsenault, who, though she hadn’t competed at Nationals this year, hadn’t technically given up her eligibility yet.

“This is the deal. I’m going to be attending a USFSA board meeting in two weeks,” Evan told the group. “There’s a movement afoot to suspend Sophia and Warren for a year, due to the nude dance they did at Worlds. Since I’m **you** guys rep on the board, I need to know what you think about it.”

“It’s ridiculous!” Liz said.

“I agree,” Andrea agreed. “And they’re shooting themselves in the foot. Warren and Sophia are choreographing our long program this year, they’ve already started on it in our off time.”

“They’re doing mine, again, too,” Liz added.

“They’re going to do mine as well, after the tour,” Tom Bellamy said.

“That’s what I’d heard,” Andrea said. “So those idiots not only want to suspend the **only** American dance team to **ever** win a Worlds—but the choreographers for **every** defending National Champion? It’s insane.”

“Hear, hear,” Victoria Blanchard, the young US silver medallist in Ladies, agreed. “Plus that program at Worlds **rocked**. It was beautiful.”

“They **should** be suspended,” Courtney Rogers spoke up.

“You **would** say that, you annoying little snot,” the ever-blunt Christine Arsenault spoke up.

“Ladies, ladies,” Evan grinned. “Anyhow, this is the deal. I’ve got a petition here. It tells the board that the undersigned do not think that Warren and Sophia should be suspended. If you agree with that, sign it. If you don’t, don’t.”

Every single skater in the room signed it except Courtney Rogers, who stormed out of the room. Even Ryan Killen, her partner, signed it after Courtney had left, whispering to Evan and Warren, “Don’t tell Court I signed this, OK?”

A couple weeks after that, the tour stormed into Chicago. Crash had gotten tickets, and had invited Jessie to drive down from Milwaukee and join him. She gladly did so.

They enjoyed the show, then met Warren and Sophia afterwards. Jessie and Sophia went up to Warren and Sophie’s hotel room, while Crash asked Warren to go get a cup of coffee with him.

“Nice program,” Crash grinned over the table in the coffee shop, “but I think I liked it better in the nude.”

“You would,” Warren grinned. “Now, what’s up with you and Jess.”

“Nothing, really. We’re friends. We occasionally visit. We’ve had sex a couple of times.”

“Scuse me?” Warren almost choked on his coffee.

“It started out, the first time, as a discussion over what broke us up. I knew she was dissatisfied with our sex life, but she never told me **during**, you know, and I pointed that out to her.”

“You mean she never said, do this, or this feels good, and all that,” Warren picked up.

“Exactly. So, she decided she wanted to make up for that, because she knew it had affected my confidence some. It just kind of happened.”

“Are you guys getting back together?” Warren asked.

“No. No, we’re not, at least not right now. We actually talked about it driving down here. We’re getting along better than we have in more than a year. And every time we think of rekindling the ‘relationship’, we both break out in hives. Honestly. I think we’re just not compatible that way anymore,” Crash admitted. “That might change in the future—but, honestly, I doubt it.”

“But you’re having sex.”

“Neither of us have anyone. I have a couple people at Northwestern that I can sleep with, but nothing serious. We’re both sexual people, you know. And, I admit it, she **has** made me a lot better, now that she’s not scared of pissing me off by speaking up during sex. Y’see, that’s what I mean. The relationship pressure is off.”

“But if you’re fixing things, doesn’t that mean you could have a relationship without the pressure?” Warren asked.

“We’re **not** fixing things,” Crash maintained. “We’re enjoying each other as friends, and we’re enjoying each other sexually, but the reasons she broke up with me still exist.” He took a breath. “I hurt her badly, but not intentionally. She **still** does things that piss me off. I react less because she’s not my girlfriend—again, that whole relationship pressure. But I need someone that’s more independent than Jess. And Jess needs a guy who she can completely depend on. That’s not me. I’m not that, I don’t know what the word, is—available, I guess. Actually, the friendlier we get, the more I agree with her decision to end it. I’ll always love her. Hell, she was my **first**, and I mean that emotionally and sexually. But she needs something other than me—and I need something other than her.”

“I’m glad you guys are friends, in any case,” Warren said. “It makes things easier.”

“When you all get home, she’s going to be right back in your bed,” Crash said. “I already know that. It’s funny,” he grinned, “Jessie’s looking to be smothered, basically. You two are the smotheringest people I know. I’m no longer surprised she turned to you two. Though the whole Sophie thing **did** surprise me,” he laughed.

“Oh, you know about that,” Warren chuckled. “I’m guessing that they’re up in our room right now and they’re **not** talking.”

“No doubt,” Crash grinned. “Look, Warren. I really am sorry I slugged you.”

“You had cause. I shouldn’t have gone to bed with Jessie without talking to you.”

“It just happened, and Jess pushed it, I know that—she’s told me.” He held out his hand. “Still friends?”

Warren took the proffered hand. “Of course. Good. I **really** didn’t want to have to decide on another best man.”

“Not on your life!” Crash grinned.

The USFSA’s board meeting was the next week in Colorado Springs. After all the arguments, pro and con, for suspending Sophia and Warren, Evan got up to speak.

“I’m here representing the athletes, as you all know. I have a petition here calling for Warren and Sophie **not** to be suspended. It was signed by **every** medallist from the last National championships except one.”

“Who?” Curtis Ingalls asked.

“Courtney Rogers, of course. Ryan Killen, by the way, signed it. We are **all** vehemently against **any** sanctions being taken against Warren and Sophia. You people browbeat

Sophia over the Maxim thing. I know some people here gave her shit about the pregnancy. You keep pushing at them. Have we forgotten that they're the most successful American ice dancers in **history**? Have we forgotten that they choreographed at least one program for all **three** of the Americans that won World Championships this year? Have we forgotten that the TV ratings for Worlds this year **doubled**, because of the Maxim thing and the rumors about their nude program?"

"Warren and Sophia **are** American figure skating, in the eyes of the public! Them and Liz Cushman. Without those three, we're **sunk**. Do you know that Warren told me that People Magazine wants to cover their **wedding**? They're a gold mine for you guys—and you're getting caught up in all this puritan bullshit. And, let's not forget, they're two of the **nicest** people in figure skating. Who else could get almost every skater to sign a petition on their behalf? Liz, maybe—that's about it. Skaters love them. Fans love them. Hell, **judges** love them."

"You guys want to cut off your nose to spite your face? Fine. Suspend them. By the way, if you do, Shawna and myself will not be at Nationals this year. I can't speak for anyone else, but Liz Cushman told me to tell you that she won't either."

After that, the vote was taken—and it was overwhelming against suspending the duo.

DISCUSSIONS (Chapter 123)

Author's note: Brian Wright was a real person, and the details given about him in this chapter are true. Though I don't think the USFSA has named an award after him. They should, though. RIP, Brian.

It was four days after Warren and Sophia had returned to Oceanview after the tour. And Warren was trying to be patient, but was getting a little upset.

Sophia and Jessie were **really** into each other. They weren't really **excluding** him—well, Sophie wasn't—but he felt like kind of a fifth wheel. He understood part of it—that they'd been separated for months—and that he had had Sophia all to himself for all those months. He guessed what bothered him is that Jess had showed **no** interest in him. It seemed like the threesome arrangement that they had had over Christmas break had changed—and now it was that he was just sharing his fiancée. If that's what it was, he could live with it—but he wish someone would **tell** him this and that it would happen in someone **else's** bed. Last night, they had kept him awake—and frustrated.

He had spent the afternoon at his parents, helping them with some things. He returned, and went into the apartment, to find Sophia and Jessie on the bed, stark naked, Sophia eating Jessie out.

He gave it another try. “What a wonderful sight to come home to. Mind if I join in?”

“Later,” Jessie said brusquely, and went back to enjoying Sophia’s tongue.

“Sophie?” Warren said. Sophia didn’t say a word. Warren turned and left the apartment, and went upstairs. “Hi, Warren,” Ellen greeted him.

“Hey, Ellen. Where’s Betsy?” She pointed towards the playpen, where Betsy was playing happily. “When did she eat last?”

“Just about an hour ago.”

“Good. I think I’ll take her for a walk.”

“Something wrong?” Ellen asked.

“Nope. Not a thing.” He went to grab Betsy, who reached out her arms to him and gurgled happily. “At least **you’re** happy to see me,” he said softly—but Ellen heard him. He took Betsy outside, put her in her stroller, and headed down the street.

It was just about then that light finally dawned over Jessie. “Oh shit!” she exclaimed, sitting up. “Soph! Stop!” Sophie looked up from between Jessie’s legs. “We’ve got a problem. Dammit, we just did it. What I was afraid of—we just did it.”

“Huh?” Sophie said.

“Shut Warren out.”

“Warren?”

“He was just here.”

“Was he?”

“Boy, **you** were preoccupied!” Jessie laughed. “He came in, asked if he could join in. I said ‘later’, very dismissively. He called you and you ignored him. Then he left—not happy.”

“I didn’t even **hear** him!” Sophia claimed.

“Yeah, because you were too into **me**. He can’t be happy about **that**.” She sighed. “I just realized. I haven’t even let him so much as **touch** me in the four days you guys have been back. I’m not doing it **deliberately**, but....”

“I’ve let him touch me, but not enough. Shit. Jess, where’s our clothes?” They quickly found them. They dressed in a hurry, then ran upstairs.

“Did Warren go through here?” Sophia asked Ellen.

“Yes. He took Betsy for a walk in her stroller. He didn’t look happy.”

“We know.” They went outside, came to the front porch, then stopped. “Shit,” Sophie said, “I have no idea what way he went.”

“Maybe we should split up. Or just wait here.”

“Wait a minute,” Sophie said. “What am I thinking? This is **Warren**. He headed to Dunkin’ Donuts.” They headed to the end of the side street that Sophie lived on, then turned down Washington looking towards the Dunkin Donuts. Sure enough, they saw Warren headed their way, pushing Betsy along, sipping an iced coffee.

They ran to meet him. He finally looked up—he had been chatting down at Betsy—and saw them when they were ten feet away.

“Warren!” Sophie yelled as she came to a stop next to him. “We’re sorry.”

“Both of us,” Jessie added.

“It’s all right,” he said, with a sad little smile. “I’ll adjust.” He looked at Jessie, again with a sad little smile. “I should’ve known this threesome wouldn’t work out. You don’t want me, you want Sophie. It’s fine. I can share. I just wish you’d find somewhere else to do it, you kept me awake and frustrated until 2 am last night.”

“Why didn’t you **say** anything?” Sophia said.

“I just tried that, didn’t I?” he asked. Then he started walking back towards the house. Sophie and Jessie looked at each other in amazement. Jessie started towards Warren, but Sophie grabbed her. “Jess, wait. We have to talk.”

“Huh?”

“Is he right? Is this just between you and me now? Because, if so, we have to **talk** about this. It **affects** him.”

“No. Dammit, **no**.” She started running towards Warren, who had already turned onto the side street and was almost at the house. “Warren, **wait!**” He turned, and waited as first Jessie and then Sophie caught up with him. “In the house,” Jessie said. Warren gathered Betsy up and went in the house. “Give Betsy to Ellen,” Jessie said. Warren, bemused, did so. “Now. Downstairs.”

“Is everything all right?” Ellen asked.

“It will be,” Jessie said as the three of them went downstairs. Once they got into the apartment, Jessie tackled Warren onto the bed.

“You idiot,” she said, kissing him and undoing his belt buckle. “You asked **once**, today, and I was a little preoccupied at the time.” Another kiss, and she was tugging at his pants. “Sophia is the only girl I sleep with, and I’m kind of like a kid with a new toy, OK? It’s new and I haven’t been with her in months. That’s **all** it is.” She was tugging his shirt above his head. “And if you had asked **last** night when you were awake and horny, I would’ve jumped your bones. We thought you were asleep.” She quickly shucked her own clothes, climbed on top of Warren, and straddled him. She lowered herself on his cock, letting out a low moan. “Don’t want you? Yeah, right. For a genius, Warren, sometimes you’re stupid.”

Jess started to move up and down on him, but Warren yelled, “Wait!” and grabbed her hips to hold her. “I need to say this before you make me incoherent.” Jessie grinned at that. “You **have** been shutting me out. I’m **engaged** to one of you. I shouldn’t have to beg.”

“You’re right,” Jess said. “Like I said, it’s the whole girl thing. I’ve **been** with guys over the past five months, Crash a few times and a couple of guys at school. The only time I’ve been with Sophie was that night on the tour. And that was kind of rushed.”

“OK,” Warren said.

“Good. That’s settled,” Jessie said, and started to move up and down his dick. “Don’t want you? Not in **this** lifetime.” She got into a steady rhythm and started moaning.

Sophie, who had been watching all this with great amusement, had shed her own clothes and crawled into the bed next to them. “My face is unoccupied if you want to take a seat, Pookie,” Warren told her.

“Nah,” she giggled. “I’m enjoying watching too much. Somebody can do me next.” Just then, Jessie howled, and flopped all over Warren’s dick, her body jerking above him.

“Oh, shit,” she said as she came back down, “I think my legs don’t work anymore.”

“Did Warren cum?” Sophie asked.

“Nope,” said Warren.

“Good. My turn. Jess, get off.” Jess did so, and Sophie took her place, impaling herself on Warren. Jessie grinned at her, then moved closer to Warren, snuggling up against him as Sophia moved herself up and down on him.

“Jess,” Sophie hissed, “show him you love him. Kiss him. I wanna watch you make out while I—Oh GOD!!” Jess got the hint and joined her lips to Warren’s. They made out while Sophia rode Warren’s dick.

“Oh, God, that’s so **hot**,” Sophie gasped as she moved up and down on Warren, watching Warren make out with Jessie. In a few minutes she was cumming. Warren quickly followed, groaning into Jessie’s mouth as he poured himself into Sophie.

Sophie fell forward and cuddled herself on top of Warren—and Jessie. They all hugged and fondled for a while. “Better?” Jess asked.

“Much,” Warren laughed.

“The next time I forget how fun the three of us are together, slap me, OK?” Jessie laughed.

The next day, they were all in the apartment, along with Betsy, just hanging out when the phone rang. Warren picked it up. “Hello? Oh, hello Curtis. What are you calling to yell at us about this time?”

“What? Really? That’s **fantastic**! Wow!”

“Yeah, I do know what it means. Thanks for calling, Curtis.” He hung up, and turned to Sophia excitedly. “We won the Brian Wright!”

“We **did**? That’s **awesome**!”

“What’s the Brian Wright?” Jessie asked.

“The Brian Wright Memorial Trophy,” Warren told her. “It’s an award given out yearly. All the choreographers registered with the USFSA vote on it, for the best American choreographer of the year. So, it’s voted on by **other** choreographers. It’s a big fucking deal—I **never** expected it.”

“Me, neither,” Sophia asked.

“We get it at Skate America next year.” Warren told her.

“Who’s Brian Wright?” Jessie asked.

“Brian Wright was a very well-regarded choreographer,” Warren told her. “He did programs for Kristi Yamaguchi, Michael Weiss, Michelle Kwan, lots of others. He was known for his enthusiasm and dedication to the art of skating choreography. This, even though for the last eight years of his life he had full-blown AIDS and was often in and out of the hospital. He’d get out of the hospital and fly to an ice rink somewhere and choreograph. And he was one talented guy. He died at 43 in July of 2003.”

“Wow,” Jessie said. “Good guy to name the award after.”

“Got **that** right,” Warren agreed.

Warren’s parents threw a barbecue again for the Fourth of July, but it wasn’t just a barbecue. It was a final wedding detail planning session. Ellen and Dan were there, as were Brian and Michelle and their kids. Jessie and Crash were also there, along with Kate and Chad, and, of course, Warren’s brother and sister.

“Well, we have to decide on the songs, because we have to send the sheet back to the DJ,” Sophia said.

“Do you know what your first dance is?” Brian asked.

“It’s under discussion,” Sophia grinned.

“I thought you’d go for ‘Romeo and Juliet,’” Jessie said.

“We actually decided not to go with anything we’ve skated to,” Sophia told her. “We want a special song.”

“I have it all picked out,” Warren said.

“You going to let me in on it?” Sophia grinned.

“Actually, no. I want to surprise you. You’ll like it, I promise.”

She looked at him, and said, “OK. I’ll trust you. You **are** the music maven. I’ll have to give you the thing to send to the DJ.”

“Good. How about parent dances, that thing?” Warren asked.

“Uhm, are you going to dance with me, Sophie?” Brian asked tentatively.

“Of course!”

“Good,” he smiled. “Actually, I’d also like to surprise you. And I **know** you’ll like what I have planned.”

“Geez, I’m not going to know any of the music at my own wedding,” Sophie grinned.
“OK. Go for it.”

“Warren and I are dancing to ‘In My Life’ by the Beatles,” Peg added.

“Cutting of the cake?” Ellen asked.

“‘Two Hearts’, by Springsteen,” Sophia told them.

“Now, the place is all set, the photographer’s all set, the flowers. We have a Justice of the Peace all ready to go,” Ellen ticked off. “And Sophie got her dress last week.”

“It’s stunning,” Kate said.

“And the bridesmaid’s dresses are all set,” Sophia said.

“Yeah, and they’re not hideous,” Kate laughed. “They’re actually very nice.”

“We also have the string quartet for the ceremony,” Sophia said.

“Here comes the bride,” Jessie sang.

“Not on your life,” Sophia laughed. “I’m **not** a fan of that song. We have alternate selections all set. I’ll be walking down the aisle to something **nice**.”

“Who’s giving you away?” Peg asked.

“Her father, of course,” Ellen said.

“No way,” Brian interjected. “Ellen, I was gone for 13 years of her life. I wasn’t there. You should give her away.”

“I don’t care, you’re close now, and you are her father,” Ellen interjected.

“It doesn’t matter. You should have that honor.”

“HOLD IT!” Sophia interjected. “Look, I’ve been having this argument in my head for three months, OK? I know it’s not traditional—but I would like you **both** to give me away. Please.”

“Oh, honey, that’s beautiful,” Ellen smiled. “That’s the perfect solution.”

“I agree,” Brian said. “Thank you, Sophie.”

“Good. That’s settled,” Sophia said.

“How many people are you having?” Jessie asked.

“We sent 250 invitations out. This is no small wedding,” Sophia grinned.

“And it’s costing us a **fortune**,” Ellen laughed, “because we’re paying for everyone to stay at the resort that’s coming in from far away.”

“Worth every penny,” Dan said.

“I agree,” Brian said. “It’s going to be spectacular.”

“And we **did** pitch in some of that World Championship prize money,” Sophia giggled.

Kristin, Warren’s sister, who had just turned 16, walked over, carrying Betsy. “Soph, I think she’s hungry,” she said.

“Mama,” Betsy said.

“HEY!” Sophia burst out delightedly. “She said Mama!!!!”

“That’s her first word?” Crash asked.

“Yup!”

“Mama,” Betsy said again. Then she turned to Warren and said, “Dada.”

“Good, I didn’t get left out,” Warren laughed.

“First **two** words,” Sophia grinned, undoing her top to breastfeed—everyone at the table was used to that by now. “You’re a smart girl, Betsy.”

“Mama,” Betsy said.

“So, did you decide about the rehearsal dinner?” Warren asked.

“Yeah. If you all can go out, so can we,” Jim, Warren’s dad, smiled. “Since there will be so many people there from out of town, we’re going to hold a bash. Not just a rehearsal dinner. We’re going to have a clambake after the rehearsal for everyone that’s there, not just the wedding party. It’s all set up.”

“That’s **great!**” Ellen said. “And very generous.”

“Ah, we can do it,” Peg said. “And it’ll be fun.”

“Did you invite Uncle Greg?” Sophia asked her mother.

“Of course. Not that he’ll come,” Ellen sighed. “Sophia’s never even met him. Greg is my brother,” she told everyone. “I haven’t seen him since I got pregnant with Sophia. He’s a few years older than me. When my parents disowned me because I got pregnant, he took their side. I realize there were practical considerations involved—inheritance, and the fact that he worked for Dad at the time—but it still hurt. We were close before that. I invited him, but I don’t think he’ll come.”

“Where do they live?” Sophia asked.

“In the Midwest somewhere. My cousin Emma sent the invitation for me, she has his address.”

“I’d like them to come,” Sophia said.

“Don’t hold your breath,” Ellen smiled sadly.

“And, I take it that all the leading lights of the figure skating world will be there?” Jim laughed.

“Every one,” Warren grinned. “Liz Cushman’s coming out early so we can choreograph her free program.”

“Don’t you have someone else coming out before then?” Peg asked. “I thought you’d asked us to put someone else up here before Liz.”

“Yeah, Tom Bellamy, the new Men’s national champion. He’ll be here in a week and a half,” Warren said.

“You guys are going to be **real** busy before this wedding,” Jessie said.

“You know it!”

After the discussion, they were all just milling around, eating and talking. There was music playing, and Warren was over in the corner of the yard dancing with Betsy, who was giggling happily. Warren was gliding around the yard with her, singing to her as they danced.

Brian caught a glimpse of this—and the song Warren was singing and dancing along to—and walked up to him. “Warren? Can I run something by you?” he asked quietly.

“Sure,” Warren said. He listened to Brian’s idea, and broke out in a grin. “What a **great** idea! Of course I’ll do it!”

“Excellent. Sophie’s gonna love it!”

ALL KINDS OF CHOREOGRAPHY (Chapter 124)

On a Sunday, three weeks—minus a day—before their wedding, Warren and Sophia found themselves at the parking lot of the Oceanview Mall. They were here to meet Tom Bellamy. Tom was staying at the Kellehers’ for the week that Warren and Sophia were going to be choreographing for him. Warren had told him, “The mall’s a lot easier to find

than my parents' house. So, we'll meet you there and lead you in." Tom had driven up from New York.

When they got to the Kellehers', Warren and Sophia—with Betsy in tow, to her grandparents' delight—introduced Tom to Peg and Jim. Warren helped Tom with his bags and showed him to his room—Warren's old room. On the way in, Tom met Warren's brother Ryan. After they had gotten his stuff in, they went down to the family room.

Tom noticed a girl close to his age sitting on the couch, reading a book. She was cute, with golden brown hair pulled back in a ponytail, a button nose, and deep brown eyes peering out from behind glasses. "This is my sister Kristin," Warren introduced her. "Kris, this is Tom Bellamy."

"Nice to meet you," Tom said.

Kristin looked up briefly, blushed, said "Hi," then went back to her book.

"Very shy," Warren mouthed to Tom out of Kristin's line of site.

Hi, Kristin thought to herself. How pathetic. Damn, I can't even make small talk. She wondered **why** her parents had to let Warren's choreography clients stay **here**. Liz Cushman, last year, was bad enough—but Liz was friendly and outgoing and didn't give up on Kristen until she stopped being shy. Besides, Liz was a girl. **This** was a guy. And this guy was a **hunk**!

Warren loved Kristin to pieces, but had once told Sophia that "Kris is what **I** would have been like if I'd never met you." In other words, a painfully shy bookish outsider. Kristin went to Wilkins Academy, because her mother taught there so she could go for free. And she stuck it out for the academics—that was important to her. But she did **not** fit in socially and she knew it. Not that she thought it would have been any better at Oceanview High.

Warren and Sophia took Tom out to eat that night. They went to Woodman's, a famous seafood restaurant up the road in Essex. "You can't come to the North Shore and not hit Woodman's," Warren told him. Afterwards, they dropped him off. He wandered into the family room and found Kristin alone in there, nose still buried in a book.

"Hi," he said. "So what are you reading?" She held it up. It was War and Peace. "Cool, another Tolstoy fan. I just finished Anna Karenina."

Kristin looked at him. "You read Tolstoy?" she asked softly.

"I read a lot of things," he grinned. "Haven't quite gotten to War and Peace though. I almost brought it here with me, but I'm working my way through some Vonnegut at the moment."

“I love Vonnegut,” Kristin told him.

“He’s great, isn’t he?” They discussed Vonnegut, Tolstoy, and some other writers they both enjoyed for about an hour. Tom was pleased he finally got Kristin talking.

Finally, he yawned. “I think I’m going to leave you to your War and Peace. It’s been a long day, and I’m exhausted!”

“OK. Good night,” Kristin said quietly

“Night.”

Warren had thought that the music Tom had skated to for the past season was too heavy for him. Tom agreed. “My coach has been doing my choreography. And I love my coach,” he laughed, “but I think she picks music from the Elvis Stojko School of Ponderous Movie Soundtracks.” Warren wanted something lighter, so had picked Mozart’s Eine Kleine Nachtmusik. Tom loved the choice, and Warren and Sophia started working with him Monday morning on a program.

They made excellent progress. Afterwards, Tom had gone back to the Kellehers. He joined them for dinner. After dinner, he had gone upstairs and fetched a book, bringing it back down. Kristin came into the room and saw him buried in his Vonnegut. She smiled, but didn’t say anything.

The next day, Tuesday, Warren and Sophia had a morning meeting with the wedding photographer, so they wouldn’t be going to the rink until about noon. Tom slept in. When he awoke, he came downstairs and heard the sound of a piano. Following the sound, it led him into the living room. He recognized the piece—Chopin’s Fantasie Impromptu—and stepped into the living room, where he saw Kristin bent over the piano. He waited until she had finished the piece, standing behind her, and then applauded. She **jumped!**

“You scared me to death!” she gasped, turning around.

“Sorry,” Tom grinned.

“I didn’t think anyone was here. Why aren’t you at the rink?”

“Sophia and Warren had a wedding thing—we’re starting late today. I’m glad I was here. You can really **play**.”

“I hate playing in front of other people,” Kristin admitted softly.

“Why?”

“I just do.”

Tom walked over to the piano, and waved to her to move over. She just looked at him. He waved again, grinning. She slid over on the piano bench. He sat down, cracked his knuckles comically—getting a slight grin out of Kristin—and leaned over the piano. Whereupon he launched into Beethoven’s “Für Elise.”

“Wow,” she said when he was done.

“That’s my serious side,” he smiled at her. “Here’s my not-so-serious side.” With that he broke into Scott Joplin’s “The Entertainer.”

She was grinning when he finished. “My not-so-serious-side tends to be all that classic rock that Warren listens to,” she told him. Then she favored him with a little of Springsteen’s “Racing in the Street,” The Beatles’ “Let It Be,” and Elton John’s “Tiny Dancer.”

“You are **really** good,” Tom maintained. “Play me something else classical.” She smiled, and started playing Beethoven’s “Pathétique” Sonata. After she had finished, he said, “That is my favorite piece of classical music ever. And you play it magnificently.”

“Thanks,” she said, blushing.

They sat at the piano for about two hours, trading off selections—and then just getting silly. When Sophia walked in the house to grab Tom for skating, they were playing a goofy four-hand version of “Chopsticks” and laughing their heads off.

“You ready to go?” Sophia asked quizzically.

“Sure.” He turned to Kristin. “Time to go skate. See you later.”

“Bye,” she said, still giggling.

They got into Warren’s van. As they drove, Sophia said to Warren, “You’ll **never** believe what I just saw.”

“What?”

“I saw **this** guy,” she pointed to Tom in the back seat, “hunched over the piano, playing silly shit, and laughing his head off—with your **sister!**”

“WHAT?” Warren exclaimed. “How did you pull **that** off?” Tom explained the events of the morning. “Jeez,” Warren said in wonder. “Tom, you have to understand. Kris is the shyest person in the universe. You’ve known her two days and you got her laughing and playing piano with you? I’m stunned.”

“How old is she anyway?” Tom asked.

“Just turned 16. You just turned 18, right?”

“Yeah. Warren, does Kristin have a boyfriend?”

Warren laughed. “Tom, Kris has never been on a **date**.” Tom didn’t say anything. Warren glanced at him through the rear-view mirror. “Are you thinking of asking her out?”

“Uhm, well, would that be a problem?” Tom asked nervously.

“No. In fact, I think it’s great. As long as you remember how inexperienced she is with guys.”

Tom laughed. “I’m not much more experienced.”

“Why?” Sophia interjected. “I didn’t take you as shy. And there’s lots of girls in ice rinks.”

“I’m not shy, but there’s no girl at my rink that **I’d** ever want to go out with. You guys are kind of isolated, and you were a couple before you started skating, you’ve told me that. But when you’re in a rink with lots of other competitive skaters, the fur flies. As do the rumors. Yeah, I could ask a fellow skater out—if I wanted **everyone** in the rink to know the next day. Plus, most girls in figure skating are silly. Present company excepted, of course.”

“Of course,” Sophia grinned back at him.

“I’ve had a few dates, but nothing much.”

“Just be careful, that’s all I ask,” Warren told him. “Don’t forget, you’re only here for a week.”

“True,” he said. “Though New York isn’t **that** far!”

Kristin thought about their little piano-playing session all afternoon. She was stunned. He actually got her laughing! He was a fellow reader, he was a fellow pianist, he was **gorgeous**—and he made her laugh.

My oh my, she thought.

When it was close to the time that he’d be returning, she kept going to the window. Peg asked her what she was doing, but she said nothing. When she finally saw Warren’s van pull up, she ran over to the piano and launched into the “Pathetique” so she was playing it when Tom came in.

What the **hell** am I doing? She thought to herself, but he came right into the room, smiled at her, and sat down next to her as she played.

When she was done, she said, “Your turn.”

“Hmm. I’ve done serious and not-so-serious, so how about goofy?”

“Goofy?”

He grinned at her, hit four quick chords on the piano, and was suddenly full-tilt into “Great Balls of Fire.” He kept a steady boogie-woogie with his left hand, as the right one hit every triplet, arpeggio, and silly little glissando. And he sang it, right at Kristin, hamming up the wink-and-a-nod lyrics for all they were worth. Kristin was **howling**.

As he ended, before the piano had even stopped echoing, he put on this mock-pompous face and started Mozart’s “Sonata Facile.” He played the whole thing—flawlessly—while making a face like a constipated schoolmaster. Kristin was laughing so hard she was about to pee her pants. He hit the final chord and she was still cracking up.

He grinned at her, and waited for the laughter to die down a bit. She had subsided into happy giggling when he said, “Kristin, will you go out to dinner with me tomorrow night?”

“Sure,” she giggled. Then she realized. And stopped giggling, looked at him in amazement, and said “WHAT?!?”

“You said yes, you can’t take it back!” Tom teased her, a huge smile on his face. “No, no, no, you can’t take it back.” He got up from the piano bench, grinned at her, and walked out of the room.

Kristin didn’t know whether to laugh, cry, or scream.

After they had eaten, they ended up in the family room. Peg and Jim were outside, so Kristin and Tom were the only ones there, each buried in a book. Kristin kept shooting looks at him—and he noticed, but didn’t say anything.

Finally, Kristin closed her book, looked at Tom, and said hesitantly, “Did you really ask me out?”

Tom closed his own book. “Yeah, I did.”

“Oh,” Kristin said. “You were very sneaky about it.”

“I know. It worked, didn’t it?” he grinned. She shot him a look he couldn’t quite make out, but it didn’t look good. So, he said, “But you’re right. It was too sneaky. Kristin, may I take you out for dinner tomorrow night?”

“Yes,” she whispered.

“Good.”

Kristin thought about it all night, until she finally fell asleep. When she woke up, she was frantic. She came down and ate breakfast with Tom and her family. Tom waved goodbye to her, and then took off—since he now knew the way to the rink, he was going to drive himself there and meet Warren and Sophia

Kristin wolfed down the rest of her breakfast and ran to the phone, dialing Warren’s number. She was hoping Sophia hadn’t left yet.

“Hello, is Sophia there?”

“Nope, she’s headed to the ice rink. Who’s this?”

“It’s Kristin Kelleher.”

“Kris! It’s Jessie. What were you looking for Sophie for?”

“Oh, Jessie, I actually have a date tonight. With Tom, that skater that’s been working with Warren. And I need **help!**”

“This is your first date, isn’t it?”

“Yeah.”

“You’re nervous as hell, aren’t you?”

“Yeah.”

“What do you need help with?”

“Oh, Jess, I don’t know what to **wear** and my **hair** and should I wear makeup and....”

“Calm down, girl!” Jessie laughed. “Look, Sophie’s gonna be at the rink all day, but I do know a thing or two. Is two o’clock cool?”

“Oh, Jessie, you’re the **best!**”

Jessie showed up at two. She took Kristin upstairs to Kristin’s room. “First things first, girl,” Jessie told her. “You need a shower so I can do your hair. While you’re doing that, I’ll go through your wardrobe.”

“Yes, ma’am,” Kristin told her.

When she came out of the shower, wrapped in a towel, Jessie had her sit down in a chair, and went after her with a curling iron.

“Jess?”

“Kris?”

“I wanted to ask you something.” She took a breath. “I can’t ask Warren.” She took another breath. “What’s up with you and Warren? I know there’s something, but.....” she trailed off. “You’re around all the time. You’ve been Sophie’s best friend for years, but I never got to know you before this summer. And sometimes it seems.....” she didn’t quite know what to say.

Jessie laughed gently. “I sleep at Warren and Sophia’s apartment. The three of us. In one bed. I’m sure you can draw a picture from that.”

“You and Sophie both make love with my brother?”

“And with each other,” Jessie admitted.

“You like **girls**?”

“Only Sophie,” Jess told her. “It’s weird, but it’s only Sophie. Sophie, on the other hand, has a definite bi streak.”

“So, you don’t like girls but you have sex with Sophie?”

Jess looked at her. “Kris, someday you’re going to realize something. And don’t think I’m talking down to you, because it’s something I’ve only realized recently. You’re going to understand that there’s a difference between having sex—and showing someone how much you love them. I don’t have sex with Sophie. I show her how much I love her. It’s just that I use my body, and hers, to do it.”

“And you have sex with my brother.”

Jessie took a breath. “No, I don’t have sex with him, either.”

“You **love** Warren?”

“Yes. He loves me too, you know.”

“But he’s with **Sophie**!”

“Yes he is. That’s fine with me, you know.”

“They’re getting **married**! Don’t you feel like, well, a fifth wheel?”

“No,” Jess grinned, “because they won’t let me. Sophie asked me if the wedding bothered me. Of **course** it doesn’t. Those two were meant to be together. Forever. What I share with them is just temporary.”

“But, if you love them.....”

“You can love more than one person. All three of us are proof of that. And, don’t get me wrong, I **am** second choice, especially for Warren, and I’m **fine** with that. But I’m confident I will find someone to love and share my life with, sooner or later. And when I do, I’ll go with him, and I’ll just have to find other ways to show Sophie and Warren how much I love them.”

“That’s a very cool attitude,” Kristin said in admiration.

“A better one than I used to have, believe me,” Jess grinned. “Hey, look at your hair!”

Kristin looked at the mirror. “Jess, you’re a miracle worker!”

When Tom came back from practice, he hustled into a shower and got himself ready. He came downstairs. A few minutes later, Kristin came down the stairs.

“Wow. You look fantastic,” he told her.

“Thanks,” she blushed.

“Ready to go?”

“Yeah.”

They went out to a local Italian restaurant. Tom immediately was telling silly jokes and making her giggle.

“God you make me laugh,” she said happily.

“And you’ve never even seen me skate,” he grinned.

“Yeah, I’ve seen you skate. I was at Nationals this year.”

“It’s gonna be better this year,” Tom predicted. “That brother of yours, and Sophia, they can choreograph up a storm.”

“I’ve watched them choreograph for themselves before. It’s fascinating.”

“So, you done with War and Peace yet?” he asked her.

“No,” she sighed. “I love it, but it’s **endless**.”

“Tolstoy does go on, doesn’t he?”

They finished the meal, chatting happily. Towards the end, Kristin said, “How do you **do** this to me?”

“What?” Tom asked, confused.

“Make me feel so at **ease**. I was so scared. This is my first date, you know.”

“Warren told me,” Tom said.

“I thought I’d be nervous, stuttering, making a complete fool of myself. How **did** you do this to me?”

He grinned at her. “The minute I caught you playing the piano, it was all over. You can’t be shy around me after that, and you know it.”

Kristin thought about that—and realized that he had a point.

They decided to just get in Tom’s car and drive around for a while—neither of them wanted to stop talking, and they didn’t want to talk at the house, where Peg and Jim might be around.

“You know this is my first date. Do you have a lot of girlfriends?” Kristin asked him.

He laughed. “I haven’t gone to school since eighth grade—I’ve been tutored since then. The only girls I ever see are the girls at the rink. I’ve known all of them for years. There’s only a few that aren’t flighty gossip-mongers. I don’t date much at all. I just don’t meet girls I’m interested in.” He grinned. “Well, until this week.”

“You’re the first person that’s ever even **asked** me out.”

“There must be a lot of stupid guys in Oceanview,” Tom said. Kristin beamed at that one.

They got back to the house around ten, and walked up onto the porch. “Kris?” Tom asked. “Before we go in, well, would it be all right if I kissed you?”

Kris’s heart started thumping like the snare in a marching band. “Yes,” she whispered. Tom leaned down to her, and their lips met. Tom didn’t want to rush things. It started as a light, fairly innocent kiss. It didn’t end up that way. To both their surprise, it just built and built. The sparks between them were almost visible. By the time Tom finally had the presence of mind to pull away—before he completely lost control—they were plastered onto each other, their arms wrapped around the other, and their lips locked.

“Wow!” Kristin breathed.

“You can say **that** again.”

“We’d better go in,” she giggled. “Before, you know, something.....”

“I know what you mean. Believe me, I know what you mean.”

Practice for Tom ran a little short on Thursday, so he was home in the early afternoon, much to Kristin’s delight. They fooled around on the piano for a couple of hours. At one point, he turned to her, beside him on the piano bench, and spontaneously kissed her. She eagerly returned the kiss.

After they ate supper with the Kellehers, Tom found a movie they both wanted to see, so they went. Friday, Kristin asked to come to practice and watch. She did that every so often with Warren and Sophia, and enjoyed it. She got to see Tom’s new Mozart program in its entirety, and she enjoyed watching her brother and her almost-sister-in-law choreograph for him. She also got to help out with Betsy. She adored her niece. She noticed Tom grinning at her at one point while she fussed over Betsy. He skated over and kissed her nose, then skated away.

Warren was working with Tom and one point, and Sophia had come off the ice because Betsy was hungry. “So, what’s up with you and Tom?” Sophia asked Kristin.

“I really like him! He really likes me, too!” she said, incredulous.

“You guys have a lot in common.”

“Yeah, but luckily only one of us is painfully shy. It’s a good thing **he** asked **me** out!”

Sophia giggled. “Yup. Reminds me of me with your brother.” Kristin laughed out loud at that one.

Jim and Peg went out that night, so Tom and Kristin stayed in. Tom would be leaving the next day, so they just wanted to spend time together. They didn’t go past making out, but they did quite a bit of making out.

“This sucks,” Kristin sighed.

“What?” Tom asked, puzzled.

“You’re leaving tomorrow.”

“Yeah,” he said. “But it’s only New York. It’s not that far. I’ll be able to visit.”

“Will you?”

“Sure.”

Just then Kristin remembered something. “I was wondering. Do you think you could make one of those visits two weekends from now?”

“Maybe. I’ll have to see. Is there a reason?”

“Well, yeah,” she giggled. “I don’t have a date to my own brother’s wedding.”

“Oh! Well, then, yes. I’ll definitely come. I’ll work it out.”

“Great!”

Tom left the next day, and Kristin and he shared a long good-bye kiss, in full view of Jim, Peg, and Warren (who had come over to see him off). When they got into the house, they all went into the family room—and Kristin, to **everyone’s** surprise, including hers, started crying.

“Shit. Shit, shit, shit,” she said, trying to stop crying.

“Kristin, honey? What’s wrong?” Peg asked.

“How the hell can you fall for someone in a **week**?”

“What?” Peg gasped. “I know you two went out a few times....”

“Yeah. But it’s more than that.”

“How much more than that?” Peg asked carefully. Kristin just looked at her. “Kristin, you **know** you can talk to us about **anything**.”

She looked at them for another minute, confused. Then light dawned. “Oh, no, not **that**,” she said. “We haven’t done anything more than kiss. It’s just that—oh, man, he’s the **perfect** guy for me! And he’s five hours away!” She started sobbing again.

“Kris,” Peg started, “like you said, you’ve only known him for a week. And you’re only sixteen.”

“War?” Kris asked. “When did **you** know?”

Warren, knowing exactly what she was talking about, grinned, “It wasn’t much longer than a week.”

“And you were only **fourteen**,” Kristin said.

“True,” Warren agreed.

“I really should know better,” Peg grinned. “Look, Kris, how does **he** feel?”

“He likes me a lot, I know that.”

“Then it’ll all work out, if it’s truly meant to be. New York isn’t **that** far away.”

“That’s what he said,” she said, then brightened visibly. “He **is** coming up in two weeks.” She grinned at Warren. “I have a date for your wedding.”

“Great! One more figure skater at the wedding can’t hurt anything,” he laughed.

Over the next two weeks, Kristin counted the days until the wedding. She had been looking forward to it anyway—she loved Sophia, she knew Warren and Sophia were meant to be together and was thrilled it was finally happening, **and** she got to be a bridesmaid. So, she’d been looking forward to it, anyway. Now she was **really** looking forward to it.

She was diverted a bit by the arrival of Liz Cushman the day after Tom had left. Liz was happy to see her. This year, she was determined not to be shy around Liz. Liz was practically part of the family—and she was engaging, gregarious, and fun to be with. Kristin even let Liz hear her playing piano. Tom was the first person not in her family to **ever** hear her—and now she played for Liz. Liz was impressed.

Liz had come in for a week of choreography—Warren and Sophia had picked Beethoven’s Fifth Piano Concerto, the Emperor, for her music. The week after that, she was just going to hang and help with the wedding plans.

Kristin told her all about Tom, and Liz was thrilled. “I like Tom,” she told Kristin. “Wish **I** had a love life to discuss with you,” she said ruefully.

That was right after she had gotten into town. Suddenly, by the Friday of the first week, she had told Kristin she had a date. Then another on Saturday. Then another on Tuesday of the following week. She hadn’t told Kristin who the dates were with, and Kristin hadn’t asked. Until, that Tuesday night, Kristin happened to be sitting in the living room, reading, when Liz came home. Liz had opened the door, and Kris could see her kissing some guy. When she pulled away, Kris got a look at the guy as he said goodbye to her.

Kris didn’t say anything to Liz about it, just wished her goodnight, but she was a little stunned.

Liz Cushman was going out with **Crash**?

THE BIG PAYOFF (Chapter 125)

Author's note:

First, the song quoted below is copyright 1980 Lenono Music. Used without permission, but I hope Yoko understands <G>.

This chapter is entitled “The Big Payoff” because it is—to my readers. The Big Big payoff, is, of course, the end of the story—but this is the other Big Payoff. This is especially dedicated to my readers that have been around from the beginning, that have stayed with me through the ups and downs of the story, that have put up with my lengthy hiatuses, that have written me nasty emails demanding more chapters <G>. This one is for you, folks, from the bottom of my heart. This is the one we’ve all—including me—been waiting for.

So please join me. Please join **us**, me and all these folks that have become, over the three years of writing DoaL, my friends—and, I hope, yours as well. Join us, in a lovely seaside resort on beautiful Cape Cod. Because you are **all** invited. You’re all invited to help us celebrate the wedding of:

Sophia Madeline Daniels
And
Warren Patrick Kelleher

“Nice choice, pal,” Crash said to Warren.

“It’s beautiful, isn’t it?” Warren agreed.

“So, the wedding’s outside?”

“Yeah, right behind the building. Sophie will come out of the back door, and then right down the aisle. Then, over to the side, the reception’s going to be under a tent.”

It was Friday, August 8th, about noontime. Warren and Crash had just arrived at the Cape Cod resort where the wedding was to be held. The rehearsal would be held that evening. Lots of people were still coming in, and various friends and family members had been pressed into chauffeur duty, shuttling folks from the airports in Boston and Providence to the Cape.

Warren and Crash walked around the resort, checking it out. They got back into the lobby, to be greeted by Warren’s parents and Liz.

“Hi, Liz,” Crash grinned at her.

“Hi, Jason,” she said happily. Hmm, Warren thought to himself. What was going on **there**?

Well, it was a wedding, right? “Love is all around,” as The Troggs once sang. Warren turned his thoughts away from that as he saw his beautiful bride-to-be saunter into the lobby.

Ellen took Betsy for the afternoon, so Warren and Sophie could drive to Providence to pick up some friends. Luckily, Warren had his minivan, as Papa Bear, Caitlin, Alexa, and Mike all piled into the back of it.

“So, you’re finally going to take the plunge,” Papa Bear said.

“It’s been a long time coming,” Sophia giggled.

“Yup,” Caitlin grinned. “For us, it’ll be another two years,” she grinned—and then shoved her left hand over into the front seat, showing Warren and Sophie her engagement ring.

“Congratulations!” Sophia enthused. “When did you guys do this?”

“Last week,” Papa Bear told them. “We wanted to show you in person.”

They got back to the resort, and their guests found their rooms. People were streaming in all the time, and Sophie and Warren were trying to greet all of them.

Suddenly, someone that Sophie didn’t recognize came into the lobby, and Sophie heard her mother gasp. “Greg? GREG?”

“Hi, Ellen,” the man smiled.

“GREG! I can’t believe you came!” she cried, hurling herself into the man’s arms.

“Who’s that?” Warren asked Sophie.

“I have no idea—wait a minute! Did she call him Greg? I think that might be my uncle that I’ve never met.”

“Really?” he asked. They walked over.

“Oh, God,” Ellen was saying, “I can’t **believe** it! I invited you on a whim—I never thought you’d come.”

He looked serious. “Ellen, it’s gone on too long. I listened to Mom and Dad too much. They’ve been gone for ten years now—I should’ve done this years ago, but I was too

nervous. When I got the invitation—well, my wife and I talked about it, and I decided that the time had come to make amends.”

“Mom? Is this your long-lost brother?” Sophia asked.

“Yes,” Ellen smiled happily. “Greg, this is Sophie. And that’s her fiancé Warren. Soph, this is your Uncle Greg.”

“My God, you’re beautiful,” Greg said to her. “Nice to meet you. And congratulations.”

“Thanks,” she smiled. “Nice to meet you, too.”

“Now, where’s my better half? Oh, and Ellen, we brought an extra, I hope that’s all right. We have a daughter.”

“That’s fine,” Ellen smiled. A woman walked up to Greg. “Liv, this is my sister Ellen. Ellen, this is Olivia, my wife.” They greeted one another. “And this is her daughter Sophia and the groom-to-be, Warren.” Greg looked around. “And here comes Siobhan.” Greg introduced Siobhan, a cute redhead who looked to be about 16, to Ellen. “And this is the bride-to-be, your cousin Sophia, and her fiancé Warren.”

Siobhan’s jaw **dropped**, and she covered her mouth. “OHMYGOD! **You** are my **cousin**? OHMYGOD!!!”

“I think we just got recognized, Pookie,” Warren chuckled to Sophia.

“Recognized?” Greg asked.

“They’re the **World Champions!!!**” Siobhan said excitedly. “In ice dancing!”

“I **knew** I recognized you!” Olivia said. “You were the ones that skated nude, right?”

Sophie cracked up laughing. “You know, we could win four World Championships and an Olympic Gold Medal but we’re always going to be ‘the ones that skated nude.’”

“I can’t believe that Sophia Daniels is my **cousin**!” Siobhan was still beside herself.

“You’re a big skating fan, I take it?” Sophia asked.

“Uh **huh**!” Siobhan said.

“Well, Siobhan, let me warn you,” Warren said, putting his arm around his new cousin-in-law—giving her a little thrill in the process—“you’re in for a big weekend.”

“Hey! Uncle Greg needs to meet his grandniece!” Sophia said.

“Grandniece?” Greg asked.

“Yes,” Sophia giggled. “We kind of put the cart before the horse. We have a daughter. She’ll be one in a couple weeks. Where **is** she?”

“Liz has her,” Warren said. He looked across the lobby. “Hey, LIZ! Where’s my KID?”

They heard laughter, followed by Liz crossing the lobby, Betsy in tow. “Here you go, Daddy,” she said, handing Betsy over.

“Dada,” Betsy gurgled.

“Oh, she’s **adorable!**” Olivia said. “She talks?”

“Dada and Mama,” Sophia grinned, “and occasionally hi.”

“Hi!” Betsy echoed.

“What’s her name?” Greg asked.

“Betsy. Well, Elizabeth, but we call her Betsy. She’s named after this one, here,” Warren said, pointing to Liz.

Warren noticed that there was one person there not paying much attention to the baby—Siobhan, of course. She was staring at **Liz**. “Th-that’s Elizabeth Cushman!!!!” she gasped.

“Hi,” Liz said, grinning.

“That’s Siobhan,” Warren told her, “Sophie’s cousin that she didn’t know she had until five minutes ago. And the poor kid’s a skating nut and nobody told her she was coming to a couple of skaters’ wedding.”

“I don’t think Dad knew you guys were skaters, he doesn’t follow it. And I never knew Sophia’s last name—I just knew I had a cousin named Sophia that I had never met. And Tara and Eric.”

“They’re around here somewhere,” Ellen told her. “You’ll meet them later.”

“Hell, I just met Sophia Daniels, Warren Kelleher, and Liz Cushman. I don’t think I can take too many more meetings,” Siobhan said.

“Get prepared,” Liz giggled.

“Prepared?” Siobhan asked.

“Oh, let’s see,” Warren started. “Jack Garrison, Evan Pogdar, Shawna Vickers. Brett Tomlinson and Andrea Wallach.”

“Yup,” Sophia added. “Oh, and Olga Bradochkina. Jennie Sellers and Denis Poulin.”

“Don’t forget Christine,” Liz said. “Arsenault,” she told Siobhan.

“Oh, and Tom Bellamy, too. He wasn’t invited—because we didn’t know him well—but he spent a week at my parents’ house three weeks ago because we were choreographing for him. And now he’s coming because he’s my sister’s date,” Warren said.

“I think I’m going to faint,” Siobhan said.

“That’s Warren’s job. Tomorrow. Right before he’s supposed to say ‘I do’,” Sophia teased.

“How old are you guys, anyhow?” Siobhan asked.

“I’m 21,” Sophia told him. “Warren’s 20. I’m the older woman,” she giggled.

“And you’re getting **married**? And you have a baby?” Siobhan asked.

“We’ve been together since we were 14,” Sophia told her.

“Wow. That’s **so** romantic!”

“Where did you guys come from, anyway?” Sophia asked.

“Wisconsin. We live right outside of Madison.”

“We go to UW!” Sophia said. “Well, we took this past year off, because of the baby, but we’ll be juniors at UW in the fall.”

“That’s right! I knew Daniels and Kelleher were at UW. I always kind of thought I might try to go sneak into a practice, but I never did.”

“Now you don’t have to sneak,” Sophia grinned at her.

“Cool!”

Sophia and Warren didn’t really have a rehearsal dinner. Warren’s parents had paid for a big dinner for **everyone** there, after the rehearsal, since everyone had pretty much come from out of town. Being that this was New England, they did it as an old-fashioned New England clambake. It was casual and fun, and everyone had a blast.

Sophie and Warren found themselves at a table surrounded by skating friends, along with Jess and Crash—plus Warren’s sister Kristin, who was there with Tom Bellamy. Warren

noticed Siobhan at the next table, kind of skirting on the periphery, but looking on in undisguised awe.

Warren pulled his chair over. “Siobhan. Slide in over here, join the crowd.” Siobhan looked at him in surprise. He nodded and waved her over again. She moved her chair in, ending up in between Warren and Evan Pogdar.

“Everybody know Siobhan? She’s Sophie’s long-lost cousin. She knows who all of you are, and she’s in awe, so be nice,” Warren said. Siobhan blushed, while everyone else laughed.

“She should be in awe,” Olga said, “after all, I **am** Bradochkina!”

Siobhan was looking at her like she was royalty. Warren laughed and said, “Tone it down, Olga, she doesn’t know your act.”

“Is **not** act.”

“Ignore her,” Warren told Siobhan, “she’s a legend in her own mind.”

“No, I am just legend,” Olga said. “And at least I am legend for skating. **You** are legend for nakedness.”

“Too bad he didn’t get hard, then he’d **really** be a legend,” Sophia giggled.

“Please. Seeing my brother in the altogether was bad enough,” Kristin piped up, to general merriment.

“So what’s it like skating in the nude?” Evan asked.

“Perky nips,” Sophia laughed.

“And receding testicles,” Warren added. “They were fucking hibernating. How I managed to keep my mind on the program is beyond me. As if Sophie’s perky nips weren’t enough of a distraction.”

“I skated in the nude once,” Jack Garrison said, “but that was a command performance for my wife.”

“And knowing your wife, she probably videotaped it,” Christine laughed.

“Where is she, anyhow?” Warren asked him.

“Home with the kids. Amy’s sick. She wanted me to come, though—she wanted one of us to be here.”

“That was nice of her,” Sophia said.

Just then Ellen came over with a crying Betsy. “Mama!” Betsy said happily.

“Someone’s hungry,” Sophia said. “Anyone going to get offended?” she asked as she started to unbutton her blouse.

“Soph, remember, we all saw your tits at Worlds,” Evan laughed.

“And they didn’t do a thing for you,” Warren joked.

“Nope.”

Siobhan looked at them in confusion. “I’m gay,” Evan said.

“Oh,” Siobhan replied. “Aren’t a lot of figure skaters gay?”

“Less than you’d think,” Evan told her. “Of all the skaters at this table, the only ones that are gay are Shawna and myself.”

“Oh,” Siobhan said.

“Well, some of us are a little bit bi,” Sophia said to laughter.

Trying to preserve a bit of tradition, Warren and Sophia spent the night in separate rooms. Jessie was in Sophia’s with her. Warren thought with a laugh that only **one** of them was being celibate tonight. That was OK, though, since Jess would have to live without either of them for the week of their honeymoon.

Warren slept fine, and woke up at 7:00 as planned. Crash was going to come up to the room at 8. They were to order some breakfast from room service and get ready. Crash showed up right on time.

“Hey, pal,” Warren greeted him. They called down for some food. Warren noticed something.

“Hey, Crash, you seem preoccupied.”

“Something happened last night,” he admitted. “I, well, kind of spent the night with Liz.”

“Liz **Cushman**?”

“Yeah. She’s been around for two weeks, and so have I. We’ve gone out a couple times, you know. We really get along. But, I’ll be honest, I didn’t expect **that** to happen. She invited me up to her room for a drink, you know? Next thing I knew, we were in bed.”

“How was it?”

“Unbelievable.”

“And, here’s the big question—what happened this morning?”

Crash sighed. “When you were apart from Sophie your first year in Wisconsin, I know you slept with a number of girls. Did you ever just end up in bed with one, not knowing or really planning that it was going to happen?”

“A couple of times.”

“Wasn’t it always awkward in the morning?” Warren nodded. “Me, too, the couple of times it’s happened to me. This was weird. We woke up this morning, all tangled up in one another—and it was like we’d been sleeping together for ten years. It was the exact opposite of awkward. And I think she felt it, too.” He grinned. “If I didn’t have to come down here and do the best man gig, I’d probably still be up there gently fucking her brains out.” He got serious again. “It was great. It was remarkable. It **sucks**.”

“It **sucks**?” Warren said with a laugh.

“Yeah, it sucks. Tomorrow, she’s going to be back in California. In less than a month, I’m going to be back in Chicago. She’s already told me she’s going to be with me tonight, but we haven’t talked about anything past that—I don’t even know when I’ll ever **see** her again!”

“End of October.” Crash just looked at him. Warren grinned. “Skate America’s in Chicago this year. You’ll see Liz, **and** Sophie and me, we’re all entered. Though I doubt you’ll be paying much attention to Sophie and me.”

“Probably not,” he grinned. Just then, the food arrived. They brought it in, tipped the guy, and sat down at the table in the room.

“You really like her,” Warren said.

“Yeah, I really like her,” Crash confirmed.

“She’s a big star, you know.”

“Ah, fuck that.” Crash poured syrup on his pancakes. “Thanks to you and Sophie, I’ve been shown the world of figure skating. I’ve met Liz before, for one thing. I always thought she was cute, but this was the first time I’ve gotten to spend any time with her—besides which, she had that Rich guy for a while, and I had Jessie. But you introduced us, and I’ve always just seen her as a person. **You** are almost as big a star as she is, and you’re my best friend. It’d kind of made me immune to caring about that crap.”

“Good point.”

“I just don’t see how anything can happen with us so far away from one another. And with so little time under our belts.”

“UCLA Law School, my friend.”

“Believe me, it’s crossed my mind,” Crash grinned. “We’ll have to see what happens before then. So, you nervous?”

“No, actually. I’m looking forward to it. I think it’s been inevitable for so long that there’s no need to get nervous.”

“Good point,” Crash said with a sigh.

“What’s up?”

“Oh, nothing. Just that at one point I thought Jess and I were going to be following you, you know? And now I’m back to that whole nervous new-thing shit.”

“I know. Glad I’m saved from that,” Warren grinned.

“Don’t be so smug, asshole,” Crash teased.

“Why not?”

“Well, yeah, I guess you got a right to be smug,” Crash laughed. “You two are the perfect couple.”

“Yup.” He got out of his seat. “Tux time.”

“Let’s do it.”

They got into their tuxes, laughing and joking the whole time. “I feel so unnatural wearing this thing,” Warren said.

“Yeah, but there’s that whole ‘James Bond’ thing,” Crash laughed. “Besides which, you think **you** feel unnatural? Imagine Sophie. Wedding dresses all weigh a thousand pounds.”

“Too true.” When they were all done up, they went down to the lobby. It was about quarter of ten. The wedding was due to start at eleven. They were there, chatting, greeting guests as they came in, or downstairs from their rooms. Warren’s gaggle of ushers were all there, seating people.

Warren and Crash found a quiet corner. “I need to tell Jessie about Liz. We don’t check with each other, but she should know this one.”

“Want me to tell her?”

“That might be easier.”

Just then—it was about a quarter past ten—Jessie and Liz rounded the corner to where Warren and Crash were standing. “Hey!” Warren said, seeing them in their lavender bridesmaid’s dresses. “You two look fabulous!”

“You guys don’t look too bad yourself,” Liz grinned.

“I agree,” Jess said. “Listen, Warren, I need your help with something. Come with me. Liz will entertain Jay.”

“OK,” Warren said, following Jess. “Hey, there’s something you need to know. Crash slept with Liz last night.”

“I know, Liz told me,” Jess giggled. “Why do you think I brought **her** to entertain him? I’m happy for both of them. She **really** likes him.”

“He does, too. Though he’s upset about the long distance thing.” Jess looked at him. “Liz lives in California.”

“Oh, shit, I forgot about that,” Jess said. “I hope they work it out.”

“Jess, you’re remarkable.”

“Hey. We’re still friends. I want him to be happy. And, honestly? Liz is probably perfect for him. She’s far more independent than I am and a lot less insecure.”

“Where **are** you taking me, Jess?”

“Just shut up.” Jess came to a stop at the end of a corridor and peered around the corner. “Good. Coast is clear. Come **on**!” She grabbed Warren’s hand and pulled him down the corridor, stopping at a door. She opened the door, pushed Warren in, and said, “Lock it behind you!” Then she closed it, leaving Warren on the other side in a large room. He locked the door and looked around.

“What is going on here?” he asked.

And then he saw her, as she emerged from an alcove on the other side of the room.

She was wearing white (“Screw it,” she had said, and Warren had agreed). It was a short-sleeve dress. The neckline was low, revealing a nice spot of cleavage. The sleeves were lacy, and the bodice had lace and pearls intertwined into it. It had a high waist, and a full skirt with a bit of a train. She was wearing a headdress over her curled hair. She grinned at him, her eyes sparkling.

“God. You take my breath away,” he said.

“Me? What about you, handsome?” she said, walking up to him.

“Isn’t this bad luck, seeing you beforehand?”

“Oh, to hell with that,” she said. “You are here for a reason.” She took off the coat to his tux and hung it up. “I want to make my deepest, darkest fantasy come true.”

“We’re not in Fenway Park, Pookie,” he grinned.

“Not **that** one. This one I’ve never told you about, because it had to wait until today.” She walked over to a table in the room, and hoisted herself up, sitting on it. “I want you to make love to me in my wedding dress.”

“That could wait until **afterwards**, you know,” Warren grinned.

“No way. I want to have you in me when I walk down the aisle,” Sophia said with a twinkle.

Warren laughed, and put his hands on her waist as she sat on the table. “Oh, are you **nasty!**”

“You know it.” She reached down and started gathering the skirts of her dress. “Fuck your bride, Warren.”

He laughed, and his hands started moving up her legs, underneath her dress. “Most guys get the wedding night. I get the wedding morning.” His hands came to a stop at her hips. “You’re not wearing panties?”

“Nope,” she grinned.

“You going to put some on **afterwards**?”

“Nope!”

“So you’re going to walk down the aisle with cum dripping down your legs.”

“That’s the idea,” she giggled. “Hey, the dress is floor-length.” She was undoing the buckle on his belt as she was saying this. “I have been dreaming about this for **weeks**,” she giggled, going for the snap on his pants. “You won’t even need any foreplay, because I’m **soaked**.” She giggled. “And you can’t kiss me, that’d ruin my makeup.”

“You’re a nut.” She had his pants down now, and they both worked to gather her dress out of the way. He reached over and ran his finger up and down her pussy. She wasn’t lying—she was drenched. “Oh, you **were** looking forward to this, weren’t you?” Warren laughed.

“Uh-huh,” she beamed at him. “Put it in me, husband-to-be.” He did, sliding slow and deep into her. “Oh GOD that’s good!” she moaned.

“I’m glad you thought of this, Pookie,” he said to her.

“So am I, Snugglebear,” she giggled. She wrapped her arms around his neck. He had his hands on her hips, underneath the dress. He started moving in and out of her, slowly and deliberately. The skirt of the dress cascaded around their joined bodies.

“Oh GOD,” Sophia moaned, trying not to make too much noise as her arousal increased. Warren slowly plunged his cock in and out of her hot, wet passage. She was **really** into this. “Oh, God, honey...”, she panted.

“Are you gonna cum?” he growled in her ear.

“Oh, **yeah**,” she moaned. “Almost...oh fuck....” He started moving faster in and out of her.

“Cum in your wedding dress, Pookie,” he told her. “I want to see you cum.”

“Oh **Warren!**” she panted, and he felt her stiffen all around him. He saw the fabric of her dress shift as her stomach tightened, and then he felt her pussy contract around his dick. He also saw the start of a wail, and quickly kissed her to muffle the sound. He stopped for a bit as she came back down. She dreamily smiled at him, and then he started moving in and out of her again, slowly.

“You didn’t?” she said.

“You’d been thinking of this all morning, you had an arousal head start,” he teased.

“GOOD!” She leaned back, so, instead of sitting on the table, she was lying on it, her legs still hanging off. She gathered the skirts of her dress up to her waist, to keep them out of the way in her new position. Warren looked down, and saw, for the first time, the white stockings and garter belt surrounding her pussy. Her legs were spread, his cock buried in her. The skirts of her dress were surrounding her torso, and she had a beatific smile on her face. However, with her lying on the table, Warren needed a better angle. He grabbed her thighs, right above the back of her knee, and lifted her legs up while spreading them further. He plunged back into her.

“OH SHIT!” Sophie howled. “Oh, God, that hits **just** right!” Warren grinned, and started pounding in and out of her. Her hands clutched the skirts of her dress, and her head was thrashing wildly back and forth on the table. She was squeaking every time he hit bottom. Warren hoped that Jess was keeping the coast clear, because anyone standing outside of that door was **going** to hear Sophie!

“FUCK! FUCK! FUCK!” she moaned, as Warren plunged his dick deep into her sopping wet hole. “Oh God YES!” She was pounding back at him with every stroke, somehow, despite not having much leverage. “AYIEEEE! AYIEEEE! AYIEEEE! Oh shit CUMMMMINNNNGGGGG!!!” she howled, as her back bowed over the table and she drove her pussy into his crotch. He kept plowing through her orgasm, and she poured his essence into her with a mighty grunt.

She caught her breath, then looked up at him. “You stud,” she grinned.

“Cumslut.”

“Oh, I **like** that one,” she grinned wider. He held out his hands to her, she took them with hers, and he pulled her back up into a sitting position.

“Now, now. No kissing, remember,” she teased.

“I think Jess is going to have to touch up that makeup anyhow,” Warren laughed.

“Oh, GOD. That was fantastic. I feel so **naughty!**”

“You **are** naughty.”

“Yes, I am. Oh, I’m going to have reminders of this dripping down my leg **all** day,” she moaned. “Now, I had a tissue around here.” She found it, and proceeded to clean off his cock, and pull his pants and underwear back up. “And I had a couple tissues in **here**, too, so I wouldn’t soak through when I squirted,” she grinned, pulling a bunch of folded tissues out of her bra. Warren cracked up. “Now **go**. And don’t forget your coat. I have to march down the aisle in twenty minutes, and I need Jess to help me put myself back together.”

“OK,” I grinned and grabbed my coat. “See you at the end of the aisle, Mrs. Kelleher.”

“I can’t wait, Mr. Kelleher,” she grinned. “Knock on the door softly. Jess will open it when the coast is clear.” Warren did, and Jess opened it.

“Nice going, Prep Stud,” she said with a shit-eating grin. “Now, vamoose.”

“Thanks, Jess,” he grinned. Then he disappeared.

He went back to where he had been before, and found Crash and Liz cuddled up on a couch. “Hey,” Crash said. “What took so long? I thought you were going to be late for your own wedding! What did Jess need help with, anyway?”

“Jess didn’t,” I said softly, grinning. “Sophie did.”

Crash just looked puzzled, but Liz twigged onto it in a few seconds. “Oh, you **didn’t**. You **DID!**”

“Did what?” Crash said.

“Fucked the daylights out of my bride-to-be in her wedding dress,” I whispered.

“Oh, that’s so **bad**!” Liz giggled.

“And she’s not wearing panties,” I added. Liz’s eyes went completely wide, while Crash stifled a guffaw. “Only Jess knows—she was obviously in on it—so keep it under your hat.”

“Sure,” Liz giggled, “and Sophie’s keeping it under her **dress**!”

Ten minutes later, Warren was standing at the end of the aisle, Crash beside him, waiting for the wedding procession. “You ready for that ol’ Ball and Chain?” Crash teased.

“If she’s a ball and chain, I’ll take it,” Warren said.

“Good answer.”

The attendants came down first. Sophie’s brother Eric came down the aisle with Kristin on his arm. Next came Warren’s brother Ryan, and Sophie’s sister Tara. Warren’s cousin Pete escorted Meggan Carruthers down the aisle, followed by Rick Kenney, Warren’s neighbor, and Karen Laskovich.

Next came Kate on the arm of Evan Pogdar. Kate noticeably blushed at the big grin she got from Chad as she walked past him on the aisle—obviously he hadn’t seen her in the low-cut clingy bridesmaid’s dress before this! Jack Garrison escorted Liz, who gave Crash a little wink as she passed by him. Papa Bear and Caitlin came afterwards.

Then there were the flower girls, Sophie’s younger sisters Katrina and Brianna. They were adorable. Then Jessie came down the aisle, grinning.

The string quartet started playing the music they had chosen for the processional—Bach’s “Air on the G String.” And then, on the arms of both her parents, there she was.

Warren’s first thought was that she still took his breath away, even though he had already seen her in the dress. His second thought was that Jess had done a **fine** job helping her re-fix herself. His third thought—with a chuckle to himself—was that he knew that all brides glow as they walk down the aisle, but not quite **this** much of a glow! And his fourth thought was about what was happening to her thighs underneath her dress. That one he forcibly shoved out of his mind—the **last** thing he needed was to get a hard-on in these snug tuxedo pants!

Then, as she kept coming down the aisle, the only thought was of how much he loved her, and how damn **lucky** he was that she was going to be his, forever.

She got to the end of the aisle, two small suns shining at him from her eyes. Ellen and Brian were beaming as well, as they took her hand and placed it into Warren's. They gazed into each others' eyes for a minute, before turning towards the Justice of the Peace. But, as they did, Warren, in an evil moment, just couldn't resist. He leaned right into Sophie's ear and whispered "Sploosh. Sploosh. Drip. Drip."

Sophie gaped at him and then **burst** out with laughter. Everyone there giggled at her laughter. Nobody knew what Warren had said—though Liz, Crash, and Jessie had a good guess—but they were all giggling at her obvious delight. Even the officiant grinned. "Well, now, isn't it nice to marry two people who are so happy to be here!"

He began the ceremony in the traditional manner, and then got to the vows. Warren and Sophia had chosen to write their own vows. They turned to each other, holding hands. Sophia went first.

She said, "You pulled me out of the wilderness. You showed me the best part of myself, and gave me the best part of you. Without you, I'm half a person. With you, I'm everything I could ever be. You own my heart, my soul, my love, my life; and I pledge these things to you for all time. I love you."

Warren sniffled, and said softly, "I knew I should have gone first," earning a chuckle from everyone, Sophia most of all. Warren took a breath, and then spoke.

"You are my heart, you are my soul. You are my partner, you are my lover, you are my best friend. You are the best thing in my life, and you bring out the best part of me. You complete me, in every way possible. You are all I've ever wanted. I love you with everything inside me, and I promise that I will love you forever."

Sophia sniffled and gave him a watery smile.

Crash managed to not lose the rings, to everyone's relief.

Then, it was over. Finally. The Justice of the Peace said, "I now pronounce you husband and wife. You may kiss your bride."

They turned to each other, grinning in delight, and Warren kissed his bride. **Boy** did he kiss his bride! They held the kiss for so long that their friends started whooping and hollering. They sheepishly broke the kiss at that, but couldn't stop grinning at each other. Finally, the officiant turned them towards their friends and said, "May I introduce to you Mr. and Mrs. Warren and Sophia Kelleher!" The audience cheered and clapped, as they held their intertwined hands above their heads. Then the quartet started playing the recessional—more Bach; "Jesu Joy of Man's Desiring" this time.

"I love you, Mrs. Kelleher," Warren said to her as they walked back down the aisle.

"I love you, too, Mr. Kelleher."

As they walked by Peg, Betsy—in her arms—yelled out “Mama!”

“There’s a nice exclamation point,” Warren said.

“Damn right.”

The wedding party had to go take pictures for a while, while the rest of the guests filed into the tent for the reception. People drank and chatted, waiting for the wedding party. Then, finally, they were ready. The parents of the bride and groom, and Betsy, and all the attendants were introduced. Then, finally, Warren and Sophia were introduced to raucous applause. They walked in, hand-in-hand, grinning from ear to ear.

“Folks, please remain standing while Warren and Sophia have their first dance. Well, their first dance as husband and wife. I understand they’ve been dancing quite successfully for a while now.” Everyone chuckled at that one.

“Usually, I’d say ‘the bride and groom have picked such and such for their first dance.’ However, this time, the bride doesn’t know what’s coming. This is a surprise, from Warren to Sophia. Warren has chosen the version done by Mary Chapin Carpenter, of a song written by John Lennon.”

Warren took Sophie in his arms, as the music started. She recognized it instantly. She looked up at Warren with a brilliant smile and watery eyes, and said, “Perfect. Just perfect.” She leaned her head onto his shoulder, and they danced.

*Grow old along with me
The best is yet to be
When our time has come
We will be as one
God bless our love
God bless our love*

*Grow old along with me
Two branches of one tree
Face the setting sun
When the day is done
God bless our love
God bless our love*

*Spending our lives together
Man and wife together
World without end
World without end*

Grow old along with me

*Whatever fate decrees
We will see it through
For our love is true
God bless our love
God bless our love*

By the time the dance had ended, both Warren and Sophia—and most of the people there—were trying, very unsuccessfully, to hold back tears. “You never let me down. Even with something like this,” Sophia managed to snifle.

“Now, I’d like to ask the rest of the wedding party to join Warren and Sophia on the dance floor.” They did, to—appropriately enough—“Don’t Forget To Dance” by the Kinks.

“Now, I’d like everyone to leave the dance floor except for Sophia. And I’d like to ask her father, Brian Daniels, to join her.” Sophia beamed as her father met her on the dance floor. “This must be the Stump The Bride wedding, because this is another surprise for Sophia.” Everyone, especially Sophie, laughed at that. “Brian has chosen a song made famous by Frank Sinatra, but he’s chosen a special guest vocalist to sing it.”

Sophia looked quizzically at her father, who just grinned at her. Then the music started. It was “Just the Way You Look Tonight.”

“Damn good choice, Dad,” Sophie grinned.

Then the vocals kicked in, and Sophia immediately recognized the voice. She looked towards the DJ’s stand with a start, and saw Warren, singing the song into a microphone.

“Oh, man,” Sophia beamed at her father. “Between the two of you....” She was feeling weepy again. “This is the perfect wedding already.”

“I knew I wanted to use this song,” Brian told her, “and, then, at that barbecue at Warren’s parents’ house, I saw him singing this very song, and dancing to it, with Betsy. I got a brainstorm.”

“It’s perfect. Everything’s perfect.” Warren made his way out to the edge of the dance floor, and sang the song right to Sophie as she danced with her father. She was beaming at her father, beaming at Warren, deliriously happy. When the song ended, she hugged her father, then hugged Warren.

Peg then came up on the dance floor and danced “In My Life” with Warren.

Warren then joined his bride at the head table. All the folks there, of course, went nuts with that “clink the glasses until the bride and groom kiss” thing. Warren and Sophia didn’t mind at all.

They started serving the food, and the DJ went over to the head table. “Can we all stand, please, for the toast to the bride and groom from the best man, Jason Kowalski.”

Crash took the microphone and grinned. “Boy, have I got some stories for **you** guys! But I suppose this is a family wedding, right?” Nobody laughed harder than Warren and Sophia—knowing that Crash **could** tell some stories! “Seriously. I’ve known Warren since the very beginning of our freshman year in high school. I met Sophia in February of that year. She was laid up in bed with broken ribs. The girl I was dating at the time and I had made plans to spend a Friday night with Warren. Warren asked us if we minded going to this friend of his’ house, who was hurt and needed cheering up. Of course, we accepted.”

“So, that’s the night I first met Sophia. Now, you have to understand, Warren and Sophie weren’t going out then. They were just friends. But, I need to tell you, I just **knew**. I knew right away. It took another week or so for **them** to figure it out. I knew before they did,” he said to laughter. “But I knew. The girl I was with did, too. Sometimes, it’s just obvious.”

“People talk about soulmates. People talk about people who were meant to be together. If that isn’t Warren and Sophia, I don’t know who it is. They’ve stuck with each other through a lot of hellish stuff—and it’s only made them stronger. This, folks, is **love**, real and true and everlasting. It makes me unbelievably jealous,” he grinned to laughter.

“So,” he raised his glass, “to Warren and Sophia. May you always make each other deliriously happy. Na zdarovye.” Warren and Sophia were only too happy to drink to that.

They ate—interrupted numerous times by glasses tinkling. After dinner, the DJ, at their request, played a selection of big band music. Even in a wedding dress, Sophia could cut a rug.

Crash was dancing with Liz, but was nice enough to dance one dance with Jessie. Warren danced one with Jessie, while Crash danced with Sophie. And then **Sophie** danced with Jessie. Warren laughed and took his sister Kristin for a twirl. Kristin happily accepted, then went back to dancing with Tom.

Then it was time to cut the cake. The DJ put “Two Hearts” by Springsteen on, and they fed each other their wedding cake—chocolate, of course, since they were both confirmed chocoholics.

After that, the dancing started up again. As a lot of the couples—and budding couples—danced together, Jessie was sitting at a table, chatting. Evan Pogdar saw her sitting there. Evan was astute as always—and he knew about the whole Jessie-Warren-Sophie thing, and about Jessie’s breakup with Crash. He saw Crash cutting a rug with Liz, and put two and two together. Jessie was putting on a brave face, but she had to feel a bit at loose ends.

“Jess,” he said to her, “I need a dance partner for the afternoon. Would you?”

"I'd love to, Ev," she grinned at him.

They danced for a couple of songs, and then Jess said, "Thank you."

"You're welcome." He hesitated, and then said it. "I know the whole thing, you know. Warren and Sophie told me on tour. And now I see Crash with Liz, and Warren and Sophie are understandably wrapped up in one another. You had to feel left out."

"Ev, thanks. It means a lot," she grinned at him. "You're sweet. Why the hell can't you be straight?" she laughed.

"Sorry."

"That's fine. You're good company and you can dance."

"You sound like Shawna," he smiled.

"How come you're not dancing with her?"

"Shawna is adamant about confining her dancing to frozen surfaces," he laughed. "She'd rather sit and gab. She's over there with Jack Garrison and Chris Arsenault."

After cutting a serious rug, Warren and Sophia made the rounds of the room, greeting all their guests. Crash and Liz, when they came off the dance floor—which wasn't often—were cuddling in a corner. Cait was busy showing her engagement ring off. Kate and Chad were alternating between dancing and holding court at a table. Warren walked over to his parents' table and grinned at seeing Kristin happily sitting in Tom's lap. And good ol' Evan was taking good care of Jessie.

At one point, Crash asked his best friend's sister for a dance.

"So," Kristin said with a grin, "you and Liz, huh?"

"So," Crash grinned back, "you and that Tom guy, huh?"

"We're in the same boat, you know." He looked at her. "Long distance. Longer for you than me."

"Yeah. Doesn't it suck?"

"Yeah. I hope we can work it out, Tom and I."

"Me, too. Liz is great."

Warren was dancing with Kate at the time, and Liz, Sophia, and Jessie were at a table discussing the same thing. "Does she know?" Jess asked Liz, pointing at Sophia.

“No,” Liz grinned. “I spent the night last night with your best man,” she told Sophia.

“You **did**?”

“Yeah. We’ve gone out a few times these past two weeks. I invited him up to my room for a drink, and it just **happened**.”

“You OK with this?” Sophia asked Jessie.

“Yes,” she said. “I really am. I’m happy for both of them.”

“Well, don’t get too happy just yet,” Liz said, a bit depressedly. Sophia looked at her. “I really like Jason. Unfortunately, tomorrow I’m going to be in Los Angeles, and he’s **not**.”

“Oh, shit,” Sophia said. “What are you going to do?”

“We don’t know.” She grinned. “We’ve, well, planned to spend tonight together, too. We’re going to talk about it. Skate America, thankfully, is in Chicago so I’ll see him then.”

“Hey, I meant to ask you,” Jessie said to Sophia. “Are you changing your name?”

“Yes,” Sophia smiled. “Very old-fashioned, especially for me, but I decided I wanted to.”

“What about professionally?” Liz asked.

“That, too,” Sophia grinned. “We’re Kelleher and Kelleher, now.”

“So,” Jessie said, leaning in conspiratorially and lowering her voice, “how’s the cum on your thighs?”

Sophia broke out laughing. “Oh, walking down the aisle I could feel it dripping! It was **so** naughty and delicious and fantastic. And then I get up to the end of the aisle and Warren starts whispering ‘drip drip’ in my ear!”

“I figured it was something like that, when you cracked up,” Liz said.

“Girls,” Sophia said, “if you ever get married, have your groom shoot you with his spunk beforehand. It’s an experience not to be missed. I can **still** feel it sloshing around in there. He came a **ton**. It’s like I’ve been carrying around a little piece of him inside me all day.”

“A whole **bunch** of little pieces,” Liz laughed.

After a bit, Sophie went off to the ladies’ room, telling Warren she’d be right back.

She came back out after a few minutes, and told Warren, “We have to do the bouquet and garter thing soon.”

“Yup,” Warren said, and then stopped. “Wait a minute. Isn’t the garter a wee bit, well, **soiled?**”

“No,” she giggled. “I had it stashed. I just put it on just now in the bathroom. It had dried up there, so I washed some of it off, and put the garter on. It’s fine.

“Good,” Warren grinned.

They gathered all of the single girls and Sophie threw the bouquet. Caitlin **really** wanted it—since her and Papa Bear most likely would be the next to get married—but she didn’t get it. Kristin did. She was delighted.

Warren reached down and slipped the garter off of Sophie’s leg. She gave him, and only him, a quick look at her uncovered pussy. It was still wet! Warren desperately willed away his budding erection.

“You’d better make sure Tom gets that thing, or Kristin’s gonna be crushed,” Sophia teased him.

“Hey, I just throw it. **They** catch it.” He leaned in and whispered to her. “Well, now I’m very glad you didn’t have this under your leaking pussy all day—considering it’s about to go on my **sister!**” Sophia laughed so hard she almost fell over.

When all the single guys were gathered, Warren turned his back to them, and flung the garter over his shoulder. He **didn’t** aim, not at all. Tom was just more enthusiastic about catching it, that’s all. In point of fact, he **dove**.

Kristin sat down in a chair on the dance floor, clearly pleased Tom had caught the garter. However, it didn’t seem to quite hit her until Tom was kneeling down in front of her exactly **where** that garter was headed! She looked up at Tom with a strange mixture of anticipation and apprehension.

“Don’t worry,” Tom whispered, “I won’t go too high.”

Summoning every bit of bravado she could muster, Kris told him, “You can go as high as you’d like.”

Tom grinned at her—but he was a gentleman. He **didn’t** go too high, just about halfway up her thigh. He didn’t, however, seem in all that much of a hurry to take his hand **away** from halfway up her thigh. For her part, Kristin didn’t seem to mind at **all**, except for the inevitable creeping blush. Sophie and Warren, catching all this, grinned at each other.

The party went on, raucous and fun, after that. At about 5:30, Sophia plucked Betsy out of Ellen’s hands and took her into a quiet corner to feed her. Ellen would be taking Betsy for

the night, and Sophia had pumped enough to get them through the night, but she wanted to make sure.

The reception was scheduled to end at six. At quarter of, Warren took the microphone from the DJ. “Hey, folks. Sophie and I want to thank you all for coming. We hope you all had a good time. For those of you staying here overnight, there’s some smaller parties and get-togethers planned. And tomorrow we have the hall in the resort reserved for brunch. We’ll see you all there tomorrow morning. But as for now, Sophie and I have a date.” He bent down, grabbed Sophie from behind the back and knees, and lifted her in the air. She squealed in surprise and delight, and wrapped her arms around his neck. “We have a date with a threshold.” Warren started out of the tent and towards the building, still carrying a squealing and giggling Sophie.

“You’re going to carry her all the way to your room?” Jess asked, amazed.

“Easily. You forget. I’m used to lugging her around while wearing **ice skates!**” Jess and Sophie both giggled, and Warren carried Sophie out.

The lobby had people in it—guests not with the wedding and patrons of the restaurant. All of them smiled at the sight of the happy groom carrying the giggling bride across the lobby and into the elevator.

Warren did make it all the way to the room. With a little twinge in his back, true, but it was worth it to see the delight on Sophie’s face. He carried her over the threshold and gently set her down on the bed.

“I love you, Mrs. Kelleher.”

“I love you too, Mr. Kelleher.” They lay on the bed for a while, just cuddling and kissing. Then Sophie sat up. “Undo me?” she asked. Warren undid the zipper in the back of her dress. “Thank you. Now I need to go take a shower.”

“Want company?”

“Nope. You stay here. Relax, watch TV. I have a surprise for you.”

“OK.”

She smiled and headed for the bathroom. Jess had slipped a bag for her in there earlier.

Warren got out of his tux and reclined on the bed in his boxers. He watched TV for a while, listening to the shower run, hearing it stop. The bathroom door opened up a crack. Sophie’s head peeked out.

“Snugglebear?”

“Yes, Pookie?”

“This isn’t the same exact one. I’ve grown some since then. But it is an exact replica. I took me forever to find it,” she giggled.

“What are you talking about?”

In response, she opened the bathroom door all the way and stepped out.

Warren’s breath caught in his throat.

There she was, wearing—she was right—an exact copy of the pink babydoll nightie and lacy pink panties that she had worn on their very first night in bed together, over six years before.

Warren sucked in a breath. “Sophie, you’re a goddess. You were a goddess then, and you’re a goddess now.”

She walked over to the bed and crawled on top of him. “Don’t tell me. Show me.”

Warren put his hand on the back of her head and pulled her lips down into his. He wrapped his fingers in her long hair as their tongues danced. His other hand slipped under the nightie, and his thumb found her nipple and stroked it. She moaned low into his mouth.

He turned them, so they were side-by-side, as he fondled her boob and nibbled on her lip. She felt a pressure from his leg between hers and spread hers so that he could bring his thigh up to her groin, pressing it into her as he kissed and fondled her. She let out a gasping groan.

Without breaking their kiss, Warren slipped Sophie’s panties off. She returned the favor with his boxers. She went to slip her nightie off but Warren wordlessly grabbed her hands and stopped her. Pulling her close, he deepened the kiss and slipped his hard cock between her legs. She gasped as his shaft slipped along her slick labia, making contact with her clit. Warren slid his cock gently between her legs, spreading her wetness over him and dragging his cock over her clit as he moved. Sophie plunged her tongue deep within his mouth as she ground her breasts into his chest through the nightie.

Warren reached out and pulled her top leg up and over his hip, then reached down to take hold of his slick cock, pressing it with his hand against her clit.

“AAAANNNGGGGHHHH!” Sophie cried out as Warren kept a steady pressure on her swollen button, making sure to keep her moisture spread on his dick. “AHH! AHH! AHH! Oh JESUS Warren!!!”

As he felt her begin to approach her climax, he suddenly shifted his angle and drove his cock right into her. Sophie let out a careening **wail**. When the screams didn’t let up, Warren pulled her mouth onto his, trying to keep her from alerting the entire hotel—not to mention all of Cape Cod. Sophie just screamed into his mouth.

The waves of pleasure radiated outward from her pussy and exploded in her gut. She just rode them, as Warren plunged into her, grinding his pelvis into her pussy and clit on every downstroke.

After a bit, Sophie was trembling from head to toe and her eyes were rolling back into her head. Warren slipped out of her while she desperately tried to catch her breath. Without really realizing what he was doing, Sophie allowed Warren to flip her over so that her back was now up against his front. She was still shuddering and gasping for air—when she felt the head of his still-slick cock start to penetrate her anus.

“OH GOD YES!” she yelled. “FUCK MY ASS! FUCK MY ASS, WARREN! OH GOD!” Warren drove his cock deep into her ass, while he moved his hand in front of her to diddle her pussy. She started spasming again almost immediately, and didn’t stop. Her ass muscles clenched hard onto his dick. Warren had good stamina, but not **that** good. After a couple minutes, he grunted, plunged all the way into her, and poured his seed deep into her ass.

Afterwards, they stayed curled up with one another, even after Warren went soft and slipped out of Sophie’s ass. Sophie was still wheezing and gasping, trying to breathe. Warren wasn’t much better.

After a couple of minutes, Warren said, “Damn, I hope this room is soundproofed.”

Sophie chuckled lazily, and said, “If that’s what married sex is like, I’ll take it!”

“Good,” Warren laughed.

“Where did you come up with that thing? You know, rubbing your dick up against my clittie like that? Where did **that** one come from? My GOD!”

Warren laughed. “Well, I just slipped it between your legs, you know, just to get you worked up. But I saw your reaction and just kept going. I was winging it.”

“Ooooh, you keep winging it!”

“You know, about six years ago, a very wise girl—wearing a nightie remarkably like this one—gave me some very good advice. She told me to go on instinct.”

“She **was** very wise, wasn’t she?” Sophie giggled. “So, husband of mine, what do your instincts say you should do next?”

“Well, my instincts say I should go in the bathroom and give Mister Happy a little wash. We don’t know where he’s been. Actually, we **do** know where he’s been, that’s the trouble.” Sophia laughed out loud as Warren got up and went in the bathroom. He was back out in a flash. She had slipped off the nightie while he was in the bathroom. He walked over to the bed, and settled himself in the opposite direction from Sophia, with

his head down near her legs. Just to make the hint explicit, he sang a bastardized version of an old Brian Adams song: "It's the position of 69." Sophie giggled, then turned herself over and straddled him.

As she lowered her pussy into his face, Warren breathed deeply through his nose and then let out a theatrical, "Aaaaaaaaaaaaaah!"

"You goof!"

"What, I can't enjoy inhaling the perfume of my wife's essence?"

"It might be more effective if you inhaled your wife's **clittie**."

"OK," Warren said, and abruptly sucked Sophie's clit right between his lips. Sophie yelped. Warren released her clit with a chuckle, and then went to work her up properly, running his tongue all up and down her pussy, dragging it in between her inner and outer labia, probing it into her opening.

Sophia sighed, then engulfed his cock into her mouth. She ran her tongue up and down the shaft, then curled it around the head. Her lips moved up and down his shaft as she nudged the head with her tongue into the roof of her mouth.

Meanwhile, Warren had moved back to her clit. He sucked it between his lips. He enjoyed the sensation of his wife's weight settled on top of him, and he could feel her rapid breathing vibrating in both their torsos. Her erect nipples were drilling a hole in his stomach. He reached his hands up and cupped her ass as he sucked on her clit.

She hadn't come completely down to earth from her previous climaxes, so it didn't take much for her to work right back up again. Her labia became reddened and engorged, and her clit swelled in Warren's mouth. And, as she started to reach her peak, she plunged her mouth right down on Warren's cock, and screamed. With her on top of him like that, when she came, Warren felt **everything**. Her buttocks clenched under his hands. Her stomach muscles spasmed on his chest. Her breasts leaked and squirted all over him. And, most of all, he felt the vibrations of her scream radiating from her throat and into her mouth, around his cock. Warren had already cum once, he didn't think he was close. He was wrong. It came upon him in an instant, and, before he even realized it, he was pumping his cock into Sophia's mouth and shooting straight down her gullet. She swallowed it all, screamed harder, and kept cumming.

Afterwards, Sophie didn't have the strength to do anything, so she just stayed where she was, on top of Warren. Warren didn't mind. Her pussy enveloped his face. His shrinking cock nudged her cheek.

After a minute, she sighed and said, "That was quick for you." She giggled. "It took me by surprise."

"It took **me** by surprise!" Warren admitted. "That one snuck up on me."

“I’m sneaky like that,” Sophia giggled. She sighed again, and rolled off him. She rubbed the pillow beside her in invitation, and Warren turned himself around and snuggled next to her.

“You know what?” Sophia said after a moment. “I’m **hungry**!”

“Well, you know, working off all those calories,” Warren laughed. “I’m hungry, too. Hey, this is a ritzy place. They’ve got room service.”

“Good idea.”

They found the menu, and looked through it. “Very elegant. Very expensive,” Sophia giggled.

“Hey, it’s our wedding night. If we can’t splurge tonight, right?”

“Good point,” Sophia laughed. “Look at this. Caviar. I want caviar.”

“Shrimp cocktail.”

“Lobster Newburg.”

“And champagne. We’ve got to have champagne,” Warren said.

“We have it. It’s over in the other room.” They were in a two-room suite. “It’s on ice. Jessie put it in earlier. It’s a good thing, since they might have checked your ID,” she giggled.

“Yeah. Don’t you love it? I’m a world champion athlete with a wife and a daughter and I can’t legally buy a bottle of champagne to celebrate my wedding night. Who makes the laws in this country?” Warren grumbled.

“Don’t worry. I got it covered. One of the advantages of marrying an older woman,” she teased.

They went through and ordered a bunch of **really** expensive stuff, and Sophia called down with the order. They cuddled for a while, and, shortly, there was a knock on the door.

“There’s our food, Snugglebear,” Sophia said. She got up to go answer the door.

Nude. “Aren’t you going to throw a robe on?” Warren asked.

“Nope,” Sophie said with a twinkle in her eye. She went and opened the door—and the poor kid, who wasn’t a day over 18, was **completely** flustered at seeing this gorgeous, very naked young woman opening the door.

“Hi!” she chirped.

“Hi. Uh, room service?” the kid gulped.

“Come on in! You can put it right over there. Snugglebear, got any money?”

“In my wallet. Over on the dresser,” Warren told her, bemused.

Sophie retrieved some money from Warren’s wallet and handed it over to the blushing waiter. “Here you go. Thank you very much.”

The kid looked at the generous tip—and the **other** tip, the free show, standing in front of him—and blurted, “Thank **you**!” He backed his way out of the room, blushing and staring the whole time.

When he had laughed, Warren burst out laughing. “I should marry you every day, Pookie, it brings out your naughty side.” He shook his head. “That poor kid. He’s probably on his way to the rest room to relieve himself.”

“You think?” Sophie said impishly.

“You’re **so** bad,” Warren laughed. “Come here. Let’s gorge ourselves on caviar and champagne. I need to regain my strength if I’m going to fuck your brains out again.”

“Oooh, now **there’s** a plan!”

After another wild lovemaking session, and a very contented sleep, Sophia woke up early the next morning. She hummed contentedly, snuggling in Warren’s arms.

He awoke then. “Good morning, my wife,” he said.

“Good morning, my husband.”

“How did you sleep?”

“Perfectly.”

“Me, too.”

“Hey, I had an idea,” Sophia said. “We’re leaving this afternoon for a week. I think we should go wake Jessie up and give her something to remember us by.”

“She’d like that, wouldn’t she?” Warren laughed.

“Yes, she would. And I still have the second key to her room from staying there the other night.”

“Good plan. Let’s take a shower first, though.”

They did, then they threw on robes and went to Jessie’s room, which was right down the hall. They silently opened the door and crept inside. They found her on the bed, naked—which is how she usually slept—on her back, right in the middle of the king-sized bed.

“Right where we want her,” Sophie whispered with a giggle. “You want the tittie or the clittie?”

“Why don’t we each start with a tittie, then I’ll move down to the clittie.”

“Sounds like a plan,” Sophie grinned. They crawled into the bed, one on each side of her, and each took one of her nipples into their mouth. Jessie moaned, her nipples stiffened, and she shifted in the bed—but she still hadn’t woken up.

Warren reached his hand down between her legs, and found that her juices were flowing. He left Sophie to the tittie play, and moved himself down between her legs. Sophie giggled into Jessie’s tit, and grabbed the one Warren had just vacated with her hand, fondling it. Warren gently spread her legs apart, moved his face in, and started licking up and down her pussy.

That woke her up. Her eyes flew open. “HUH?” she gasped. And she looked down to see Sophie nibbling her tit and Warren doing his usual thorough job on her pussy. “What?”

Sophie looked up, grinning. “Good morning, sunshine.” She leaned up and kissed Jessie full on the lips. “This is your **very** special wake-up call.”

“What are you guys **doing** here?” Jessie asked incredulously.

“We didn’t want you to forget us while we’re away on our honeymoon,” Sophie giggled.

“Fat chance of **that**.”

Sophie grinned, and went back to her breasts, nibbling and fondling them. Warren kept up his relentless assault on her pussy. It didn’t take long before she was in the throes of a crashing orgasm.

After she came down, Warren settled himself between her legs and slipped his cock into her waiting pussy. She moaned deeply, and Sophie moved back up to kiss her.

After they broke the kiss, with Warren still pounding away at her, Jessie looked up at Sophie and said, “Soph? Uhm, you haven’t fed Betsy in a while, have you?”

“Nope. 15 hours or so. And boy am I full. I don’t suppose you have a solution to that?” Sophie teased.

“I think I might,” Jessie grinned.

Sophie laughed, and got on her hands and knees. She crawled over and dangled her tits right at Jessie’s mouth. Jessie latched on and started draining Sophie’s engorged boobs. With Sophie’s tit draining her sweet milk into her mouth and Warren pounding his cock into her pussy, Jess was in heaven.

She **really** hadn’t expected this today!

When they were done, about an hour later, and she was cuddled up with both of them, she said so. “I can’t **believe** you two came in here with me. **Today**. On your **wedding** night!”

“It’s not our wedding night, it’s the morning after,” Warren pointed out.

“And, don’t worry, we had a wedding night for the ages,” Sophia told her with a laugh.

“Good,” Jess said. “I dunno. Don’t get me wrong, I’m **thrilled** you did this, but I didn’t expect it.” She sniffled a little bit. “I really love you guys.”

“And we love you,” Warren told her.

They cuddled and talked for a bit, then Warren and Sophia went back to their room to get dressed. Jessie did the same, and they met in the corridor. They headed down to brunch.