

A HONEYMOON FOR THREE (Chapter 126)

“How’s your pina colada?” Sophie asked Warren.

“Just perfect. How’s your daiquiri?”

“Just as perfect.” She leaned back in her lounge chair, letting the sun bear down on her bikini-clad body. “This **is** the life, isn’t it?”

“Uh-huh.” He looked down in between his chair and Sophie’s. “We’re gonna have to put somebody in a serious bath when we get back to the room. She’s **covered** in sand.”

Sophia looked down and giggled. “Hey, Betsy. Having a good time?”

“Mama!” Betsy chirped. She was sitting in the sand, merrily playing with it.

“You should take her in the water, Snugglebear,” Sophie suggested.

“In a bit.” He started laughing.

“What’s so funny?” Sophie asked.

“I just keep thinking of that desk clerk when we checked in last night,” Warren said with a laugh. “That was so funny. I loved it how he looked at his computer, said, ‘Oh, yes, you’re in the honeymoon suite,’ and then saw Betsy. And looked at the computer. And looked at Betsy. And looked at the computer.”

“I know,” Sophie snorted. “Hey, you’d think we were the only people that ever had a kid before they got married.”

“Well, I don’t know if bringing the kid on the **honeymoon** is all that common.”

“Yeah, but neither of us wanted to be away from her for a week. Plus, I’m not quite ready to wean her yet,” Sophie said. “I **definitely** didn’t want to worry about weaning on my **honeymoon**.”

“Hey, I wanted her here, too.”

“Dad actually questioned it,” Sophia told him. “I told him, listen. We’re going to Aruba. Which means we’re either going to be lounging on the beach, or having sex. Betsy **likes** lounging on the beach, and she sleeps through the sex. So what’s the problem?”

Warren cracked up. “My sentiments exactly. Though I can’t **wait** to tell her when she’s older that she was along on our **honeymoon**. She should crack up at that when she’s sixteen or so.”

“She’s **my** child, Warren. Sixteen? Try **twelve**,” Sophie said, deadpan.

“Oh **Jesus**. Things to look forward to,” Warren grinned.

“We’ve actually never discussed that,” Sophia told him. “When she gets older, I mean. When she starts getting interested in you-know-what. What do you think? How are we going to handle this?”

“An open book,” Warren said definitively. Sophie nodded in approval. “With emphasis on not getting pushed into anything **she** doesn’t feel good about.”

“Oh, I knew I loved you,” Sophia said.

“You lost your virginity at 12, and it sucked. And we need to tell her that, and we need to tell her **why** it sucked. But, let’s not forget, I lost mine at 14, and it was glorious. If she loses it at 14, she wants to do it, and she enjoys herself? As long as she’s doing it for **her**, and as long as she’s protected to the hilt.” He grinned at her. “And if she ever goes to Japan, warn her about that pesky International Date Line.”

Sophie laughed. “You know what? Now, with her here? I wouldn’t change a thing.”

“Neither would I,” Warren agreed.

“However,” Sophie smirked, “since I definitely don’t want number two until we stop skating, I’m going to have to be careful. Worlds are in Beijing this year.”

“Good point.” He looked at his drink. “How’s your daiquiri doing? Need another?”

Sophie took a pull on the straw. Her drink emptied with a resounding “slurp”. “I do now,” she giggled. “You going up?”

“Sure.” He leaned from the lounge chair to the bag they had brought, and retrieved his wallet. There was an outdoor bar right at the beach, attached to their hotel.

“You **love** this, don’t you? The loving husband, able to go refill his wife’s drink,” Sophie giggled.

“Well, that’s why I didn’t just pick a tropical paradise, I picked a tropical paradise with a drinking age of eighteen.” He stood up, leaned over, and kissed his wife. “Be right back, Pookie.”

“I’ll be waiting, Snugglebear.” He took off, and she sighed happily. Then she looked over beside her chair. She reached over and picked Betsy up. Betsy gurgled happily.

“How are you doing, little one? Hey, that Daddy of yours is pretty swell, isn’t he?”

“Dada,” Betsy chirped.

“I agree,” Sophia giggled. “I think we’ll keep him, huh?.” She looked at her daughter, being held in her arms. “Daddy wasn’t kidding, though, was he? You’re a walking sand dune. And you’re getting it all over Mama.”

“Mama!” Betsy said.

“Yeah, yeah. When Daddy gets back I think we’ll have to go dunk you in the ocean.” Just then, Sophia got a kiss on her forehead and a drink at her side. “It’s my two favorite girls,” Warren said. “What are we talking about?”

“Betsy and I have decided to keep you,” Sophie giggled.

“That’s a good thing,” Warren grinned. “I would’ve hated to go through all that wedding rigamarole for nothing.”

“Uh-uh. You’re stuck with me, and you know it.”

Warren laughed. “When Crash and I were waiting for you to come down the aisle, he asked me if I was ready for the ol’ ball and chain. I told him that if **you** were a ball and chain, I’d take it.”

“Oh, you say the sweetest things.”

“Yes, I do. And what do I get back? ‘Oh, I guess we’ll keep him,’” Warren teased.

Sophie grinned at him, and then stood up. She set Betsy down in the lounge chair, wrapped her arms around Warren, and gave him a long, slow kiss. “That better?” she giggled.

“Much.”

“Good. Let’s take our kid down to the water and de-sand her.”

“Good plan,” Warren agreed. He scooped Betsy up in his right hand, and wrapped his left one around Sophia’s waist. She did the same to his waist, and the headed down to the water. They strolled right in.

“Wow, it’s like bath water!” Sophie exclaimed.

“Yeah,” Warren laughed, “that’s because we’re used to Hampton Beach, where the water temperature **might** hit 68 on a **good** day.” They walked together to where the water came above Warren’s waist. He held Betsy to his chest and dipped, getting her wet. She went **nuts!**

Sophie laughed, watching Betsy giggle and squirm in Warren’s arms, splashing the water. Warren held his arms out with her in them, and zoomed her around in the water. She flapped her arms and kicked her feet, laughing the whole time.

“Wow. She’s a **fish**!” Sophie exclaimed.

“Sure is. Hey, she always has loved bath time.”

“You’re right.”

Warren took her and dunked her, all the way. He did it quickly, but was trying to get the sand out of her hair. She came up sputtering a bit—but still laughing. “Dada!” she exclaimed.

“Swim? Betsy swim?” Warren said to her.

“S’im,” she attempted.

“Not bad, kid,” Sophie grinned proudly. “We’ll have her talking and swimming before she’s two.”

After Betsy started to tire out, they headed out of the water. Sophie was walking slightly ahead of Warren. Warren watched her ass appreciatively.

“Have I mentioned how much I like that bikini?” he grinned.

“You didn’t have to mention it. I noticed.” She looked down. “If I’m going to wear this bikini, we might have to get you a looser swimsuit.”

Warren laughed. If anyone was looking close enough, his erection was plainly apparent. “This is what looking at your ass covered by not-much does to me.”

“Hmm. Wonder if there’s any nude beaches on Aruba?” Sophie said impishly.

“That’s **all** I need.”

“Well, anyhow,” she said, leering at him, “I really **do** think Betsy’s getting tired. We **really** should go back up to the room and put her down for her nap. Shouldn’t we?”

“Absolutely.”

They dried off, and then headed towards the hotel. They got to the room and ordered room service for lunch. They ate, and fed Betsy. She was eating more table food, though Sophie was still breastfeeding, just less often. They had set up her porta-crib in the ‘sitting room’ of the suite. They set her in it, and she was asleep in moments.

“We got in so late last night, we didn’t have much of a chance to check this place out,” Sophia pointed out.

“True.” Through the bedroom, there was a balcony. “Hey, if you ever wanted to get an all-over tan, nobody’d be able to see you up here,” Warren said, stepping on the balcony.

“Good plan. Though I like the beach, too, even if I do have to wear a swimsuit.”

“Not that it’s much of a swimsuit,” Warren laughed.

“True. But it does cover the fun bits.” Sophie leered at him, and, before he even knew she was doing it, had her bikini completely off. She grinned at him, and sauntered over to the couch that was on the balcony. She kneeled on it, her arms resting on the back, and wiggled her ass. “Warren? The bride wants to cum.”

“Here? Now?”

“Yes,” Sophia panted. “Nobody can see us.” The balcony **was** built for privacy. They were high up on the building, and the balcony was surrounded by a 5-foot-high wall. Nobody should be able to see in.

“I wasn’t thinking seeing, Pookie, I was thinking **hearing**,” Warren said wryly.

“I can be quiet.”

“That’d be a first!”

“Fine, have it your way,” she pouted. “You have a very willing, very **wet** wife right where you want her, and you’re worried about the neighbors.”

“Not **that** worried. Just bite your tongue,” he chuckled—and, without warning, came up behind her and slid right in to the hilt. She moaned—but softly. “You weren’t kidding about being very wet.”

She giggled and moaned. “I guess exhibitionism turns me on.”

“Good.” He reached around and grabbed her boobs, as he started a slow, steady rhythm in and out of her. She gasped and moaned a bit as he fucked her, but she was going a good job with the volume control.

“This is **so** naughty,” Sophie purred.

“Not quite as naughty as the wedding day, but close,” Warren grinned.

Sophia giggled. “Nothing’s as naughty as the wedding day. Oh GOD Warren,” she gasped. He steadily slipped in and out of her, building her up slowly. She climbed and climbed, gasping and moaning softly. When she went over, Warren could, of course, tell by the spasming and jerking of her body. But, she was a good girl—the only verbal reaction was a sharp hiss of breath and a little squeak. Warren, turned on beyond belief by the situation himself, poured into her shortly thereafter.

They spent the rest of the afternoon just relaxing. Sophie **did** go back out on the balcony for a while, covered in nothing but suntan lotion. Warren, bemused, joined her with a book—but kept his shorts on. After Betsy woke up, they brought her out there and she toddled around with them.

After supper and putting Betsy down, they explored another lovely feature of the room—the Jacuzzi. Which meant exploring another interesting place to have sex. Sophia particularly enjoyed sitting on the edge, her feet dangling in the water, while a submerged-below-the-neck Warren ate her out. Fucking underwater near the jets was fun, too!

They wore out the bed, too. After all, what’s a honeymoon for?

On Wednesday, they **did** have a bit of business to conduct. Rather, Sophie did.

After the triumph—not to mention the nudity—at Worlds, they started getting offers. Endorsement offers, and quite a few of them. The problem was, many of them were for Sophie and Sophie alone. Warren didn’t mind at all, but it had bothered Sophie.

“What does it matter?” Warren had laughed. “It all goes in the same bank account. The only difference is you get more fame, and I couldn’t care less about that. But, Jesus, I mean, really. Look at this one. That’ll pay for all four years of my med school ten times over. And I’m gonna be **upset** that they don’t want **me**?”

“There was one thing that did occur to me. If we did this and piled up some money, I wouldn’t have to work while you were in med school. I could stay home with Betsy,” Sophia had said.

“There you go. You **can** work, you know. I mean, you **are** getting a college degree.”

“And maybe I’ll use it someday, but the idea of staying home appeals to me. Med school is a grind, you should have a loving wife to come home to,” she grinned. “Besides which, after the next Olympics, I think I’ll want another one.”

“Baby?”

“Yeah.”

“Fine by me. **Great** by me. So let’s look at some of these deals, OK?”

The one they were doing while in Aruba was actually an easy choice. It was for Diet Coke, which Sophia drank incessantly and Warren could not **abide**. “They definitely picked the right Kelleher for that one,” he had laughed. They wanted two different sequences for the TV commercial; one on the ice, which Sophie would be filming in

Oceanview the following week. This one, in Aruba, was for the bikini sequence. The ad company, finding out that Sophie would be in Aruba for the honeymoon, quickly asked to do it there. Sophie agreed, and the crew had found a **stunning** setting, an isolated beach that was gorgeous.

Warren was bemused by the “bikini” part of the commercial. “Yeah. Drink Diet Coke and you can look like this. Of course, we won’t mention the endless hours on the ice, the aerobics, the weightlifting....”

“What, my figure isn’t from the magic of Diet Coke?” Sophie grinned.

“Hey. I might not be stunning like you are, but I **am** in as good a shape as you are. And I drink root beer, and not diet root beer. And coffee with extra sugar.”

“And you’ve never had a baby,” Sophia teased.

“Oh, so that’s your postpartum prescription, Doctor Kelleher? Diet Coke?”

“Yeah. It’ll be in all the medical journals,” she laughed.

The filming went well. Sophie had a great time, the crew adored her, and the session was wrapped up quickly. They’d do the ice shots the next week and the commercial was expected to be airing in time for skating season.

There was nightlife in Aruba, but Sophie and Warren hadn’t expected to be able to partake, due to having Betsy along. Then they discovered the hotel had a babysitting service. A very nice 18-year-old Aruban girl came up to their room on Thursday night, made quick friends with Betsy, and off the couple went.

After a lovely supper in a very nice restaurant, they headed—big surprise—to go dancing. As usual, they lit up the dance floor. As usual, they had a blast. And, as usual—considering all the Americans that vacationed in Aruba—they got recognized.

At their table, actually. They had left their drinks on the table while out on the dance floor, in front of two seats at the table. When they got back, they found that the other four seats at the table had been filled. Two couples, college students from Georgia having a week-long vacation before they went back to their studies. The two girls were longtime skating fans that recognized the duo right off. The two guys **had** seen Maxim. All four had seen the World Championship.

“We’ve never minded being recognized,” Sophia told them, “before this year. The only problem is **now** everyone that recognizes us has seen me naked!”

“Not just you, Pookie,” Warren said.

“Oh, **definitely** not just you,” one of the girls grinned, mooning at Warren, and earning a subtle poke from her boyfriend.

Warren and Sophia thoroughly enjoyed the evening, dancing and chatting with their new friends.

Flying back that Saturday, they felt thoroughly rested and relaxed.

“I didn’t think it was possible for two people to have that much sex in one week,” Sophia grinned.

“And you even managed to film a commercial and get a tan in between all that sex,” Warren teased.

“And go dancing.”

“And go dancing,” Warren agreed. “And, I’ll tell you one other thing. When we eventually buy a house? It **will** have a Jacuzzi.”

“I agree completely!”

--end of chapter—

BETSY’S BIRTHDAY (Chapter 127)

They had another barbecue in the Kelleher’s back yard to celebrate Betsy’s first birthday. All the usual suspects were in attendance.

Kristin had asked to talk to Sophia privately, so they were huddled in a corner of the backyard. Everyone else was gathered in the general vicinity of the picnic table.

“Hey, Warren, you know what?” Jess, sitting next to him, said. “Your little brother is a **hunk**.”

Ryan—who heard her—laughed, as did Warren. “Hey, Jess, if you’re going after my brother, you’d better like sharing. And not just with one, with about ten.”

Ryan laughed. “Oh, it hasn’t been **that** bad.”

“You should see it,” Warren told Jess. “Every time I step into this house, there’s a new girl on Ryan’s arm.”

“Well, of course,” Jess grinned. “Like I said, he’s a hunk. Plus, if he’s **your** brother, Warren—he’s probably a sweetheart **and** very smart.”

“That’s me all over,” Ryan grinned.

“So,” Jess continued, “if he hasn’t yet found his Sophia, why not play the field?”

“Well, that’s what I had been thinking,” Ryan said.

Jess picked up something from the way that he phrased that. “Things have changed, haven’t they?”

“Yeah,” Ryan admitted. “Well, maybe.”

“Laurel,” Warren guessed.

“Good call, big bro,” Ryan grinned.

“Clue me in,” Jess said.

“Laurel Tingsley,” Ryan told her. “She lives out in West Boylston, near Worcester. I met her in March. Georgia Tech held this get-together for everyone from around here that’s going to be attending in September. That’s where we met. We hit it off, and started e-mailing and IMing and that. We’ve seen each other a number of times. That’s tough, West Boylston’s not close, and we’re both working for the summer. But we’ve managed, about every other week. She went to the prom with me—and Warren’s wedding.”

“Oh, you mean the stunning redhead I saw you dancing with?” Jess grinned.

“That’s her,” Ryan grinned. Then the grin faded. “That night, after Warren’s wedding, we made love for the first time. Jess, I’m not inexperienced, OK? But, with her, it was—**amazing**.”

“And now you guys are going to the same college,” Jess grinned.

“Yep. We’re going to date when we get there and see what happens.”

“From what I understand, Laurel’s in my league academically,” Warren said.

“She sure is,” Ryan grinned. “And, despite what you said earlier, Jess, I am **not**. I hold my own; but with Warren and Kris around I’m the family dummy. And Laurel is going to Tech on a full academic scholarship.”

“And she’s not impressed with Mister Basketball Scholarship one little bit,” Warren teased.

“Actually, she is. That, plus the fact that I **could** have gotten into Tech academically, though I wouldn’t have gotten a scholarship. But she’s impressed that a jock like me treats her like a person. She was known as a first class geek at her high school.”

“She’s gorgeous, though,” Jess pointed out.

“Yeah, and she’s **not** shy or withdrawn or anything. I don’t know. I guess when you’re at the top of **everything** academically, you’re a geek by definition. She was surprised that **I** didn’t think she was a geek,” Ryan laughed. “Until, at the wedding, she met Kristin.”

“That’ll do it,” Warren laughed.

“Oh, yeah?” Jess snorted. “Kristin, my ass. She could’ve met **you** when **I** first did and she’d know what a geek is.”

“Jess, honey, I’ve got news for you,” he grinned at her. “I’m **still** a geek.”

Ryan, who knew the whole story, said, “He is, Jess. And **you** sleep with him!”

“Oh, no, what have I **done**?” Jess mock-wailed.

Sophia and Kristin grabbed their food and headed over to a corner of the back yard. They sat on the grass. “So, Kris, what did you want to ask me about?”

“Sophie, what is sex like?”

Sophia almost choked on her hamburger. “What?!?”

“I can’t ask my mother,” Kristin said softly. “I don’t have a sister. I have no close girlfriends. You’re the only one. And you **are** my sister now, actually.”

“That’s so sweet,” Sophia beamed. Then, she looked right at Kristin. “Kris, you and Tom haven’t.....”

“No, just kiss. I mean, if I had, would I have to ask you what it’s like?” she giggled.

“Well, unless you were asking me what it’s **supposed** to be like. Anyway, why, then, were you asking? Are you **thinking** about it?”

“Yes. No. I don’t know,” Kristin sighed. “Look, I’ve known you and Warren have been having sex since I knew what sex **was**. When I got to be old enough that Mom didn’t care what you guys were doing in Warren’s room, I noticed that you’d always come downstairs looking **very** happy. And Ryan? The night of your wedding, he was with Laurel.” Kristin explained who Laurel was. “When I saw her the next morning, she looked like she had died and gone to heaven.”

“I know what’s going on around me,” she continued, “but I never thought of it personally, because guys seemed completely beyond me. Then Tom came along. And, God, Sophie, when he kisses me? **Wow!**”

Sophie smiled at her sister-in-law. “So, something’s waking up.”

“And **how**.”

“Kris, do **not** rush into anything. Please. Trust me on that one.”

“I won’t. Heck, I don’t even know when I’m going to **see** him again!”

“I know. I’m worried that, when you do see him, you’ll be tempted to rush it, just **because** you don’t see him that much.”

“No. I’m just, you know, wondering.”

“OK, then. To answer your original question, it depends, and on a lot of things. The first and most important is the guy.”

Kristin blushed bright red. “I, er, heard two girls in my class talking about that.”

“About what, exactly?” Sophia asked.

“Well, one was saying how great her new boyfriend was, because he was really, you know.” She blushed deeper. “Big.”

“Bullshit,” Sophia laughed. “That’s someone trying to impress a friend. Listen, Warren’s not **small**....”

Kristin interrupted, dismayed. “Oh, God, I don’t know if I want to know these things about my **brother**!”

“Hey, Kris, you asked me what sex was like. Who do I have sex with?” Sophia asked bemused. Kristin looked a little sheepish. “Don’t worry, I’ll try not to go into **too** much graphic detail. Anyhow, Warren’s not small—but he’s not huge, either. I’ve had bigger. I’ve never had **better**, and it’s not even **close**. Size means nothing. Attitude means everything.”

“Attitude?”

“My pleasure is as important to Warren as his own is. If not more so.”

“Oh.”

“That is what I mean when I say the guy makes a difference. A lot of other things make a difference. **Your** attitude.” Kristin looked at her. Sophie smiled. “It’s a whole lot better if you are **completely** sure you **really** want it.”

“Oh. You mean, like, what happened to you before Warren.”

“That’s a lot of it. But it even happens nowadays. Look, Warren and I love each other, we’re together, and we take care of each other. There are days that Warren’s really in the mood, and I’m not, but I’ll give in for his sake.” Kristin shot her a look. “Oh, Kris, that goes **both** ways. In fact, it probably goes the other way more often. I’m generally hornier than Warren is, believe it or not.” Kristin giggled at that. “But, what I was saying was, the more I’m in the mood, the better it is. If I can say that about **Warren**, imagine what it was like going to bed with guys when I was **really** unsure and hesitating. It’s really not worth it.”

“How will I know?” Kris asked her.

“You will,” she smiled. “Trust me.”

“OK. When it’s the right guy, the right time, I’m really sure, all that—is it really that good?”

“Oh, Kris, you won’t believe it. Trust me. You won’t believe how good it is.”

They talked a little longer, then headed back towards the rest of the crowd. It was cake time. A kid’s first birthday isn’t complete without watching her attempting to eat chocolate cake and getting it all over herself!

A week later, and Warren and Sophie were headed back to Wisconsin. Because they’d be living in an apartment and not the dorms, they had a lot of stuff to move. So, they rented a truck. However, they still wanted Warren’s van out there with them—and neither of them wanted to drive alone. So, they worked out a plan. Warren would drive the truck, and Crash would accompany him as far as Chicago. Jessie would ride with Sophie and Betsy in the van until Milwaukee. They bought walkie-talkies so they could communicate on the road.

Sophie was driving along the Mass Pike. Jess was sitting in the passenger’s seat, wearing shorts, her sandals off, and her foot was up against the dashboard. She was painting her toenails.

Sophie looked at her, bemused. “How you can do that in a moving car is completely beyond me.”

“I’m good,” Jess grinned.

“So what do we have today? Pink? Purple? Black?”

“Fuck-Me Red,” Jessie grinned. “My favorite.”

“It would be,” Sophia grinned back. “So, what’s the deal when we stop tonight? You coming in the hotel room with us, or Crash?”

“You guys.”

“I thought you and Crash might, you know....”

“I offered,” Jess grinned. “He turned me down. It’s Liz.”

“Ah.”

“Hey, Jay really **is** a monogamous guy. The only time he **ever** cheated on me was right at the end, when it was all falling apart.” Jessie grinned. “I think he’s really stuck on Liz. You know that nut flew out to LA last weekend just to see her?”

“Cool,” Sophia giggled. “This really doesn’t bother you.”

“Nope. I’m happy for him. And I’ve liked Liz since you introduced me to her. She’s very down-to-earth, considering. If those guys work it out, I’ll be happy.”

“And what about you?”

“I’m fine, Sophie,” Jess grinned. “Yeah, I’m looking, I won’t deny it. But I’ve got you and Warren in the meantime, I know you guys love me, and I love both of you. I’m only 21. No rush, you know?” She gave Sophie a wry little grin. “Not **everybody** finds their soulmate at 14, Miss Romantic.”

“I know,” she giggled.

“Mama!” they heard from the back seat.

“Ah, someone’s awake. Hi, Betsy,” Sophia said.

“Hi, Betsy,” Jess echoed.

“Mama! Ahnshess!” Betsy chirped.

“Was that ‘Aunt Jess’?” Jessie asked.

“Yeah, I do believe it was!” Sophia said.

“Ahnshess!” Betsy repeated.

Sophia cracked up laughing. Jessie just looked at her. “She said Aunt Jess before she said anything even remotely resembling Grammy. Do **not** tell my mother!”

Jessie joined in Sophia’s laughter. “Wouldn’t dream of it.”

“You what?” Warren was asking Crash at just about the same time.

“Flew to LA last weekend. I was supposed to finish the summer job last Friday, but I decided to end Thursday. Called Liz up and asked her what she’d do if I hopped on a plane to come out and spend the weekend with her. She said she’d do a jig, then fuck my brains out,” he grinned. “Now, come on, what would **you** do?”

“Fly to LA,” Warren laughed.

“You’re a wise man, Warren,” Crash intoned with a chuckle.

“So, what’s up with you and Liz?”

“Long distance romance, pretty much. We talked a lot about it this weekend. We’re pretty crazy about each other. We either instant message or talk on the phone for hours every night. It’s going to be tough, no doubt, but there’s definitely something there.”

“Does Jess know?” Warren asked.

“Jess knows everything. I even thanked her,” Crash laughed. “For two things. One was breaking up with me when she did—it really **was** one hell of a wake-up call. The other thing was taking me to bed back in February and showing me what I was doing wrong.”

“Not that **that** would make much of a difference with **Liz**, unless she’s changed.”

“Nope,” Crash laughed, “she still cums if you look at her cross-eyed. But it’s good for **me**, you know. I don’t want to have to rely on her reactions.”

“And Jess is OK with everything?”

“Jess is lonely. She’s fine with me and Liz, but she’s lonely.” He looked at Warren. “And I’m probably overstepping my bounds in a big way, here, but I don’t think you and Sophie are enough. Not in the long run.”

“Crash, **we** know that. Both of us.”

“OK. As long as you know that.” Crash sighed. “I now agree with Jess and I breaking up, but I will love her until the day I die. I want her to be **happy**.”

“You know I want the same thing. As does Sophie. I think she **is** happy now.” Crash started to say something, but Warren cut him off. “Not in the long run, yes, I **know**. But, don’t forget how young we all are.”

“True. I just **feel** older,” Crash said ruefully.

“That, pal, is because you’re losing your hair.”

“Oh, thanks a **lot**. I’m not even 21 yet, asshole.”

“Sorry, but you have a receding hairline.”

“I’ve **always** had a high forehead, where the hell have **you** been?”

Finally, Warren and Sophia got to Madison.

There was an apartment complex right on the edge of the campus. It was reserved for Seniors, graduate students—and married students. That’s where Sophia and Warren would be living this year. They had a two-bedroom apartment on the third floor.

Right down the hall were Papa Bear and Cait. They had stayed in Madison all summer, and had done a lot of helping to get Warren and Sophia the apartment. Now they, plus Mike and Alexa—who were up on the fifth floor—were helping the duo get their stuff moved in.

They took a couple of days to get moved in and get themselves together. A few days before classes were to start, they had scheduled some ice time. They had called before they got there and had nailed down their ice time for the semester.

About a half hour before they were supposed to hit the ice, they were getting ready, gathering their stuff up, and also Betsy’s so they could drop her off at the day care. The phone rang. It was Kathy, their coach in Wisconsin.

“Hey, Kath!” Warren answered. “Yeah, we’ve got ice time in a half hour. We figured we’d see you then. What?”

Sophia looked on as Warren’s face fell. By the time he hung up the phone, he looked like he wanted to strangle someone.

“What did she say, Warren?” Sophie asked worriedly. He told her.

Sophie was horrified. “WHAT? Jesus Christ, how could she **do** that to us?”

--end of chapter---

INTRUDERS (Chapter 128)

Warren and Sophia quickly dropped Betsy off at the day care, and hustled over to the rink. Kathy was waiting for them. She directed them into her office.

“Look, guys, I **had** to. I didn’t know what was going on with you guys,” Kathy started.

“Bullshit,” Warren spat. “You **knew** we were coming back.”

“Well, I thought that with the baby, plus since you won Worlds.....”

“Worlds isn’t the Olympics,” Sophia told her.

“The Olympics?” Kathy laughed. “You guys don’t get it, do you? You **completely** sabotaged your career with that stunt you pulled at Worlds. You’ll be lucky if you win another **National** championship. I thought you’d see that, and get out while you had your World Championship.”

“You don’t have much confidence in us,” Warren said.

“This is still a judged sport. And too many judges think you’re bad for it,” Kathy countered.

“The only American ice dance team to **ever** win a World Championship, and we’re bad for the sport,” Sophia snorted. “Well, Kathy, we’re not going away. We’re the best ice dancers in the world, and we’re just going to be **so** good we force the judges into acknowledging it.”

“If anyone can pull it off....” Kathy laughed. “But you understand why I don’t want all my eggs in one basket.”

“We understand that part of it,” Warren said. “What we don’t understand is **who**.”

“They’re the up and coming dance team,” Kathy shrugged.

“They’re also first-class slimebags. Well, **she** is, anyway,” Sophia pointed out.

“She’s not that bad,” Kathy said.

“She took a run at us on the practice ice at Nationals,” Sophia pointed out. “She’s said nasty things in the press. And now Courtney Rogers and Ryan Killen are **here**? Sharing our ice? Our **coach**?”

“Look, competitors **do** share ice and coaches,” Kathy pointed out.

“And if it were anyone else, we wouldn’t care,” Warren told her. “But we don’t trust her. They are **never** going to beat us fair and square, and I don’t put it past her to do something underhanded. And, while we trust **you**, it’s clear that you don’t believe in us either, if you think the judges are out to get us.”

“And taking them on as students isn’t a ringing vote of confidence, either,” Sophia added.

“I needed to expand,” Kathy maintained.

Warren took a deep breath. “Do you have a copy of our contract?”

Kathy looked startled. “Yes.”

“Could I see it?”

“I suppose. Hold on, it’s not here.” She left the room. Warren and Sophia talked about the situation while she was gone. She came back quickly, and handed the contract to Warren.

After reading it, he said, “This is what I thought. Our deal for free ice time in exchange for promotional help is for the **club**.”

“Yes,” Kathy said, confused.

“You signed it in your capacity as president of the club.”

“Right.”

“Not as our coach,” Warren said.

“Well, now we’re talking to Kathy the coach, not Kathy the president of the club,” Sophia said. “You’re fired.”

“WHAT?” Kathy asked.

“We’re still going to train here,” Sophia told her, “since we don’t have much of a choice. And we’ll do the promotional stuff we’re supposed to, and we expect the free ice time, like it says in this contract. But we don’t want you coaching us anymore. Not if you’re going to be coaching **them**. We won’t stand for it. Courtney Rogers is bad news. We’re not going to share a coach with her.”

“Who’s going to coach you?” Kathy asked incredulously.

“June is our coach,” Warren told her. “We’ll send videotapes if we’re having a problem. She pretty much helped us work out our programs before the wedding. Other than that, we’ll coach ourselves. We’ve done it before.”

“You guys are making a big mistake,” Kathy told them.

“No, we’re not,” Warren claimed, and they walked out of her office.

A few days later, Warren was in the locker room when he was approached by Ryan Killen.

“Warren? I’m sorry.” Warren just looked at him. “I tried to talk Courtney out of this. I even told Kathy I didn’t think it was a good idea.”

“Water under the bridge,” Warren said. “What are you going to do?”

“Look,” Ryan sighed, “Courtney’s going to make your life a living hell.”

“She can **try**,” Warren said with amusement. “Ryan? We’re not worried about Courtney, OK?”

“She’s a great skater. We work well together on the ice,” Ryan told him. “But, Warren, she’s **ruthless**.” His voice dropped to a near-whisper. “You don’t know. You don’t know the **half** of it.”

“I’ll keep that in mind, Ryan, OK?”

They had their programs for the coming year.

This was the first year for the two original dances. For the Bossa Nova, they’d picked the Austin Powers theme, and had worked up a humorous program. The other OD was the Polka, and they were skating to “The Lonely Goatherd” from the Sound of Music. “The Duschesnays did it,” Warren had told Sophia, “but they **sucked**. It was a reach for them. It’s right up our alley.”

Their free dance **was** a bit of a departure. It was the closest they’d ever gotten to skating to classical. They’d picked the music of Aaron Copeland, two selections from his “Rodeo”. They started with the slow section, Saturday Night Waltz, and then finished with Roundup—or, as Sophie insisted on calling it, The Steak Commercial Song. She’d giggled when Warren had suggested skating to it. It **was**, however, fantastic to skate to.

A few days after Warren’s conversation with Ryan, he arrived at the rink, with Caitlin, Papa Bear, and Betsy. Sophie had a meeting with one of her professors and would be a few minutes late.

When Warren arrived, Courtney was still on the ice. “Your time’s over,” Warren said brusquely.

“Where’s Sophia?” she asked.

“Meeting with a professor.”

“You know what, Warren?” Courtney said. “You shouldn’t be skating with her, anyway. You should be skating with **me**. I’m far better than she is.”

“Oh, really,” Warren said, bemused. “What about Ryan?”

“He’s good, but not as good as **you** are,” Courtney cooed, laying it on thick. “We’d be a dynamite team.”

“Are you forgetting that she’s my wife?” Warren laughed.

“Oh, who cares? I’m still a better skater than she is.”

“You think?”

“I **know** it.”

“Fine, come here.” She skated over to him. “How’s your memory for dance steps?”

“Fantastic.”

“Good. This is the transition out of the side-by-side step sequence. It starts with a lift.” He showed her. “Then this.” He showed her a series of steps. They ran through it a couple of times. What Courtney didn’t know—but Warren did—is that he was showing it to her at half-speed.

Papa Bear and Caitlin were watching all this, trying to figure out just what was going on.

“OK, pick it up,” Warren told Courtney. They did the sequence faster. Courtney was just able to keep up. Warren chuckled to himself—they were still only at about three-quarter speed. Just then, Sophia walked into the rink. She came to a dead stop, and looked out on the ice, dumbfounded at seeing her husband skating with that **bitch**. She was just about to say something, when Warren shot her a “trust me” look.

“OK, Courtney, you’ve got the steps. Let’s try it. Caitlin, music please?”

Cait started the music. They went into the lift, came out of it, started the steps—and Courtney just could **not** keep up. She had had problems at three-quarter speed; at full-speed, she was lost.

“Come on, Courtney, keep up!” Warren hollered at her. They ran through it a couple of more times, and Courtney was getting **more** lost. The fifth time, desperately trying to keep up, Courtney clicked skate blades and went down in a heap.

Warren looked at her, chuckling. Then he turned to Sophia, still standing by the entrance to the rink. “Hey, Pookie. You wanna show her how it’s done?”

“Don’t mind if I do,” Sophia grinned. She skated over to Warren. Cait started the music, and they flew through the sequence flawlessly.

“She was trying to convince me she’s a better skater than you are,” Warren grinned at Sophia when they were done. “Hey, Courtney? You’re not even close.”

Courtney stormed off in a huff.

After they had eaten supper that night and put Betsy to bed, they were in the living room of their apartment. They were both studying—classes had started.

“Pookie, you seem a little out of it tonight,” Warren told her.

She sighed, and smiled at him. “It’s stupid.” Warren just looked at her. “That’s the first time you’ve ever skated with anyone other than me. I mean, I know about being on the ice with other skaters when you’re choreographing them. But we’ve never choreographed for another dance team, and, besides, that’s different. I saw you skating with her, and my heart was in my throat.”

“I only did it to prove a point.”

“I know,” she smiled. “It’s just that we’ve always been very possessive about dancing.” Warren cracked up laughing. “What?”

“We’ve been more possessive about **dancing** than we ever have about **sex**,” Warren laughed.

“Too true,” Sophia giggled. “Well, I hope Courtney didn’t figure out the truth.”

“Huh?”

“That if you had been trying to **help** her instead of show her up, she would’ve been able to keep up with you. You’re the best partner in the world. You could skate with **anyone**, and make them better.”

“Yeah, but why should I have to do that when I already have the best female ice dancer in the world as my partner?”

“Awww,” Sophie giggled. “Now, that’s enough talk. Study.”

“OK.”

“And be quick about it.”

“Why?”

She giggled. “Because I need you to fuck my brains out, o loving husband.”

“And you expect me to concentrate on **studying** now?”

“You’re a genius,” she giggled. “You can do it.”

“Uh-huh.”

Two days later, they were preparing to get on the ice to train. Courtney was just getting off. She skated over to them. “Listen. I was wondering. If I got some ice time tomorrow or the next day, could I ask you guys for some help? You especially, Warren, but Sophia too. I want you to teach me how you keep your speed through the steps like you do.”

Warren and Sophia looked at each other incredulously. Then Warren turned back to Courtney. “You’ve **got** to be kidding. First of all, I don’t know if we even **could** teach that.”

“It’s a gift,” Sophie interjected with an evil grin.

“Second of all, you’re competition. That alone, I wouldn’t care—if you were Shawna Vickers, I’d do it. But you took a run at us at Nationals. You’ve said some nasty stuff about us to the press. You were the only one that didn’t sign the petition for us. And, now, you’ve stolen our coach—and **don’t** tell me for a **second** that you did it just because Kathy’s a good coach.”

“And now you want us to tell you all our **tricks**? Nice try, Courtney. Now get off our ice.” She did, angrily.

Courtney’s antipathy towards the duo only increased when she happened by a newsstand a few days later. There they were, Warren and Sophia—on the cover of Sports Illustrated.

They had done an interview two weeks before. They themselves got the issue, and were thrilled with it. They were on the cover, sitting on their couch, arms around one another, grinning. The cover blurb said, “Figure Skating Will Never Be The Same.”

When Courtney—and the rest of the world—turned to the article, this is what they read.

HEAT ON ICE

How Two Young Lovers Transformed American Ice Dance, For Better Or Worse
And How the Figure Skating World Might Bite Back

It’s a rather small apartment. With their recent endorsement deals, Warren and Sophia Kelleher probably could afford better—but this one’s on the campus of the University of Wisconsin, and thus convenient.

It’s cluttered. “Who has time to clean?” Sophia Kelleher laughs. She’s got a point.

Warren and Sophia Kelleher are 20 and 21 years old, respectively. They took last year off from school, but they are now back at Wisconsin, in their Junior years. Warren is pre-med, with a 3.8 GPA. Sophia is a meteorology major, keeping up a 3.4. They are newlyweds. They have an adorable one-year-old bundle of energy named Betsy.

And, if that's not enough, they're also the best ice dancers in the world.

"Sometimes I'm so busy I forget my name," Warren laughs. Even with their hectic life, laughter comes easily to this couple. "Classes, studying, skating, Betsy. It's too much, and we know it. But there's nothing dispensable here—it's all necessary."

"We're not willing to put off schooling any more," Sophia adds. "And this is our time for skating. What would we get rid of?" She lets out a huge grin. "It's bad enough that we have to schedule **sex**."

Ah, yes. Sex. It's important to understand something—sex is important to the Kellehers. It is, frankly, part of their appeal. It's also part of the controversy.

It probably all started before the last Olympics. A tabloid printed an article about Sophia, alleging all kinds of sexual improprieties. The Kellehers dealt with the issue—revealing that Sophia had been abused in her early teens—but also revealed another one. Sophia, 19 and unmarried at the time, was pregnant.

"In the upper echelons of the sport, her pregnancy was absolutely frowned upon," Tina Bowman, a veteran skating reporter for USA Today, said. "That started their troubles with the USFSA, make no mistake about it. What happened afterwards only added to it."

What happened afterwards? A racy photo shoot of Sophia in Maxim magazine. An exhibition program at last year's nationals to Aerosmith's "Pink" that was so hot it just about melted the ice. And then, in what they say was protest against the flak they got for the first two things, an exhibition performance at the World Championships done completely in the nude.

The Powers That Be in figure skating have murmured behind the scenes since then. The rumor is it that the USFSA is rescinding all support for the couple. Since they get no financial support, they can only believe that the USFSA is talking about one thing—support with the judges.

Has someone forgotten that Warren and Sophia Kelleher are the most successful American ice dance team in history?

Some friends of theirs have come to take care of their daughter for the afternoon. Without having to worry about their daughter, they're relaxed and charming. They are asked if some of the rumor swirling around about lack of judging support give credence to the belief that figure skating isn't a "real" sport. They answer, in unison, "Yes."

"And ice dancing's the worst of them, without all the jumps to separate people," Warren adds.

"So, yeah, they can put us in fifth place next year, and most fans couldn't tell the difference," Sophia says.

But hasn't their always been an element of sexuality in figure skating? "To a point," Warren says. "First of all, relentless male heterosexuality has **always** been applauded. Somehow **I** didn't get put in with that, but it's been applauded with other people. Michael Weiss rips his shirt off and that's cool. The problem is with **female** sexuality."

"And only one aspect of that," Sophia added. "There's a girl, Allison Bowman, finished third at Nationals this year. She's 15 but she looks 12. Her competition programs were fine. Her exhibition—they dressed her up like a 12-year-old tart and had her skate to 'Brick House'. And nobody says a word to her."

Why do you think that is, she is asked.

"Because it's not real. It's fantasyland. Somehow, that's better. I don't agree, but that's the way some people see it."

"Look," Warren interjected, "Allison's costume and movements were far more lascivious than ours in 'Pink'. You know what the difference is? She was acting. We were not. 'Pink' isn't an act, it's foreplay!"

"And somehow that's better," Sophia repeated. "Taking a fifteen year old and making her look like a pedophile's dream, with absolutely **no** conviction behind it, is somehow better than two people who have a great sex life celebrating that—and **mildly**, I might add."

"It's the Madison Avenue commercialization of sex, is what it is," Warren asserted. "Of course, we by into it a bit with that Diet Coke commercial Sophie did. We're not innocent."

Tina Bowman, longtime figure skating writer for USA Today, tends to agree with the Kellehers. But she adds one more thing. "Singles skaters and female pairs skaters are small, almost by definition. But ice dancers, especially here in the USA, tend to be just as small, especially in weight. Sophie's not the only tall female ice dancer—but she's one of the few that isn't rail-thin. She's fairly voluptuous. I don't think that helps. They break the mold in a lot of different ways."

Sophia, when told of this quote, laughs and agrees. "Somehow, the sexuality of someone who looks 12 is less threatening than someone with a little T&A."

Warren and Sophia were both born and brought up in Oceanview, Massachusetts, a city of about 45,000 people 20 miles north of Boston. Warren comes from a stable home. Sophia, for a while there, did not. "My father left when I was three. I didn't see him again until I was sixteen. It's fine now. But I had some crap to deal with." She met Warren, at an after-school job, when they were both all of fourteen. "And I had one foot in the grave," she says. "Without Warren, it's hard to say what would have happened to me."

"And I was a bookish nerdy outsider," Warren reveals. "We found the best in each other."

It shows, and that includes on the ice. That's another part of their appeal, even when you take the sex out of it. The long program that won them an Olympic silver medal, "Romeo and Juliet," was a gorgeous display of sustained romanticism.

Their friend Evan Pogdar, the male half of the number-two American ice dance team, chuckles when reminded of it. "It's no secret that Shawna, my partner, and I are both gay. So, obviously, there's nothing romantic between **us**. We're very, very good friends, but that's it. And we have to go compete with **those** two," he laughs. "I swear, at times, it looks like they're one person with four arms and four legs. There's a level of completeness with those two that other dance teams just don't get."

"Actually, I think that's the most important part of our appeal," Warren says. "Quite honestly, I think that was part of the appeal for 'True Colors'. We may have skated it nude, but that program was, quite deliberately, not salacious. It was meant to be romantic, and I think it shows. And I think most of our fans, when they think of us, think of 'Romeo and Juliet' before they think of 'Pink'."

That's not why they're successful, though. Tina Bowman has some thoughts on that. "First of all, they do the most complex steps in the world and at incredible speed. Second of all, they really do think like one person so their unison is superb. And, lastly, they are **fantastic** at picking out music and choreographing to that music. They are unbelievably musical. That's another thing the bigwigs don't realize about them. They just won the Brian Wright Trophy for choreographer of the year. They not only did their own programs, they did Liz Cushman's long program and Brett Tomlinson and Andrea Wallach's short program. That's all three American World champions, folks. And they're doing Tom Bellamy's long program this year, too."

We go to the rink, and they show me their programs. There are two Original Dances this year. The first one, to a bossa nova beat, they use the Austin Powers theme. Not only is it snappy and difficult, it's absolutely hilarious. The Kellehers camp it up from start to end, without losing the difficulty of the skating. The second one, to a polka beat, is a whimsical, lighthearted program done to "The Lonely Goatherd" from The Sound Of Music.

Their free dance is done to Aaron Copland. The first part, the slow section, superbly displays their romanticism. The second part, skated to what Sophia laughingly calls "the steak commercial song" shows their quick feet and explosiveness.

Are these programs enough to defend a World Championship? They should be. But, then, they show me an exhibition they're working on, one that truly shows how special they are. It's to "At My Most Beautiful" by REM. It's not what you'd call a 'danceable' song. It's probably not difficult enough to be a competitive program, which is why it's an exhibition. "The steps aren't too quick," Warren tells me. But it's absolutely gorgeous. If dancing is supposed to be two people becoming as one, in time with music, "At My Most Beautiful" is dancing at its height. And it's them, the Kellehers, at their most beautiful.

After showing me their programs, the Kellehers grab their daughter and then take me to their favorite Chinese restaurant, right at the edge of the campus. We talk for a while, about their first meeting, about their wedding this August (“It was fantastic,” Sophia informs me), about how they manage to juggle the various parts of their life.

And, the more you spend time with this couple, the more you’re struck. Now, as Tina Bowman informs me, “Their skating absolutely speaks for itself. No question.” But the skating really isn’t the problem.

The thing of it is, the more time you spend with them, the more you realize that there shouldn’t be any problem. Warren and Sophia Kelleher are sweet, charming, and personable. At dinner, they were interrupted constantly by friends and well-wishers. They are highly intelligent. They have an artistic gift that’s present in other people’s choreography besides their own. They’re caring, doting parents. They have definite sex appeal—but definite romantic appeal as well. They have an easy, comfortable way with each other that’s delightful. They smile at each other often, laugh often, finish each other’s sentences.

Tina Bowman says, “The skating world is full of skating drones, and Sophia and Warren are so far away from that.” I know what she means. They’re lovely, charming people with full lives (“Too full,” Warren laughs) of which skating is only a part.

And, again, let’s not forget, they’re the most successful American ice dance team ever.

In other words, they’re a gold mine—and they know it. They’re perfectly willing to be that. “If the skating world wants to use us to sell skating, great,” Sophia says. “If they want us to be the public face of skating, sure. But they don’t seem to want that.”

It’s a puzzle. The Kellehers, because they have an active sex life and don’t hide it, are rapidly becoming pariahs. But the **rest** of what makes them tick is so special and unique that the skating world could absolutely benefit from it.

“We don’t need skating,” Warren points out astutely. These two have other things going for them, with their ambition and grades. Warren plans on going to medical school. They have other options.

But skating needs **them**. Will the skating world figure it out in time?

We’ll all find out in March, at the next World Championships. If they’re where they should be, then maybe there’s hope for the skating world. If they’re in eighth place, well, skating will have missed out.

Not the Kellehers—skating. Warren and Sophia will be fine. If the skating world screws around with them, it’s skating that will suffer.

After the article came out, the duo got a call from June, their coach back in Massachusetts. “It’s perfect. It nailed you guys. There couldn’t have been a better profile.” She started laughing. “And prepare for another shitstorm. You guys put the USFSA on notice, with the help of that reporter.”

“We know,” Warren told her. “We’ll see what happens.”

--end of chapter—

THE BMOC AND THE ARTIST (Chapter 129)

Kate Thompson had a self-image. It wasn’t a **bad** one, mind you, but it was realistic. She had always thought of herself as a bit ‘off’, a little strange—weird, even. She just wasn’t like other people.

And then she went to art school.

Kate’s classmates in high school had thought she dressed strangely. Well, her floppy hats and skinny ties and tie-die skirts and collections of bracelets were positively **sedate** compared to some of her classmates in art school. Hair colors that were not of this world, piercings in places she didn’t even know she **had**, and clothing choices that were way beyond the pale.

Suddenly, Kate had become **conservative**. How the hell did **that** happen, she laughed to herself.

Her roommate, Freya, wasn’t bad. She actually had normal blonde hair, though she did have a gazillion piercings and favored camouflage clothing. She even wore her hair normally, loose around her shoulders, and not in a mohawk or somesuch. Kate also found out that she was a really cool person.

Kate also appreciated that Freya came to art school to do **art**. Kate had been flabbergasted at how many people came to art school to be, and be seen as, ‘artistic’—but really didn’t care about actually **working** at doing art. Kate actually wanted to go to art school to be a better painter—as did Freya, although in her case she was a photography major.

So, Kate and Freya got along, and had started developing a friendship. It wasn’t until early October, however, that Kate told her about the most important person in her life.

She got off the phone that Tuesday afternoon and let out a delighted little squeak. “I can’t believe he’s starting!”

“Who’s starting what?” Freya asked.

“My boyfriend, Chad.”

“You have a boyfriend? How come I’ve never seen him?”

“We, unfortunately, don’t have much time together—and, I’m sure you understand, when we do, we’d rather be **alone**.”

“I’ll buy that,” Freya laughed. “So, he’s starting what?”

“He’s starting at quarterback Saturday for Boston College. He’s only a freshman, but their quarterbacks are riddled with injuries. He’s, like, the only one left, so he’s starting Saturday against Syracuse. He’s all excited. He’s trying to get tickets for me now.”

Freya goggled at her. “You’re going out with a **jock**?”

“Yeah,” Kate laughed. “Strange, isn’t it? We’ve been going out for almost a year.”

“Jeez, I’d like to meet him. It’s just strange he’s never been here.”

“Well, it’s easier for me to go there,” Kate pointed out, “because he’s busy with football right now.” Kate’s face unfolded into a wide grin. “Besides which, his roommate has been his best friend since freshman year in high school and knows and likes me—so he’s real good about getting out of the room.”

“Ah,” Freya laughed. “So, you’re doing him.”

“Yup,” Kate admitted happily.

“How is he?”

“Oh. My. God.” Both girls cracked up laughing. “He’s not your typical self-absorbed BMOC-type quarterback, you have to understand. He’s **very** attentive to my needs.”

“Ah,” Freya laughed. “And are you attentive to **his** needs?”

“You wanna know a secret?” Kate asked. Freya nodded. “I’m a complete animal in bed.” Freya looked at her, and then cracked up laughing. “He likes it,” Kate continued, “a **whole** lot.”

“I’ll just bet he does,” Freya grinned. “Still, the art school geek and the jock. It’s amusing.”

“To us, too, actually,” Kate admitted. “Hey, I love sports, anyhow.”

“Do you?” Freya asked. “Honestly, the only sport I like is figure skating.”

“Really?” Kate grinned. “Damn, if I had known that, I’d have told you who my stepsister is.” Freya looked at her, waiting. “Sophia Daniels Kelleher.”

“You’re **kidding!**” Freya gasped.

“Nope. Sophie’s mom married my dad a few years ago. Sophie and Warren lived at the house the whole past year.” Kate walked over to her shelving and pulled out a photo album. “See? I was even a bridesmaid at the wedding.”

“You **have** to let me meet them! I adore their skating!” Freya said excitedly.

“Sure. When they get back for Christmas, sure,” Kate agreed.

Chad came through with four tickets to the game. Freya eagerly went. Two other girls from their floor, Shelly and Alicia, decided to go along.

“I don’t know why I’m going,” Alicia said. “I’m not much for football.”

“You’re going because you’re my friend, I **love** football,” Shelly proclaimed. Shelly was a short-haired muscular lesbian.

“You liking football, that’s **such** a cliché,” Alicia teased.

“And you’re such a breeder,” Shelly teased back.

“Breeders can like football, too,” Kate pointed out. “More to the point, we can like football **players.**”

“There is that,” Freya agreed.

“True,” Shelly agreed.

“And you can check out the cheerleaders,” Alicia teased.

“I’ll be checking out the **game,**” Shelly pointed out. “Like I said, I **like** football.” They had found the very good seats that Chad had provided for them. “Hey, Kate. Nice seats.”

“Good to have connections,” Kate grinned.

“Connections?”

“Yeah.” Shelly and Alicia didn’t know about Chad. Kate spotted him warming up, fairly close by, and yelled out, “Hey, number five! Nice ass!” Chad turned around, spotted her, grinned, and waved.

“You know that guy?” Shelly asked.

“That’s Chad Kozak. He’s starting at quarterback today. It’s his first start, he’s just a freshman,” Kate told Shelly. Then she grinned. “We’ve been going out for almost a year.”

“Really?” Alicia asked. “A **jock**?”

“That’s what I said,” Freya laughed.

Shortly after that, the game started. Alicia and Freya were busy checking out “the tight end’s tight end,” but Shelly was pleased to find out that Kate knew football quite well.

“You a football nut because your guy plays it?” Shelly asked her.

“Nope. Long before that. In fact, at the first team party Chad took me to last year, I shocked the whole team with my acumen.”

“Good for you,” Shelly grinned.

Chad did well in his first game as a starter, especially after the coaches put his favorite receiver, Butch, into the game. BC won in a close one.

Alicia and Shelly headed back to Mass Art after the game, but Freya decided to hang out with Kate, who was waiting for Chad. Shortly he emerged, Butch in tow. Kate stood up and greeted him with a long kiss.

“Oh, Jesus. Here we go again,” Butch teased.

“Shaddap,” Chad grinned, then kissed Kate again.

“Nice game, hotshot,” Kate told him after they broke the kiss. “You, too,” she grinned at Butch. “Guys, this is my roommate Freya. This is Chad, and that’s his best friend Butch.”

They chatted for a bit, then all decided to go to dinner together.

Towards the end of the dinner, Freya and Kate went to the ladies’ room.

“Look,” Freya told her, “Butch just invited me to go to a party with him. I’m not going to want to trudge back to Mass Art if I’m half in the bag. So, why don’t you take Chad back to our room? Butch says I can crash in Chad’s bed tonight. Butch is telling Chad the same thing right now.”

“Hmm, you have it all worked out,” Kate grinned.

“Yeah. I like Butch. It’ll be fun.” She leered at Kate. “And you’ll have Chad all to yourself all night.”

“That’s always a good thing,” Kate grinned.

This was Chad's first trip to Kate's dorm. They both knew it was going to be weird—and they were right. Every single eye was on them as they walked through the Mass Art campus. Clean-cut muscular jock types like Chad were pretty rare there.

When they got to her dorm, they were almost laughing. When they got into her room, they **did** laugh. “Man, are **you** going to be fending off the questions about me!”

“Yup,” Kate agreed.

“Wow, that girl Tori—exactly **how** many piercings does she have?”

“Oh, you don't know the half of it,” Kate grinned. “Both nipples **and** her clit.”

“Her **clit**?”

“Well, the hood, actually.”

“That must have hurt like hell.”

“She says it did—but she also says it's the greatest thing ever. She says all she has to do now is wear tight jeans and she gives herself little mini-orgasms all day long.”

“Getting ideas, Katie?”

“Nah. I don't like pain.” She walked over to Chad and wrapped her arms around his shoulders, grinning at him. “Besides which, I'm not much for little mini-orgasms. I like big fat **huge** orgasms.”

“Oh, really?”

“Really. Know where I can get one of those?”

“I have a idea.” He reached down and grabbed her shirt, and pulled it over her head. Then he went to undo the bra.

“Good idea,” she grinned, and started working on his shirt. In short order they were both naked. Giggling, Kate grabbed Chad's dick and pulled him towards her bed.

They landed on the bed and wrapped their arms around each other, kissing deeply. They rubbed their naked bodies up against one another, sighing deeply into their kiss. Chad's hand slipped down to her breast and he lightly fondled it.

He kissed down her neck and then moved to her erect nipple, lightly sucking and nibbling on it. His hand moved between her legs. “YESSSSS!” she hissed as he slipped a finger deep into her pussy. He moved his other hand down and fondled her clit while he moved his fingers in and out of her. She started moaning and bucking back at his hand. After a few minutes, she found herself getting close.

“Oh, God, Chad, fuck me!” she demanded.

He happily obliged. It just took two long strokes of his cock into her, and Kate went into orbit with her first orgasm. She clenched and bucked beneath him, letting out a nice loud yelp. Chad stroked through it and smiled inwardly to himself at his girlfriend’s unbridled enthusiasm about sex.

“Oh, MAN! FUCK ME! FUCK ME!” Kate howled, still riding the waves of her climax. Chad drove into her, as she howled every time he hit bottom. She slammed her hips upward to meet him on every downstroke. She screamed her second climax, and Chad went right with her.

They collapsed in a heap on her bed. “Oh, God, I love you,” Kate gasped.

“I love you, too,” Chad replied. Then he looked at her with a little grin. “You know, we’re never going to be the king and queen of foreplay.”

Kate giggled. “Well, that’s because we don’t have enough time together. I’m too pent up by the time I get you in bed.”

“True,” Chad laughed. “But just think, honey—for a change, we’ve got each other all night.”

“Yes, but, there’s a problem. You **completely** wore me out!”

The both laughed at that. Then they chatted and cuddled for a while before they fell asleep in each other’s arms.

Kate woke the next morning with the sensation of something warm and wet on her pussy. She sleepily opened her eyes, and looked down—to see Chad with his face buried between her legs.

“OH GOD!” she gasped, as her whole body quickly became awake.

Chad looked up at her with a gleam in his eye. “Morning, honey. I told you I was going to get to some foreplay.”

“I ain’t complaining!” She rest her head back onto the pillow and enjoyed what Chad was doing to her. “OK, I admit it,” she gasped, “I don’t let you do this enough!”

Chad just giggled into her crotch and kept right on licking her pussy. When he was sure she was completely awake, he zeroed in on her clit, causing her hips to rocket off the bed as she moaned. Chad worked her clit with his tongue for a few minutes, until she howled her climax.

As she was coming down, Chad moved up, positioned himself between her legs, and entered her.

After they had finished, they cleaned up, got dressed, and headed out of her room. To Chad's amusement—and Kate's embarrassment—they found that every girl that was out in the hall was looking at them in jealous amusement. By the time they got out of the dorm, Kate was sporting a full blush.

"I guess I was loud," she said feebly.

"When aren't you?" Chad laughed. "My little fuck monkey."

"Fuck monkey?" she laughed. "Why do I actually think I **like** that?"

They laughed together and walked hand-in-hand. They found a restaurant that Kate liked for some breakfast, then spent the rest of the day wandering Boston.

That night, at supper, Kate was joined by Freya.

"Have a good time last night?" Kate asked her.

"Yeah. I did. And, from what I hear, you had a **very** good time."

"It's hard for me to stay quiet," Kate said sheepishly.

"It's the talk of the floor. Everybody thought you were quiet and unassuming."

"Not in bed," Kate laughed. "The walls in that dorm are too damn thin."

"In the dorm at BC, too, I think." Freya said with a little grin.

"You **didn't**!"

"We did," Freya admitted. "And, no, before you ask, I wasn't drunk. I'd had only a couple. I knew exactly what I was doing. Butch is very nice. And **hung**!"

"I'll take your word for that one. I have no desire to roam!"

--end of chapter—

JUGGLING ACT (Chapter 130)

One Friday in mid-October, Jessie had her two later classes cancelled. So, since she was out for the day at 9:00, she figured that would be a good weekend to go to Madison to visit Warren and Sophia.

She got there shortly before 11:00. She found their apartment, and was about to knock on the door when Warren came running up behind her. “Hi, Jess,” he said, kissed her on the cheek, and plowed through the door. Jess followed.

Sophia was standing at the door, waiting, Betsy in one hand and her bookbag in the other. “Hi, Honey, she needs to be changed,” Sophia said, kissing Warren. “Hi, Jess,” she said with another kiss. “Bye, Jess.” Then she was gone out the door at breakneck speed.

Warren pulled Betsy into her room, and put her up on the changing table. Jess followed. “So, tell me,” Jess said with a giggle, “**what** was **that**?”

Warren laughed. “On Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays I have a class that ends at 10:50, and Sophie has one that starts at 11:00. So, I have to run back here, and she has to run to class.”

“Why don’t you just put Betsy in day care for those hours?”

“We do that enough. We both have classes at eight and nine. So she’s in day care from eight to ten. Sophie gets her at ten. Plus she’s in the day care when we practice. Except for Sundays—Paul and Caitlin watch her then.”

“You guys have an impossible schedule, don’t you?”

“Pretty much,” Warren admitted. “Especially when you add in studying, since my classes are impossible this semester. I’m always tired.”

“When do you guys have sex?” Jessie teased.

“Sex? What’s that?” Warren asked wryly.

“See, I knew there was a reason for me to come up here. I need to remind you and that wife of yours what sex is.”

“Jessie’s horny, Jessie’s horny,” Warren teased.

“Jessie’s **always** horny.”

“Be warned, She-Devil. I might just pass out.”

They chatted for a while, and played with Betsy. When Sophie got back from class, they got some lunch. Then Warren and Sophie had to practice. Jessie went along and watched Betsy, saving Warren and Sophia another day care trip. After practice, they found a family type restaurant that they could take Betsy to, and had supper.

“I wish we could take you to a party, Jess,” Sophie told her. “You really should have some fun while you’re here. But it’s hard to find a sitter for Betsy on a Friday night.”

“That’s OK,” Jess said.

“Why don’t you just take her out, Pookie?” Warren said. “You guys go have a good time. I’ll stay with Betsy.”

“Snugglebear, you’re the best, you know that?”

Sophie and Jessie found a party, and had a good time. When they returned to the apartment at about midnight, they were mildly buzzed but not really drunk.

“Warren?” Sophie said. “Where are you?” She checked their bedroom—no Warren.

“Soph,” Jess whispered. “I found him. Check this out.” Sophie went to where Jessie was—at the door to Betsy’s room—and peered in.

“Awww,” Sophie said. She looked over to Betsy’s bed—Betsy had been sleeping in a regular bed since they moved to Wisconsin—and saw Warren, fast asleep, on Betsy’s bed. Betsy was also asleep, on Warren’s chest. Warren had his arms wrapped around her.

“How adorable is that?” Jessie asked.

“He really is the best Daddy ever,” Sophia said.

“Should we wake them?” Jess asked.

“Nah. Poor Warren’s exhausted. This schedule is killing him.” Sophia got a gleam in her eye. “You can keep me company in bed tonight instead.”

“Don’t mind if I do!”

They went into Sophie and Warren’s bedroom and sat on the bed. Jessie leaned in and kissed Sophie, which gradually led to a full-blown makeout session. Jessie and Sophie’s tongues darted in and out of each other’s mouths, as their arms wrapped around one another. They kissed for a while, then Jessie broke the kiss and reached for Sophie’s shirt. Sophie laughed and helped Jess get her shirt off. Then she reached for Jess’s shirt. The pants came next, then the underwear. Now completely naked, they resumed their kissing, their hands roaming all over one another.

Jessie gasped as Sophie slipped a finger into her already-wet pussy. “Oh, God, I missed you,” she moaned.

“Missed you, too, Jess.”

Jessie lowered herself to Sophie’s breast and started sucking on her nipple as Sophie continued fondling Jessie’s pussy. Jessie was surprised to taste a bit of milk in her mouth.

“I thought you weaned Betsy?”

“I did, about a month ago. I still get a little coming out sometimes, though.” Sophie grinned. “Especially with stimulation.”

“Oh, goody, then I better keep stimulating!” Sophie laughed at that, as Jessie went back to the tittie. Jessie sucked on Sophie for a while, getting some milk out, then started kissing down her stomach. “Well, Hello Kitty,” Jessie joked as she moved in between Sophie’s legs. She dove right in.

“Oh GOD Jess!”

Jess sucked and licked at Sophie’s pussy while Sophie moaned and writhed beneath her. After a few minutes, they heard a voice at the bedroom door.

“You **could’ve** woken me up, you know.”

“You looked so sweet all curled up with Betsy like that, we didn’t have the heart to wake you,” Sophie told him.

“But now that you **are** awake,” Jessie grinned, “get your ass over here and fuck me while I eat out your wife.”

“Sounds good to me,” Warren laughed. He quickly stripped off his clothes and moved in behind Jess. Jess lifted her ass off the bed to give Warren room, and he slid into her from behind.

“MMMMFFFFFFFF!!” Jess moaned into Sophie’s pussy. Warren started a steady rhythm, stroking into her, and hearing her muffled moan every time he did. Sophie, for her part, was yelping every time Warren bottomed out.

“Oh, God,” she moaned, “you’re forcing her face into my pussy!”

Warren just grinned and went at Jess harder. The twin moans and yelps from the two young women filled the room. Then Jess took Sophie’s clit in between her lips and sucked on it. The movement of Jessie’s body being ravaged by Warren’s cock increased the tension of her lips on Sophie’s clit.

“OH SHIT OH SHIT OH GOD JESSIE!” Sophie howled. “AAYYYYYIIIIIIIEEEEE!” She came, spectacularly. Jessie looked up from her crotch and grinned for a moment, then she started moaning deeply as her own climax overtook her.

Warren felt Jessie cum beneath him, but he was still going. So he pulled out, ignoring Jessie’s moan. He good-naturedly nudged her out of the way, then crawled up the bed—and plunged into Sophia.

“JESUS!” Sophia hissed as Warren hit bottom.

“Damn. You stud,” Jessie joked.

“UH-HUH!” Sophie agreed loudly. “Oh **fuck**.” She turned her head, and groped. “Jess! Get your ass over here!” Jess crawled over to her. “Sit!”

Jessie laughed, and crouched over Sophie’s face, then lowered herself down. “Yes!” she shouted as Sophie’s tongue flicked up and down her labia.

“Good, that’ll muffle her screams,” Warren joked.

“Not hardly!” Sophie shouted, clear as day, from underneath Jessie. And she was right, her screams were a wee bit softer than usual, but were still plainly heard. Not that anybody minded. In fact, Jess delightedly proclaimed, “Every time she yells, it vibrates my **whole** pussy!”

All three came, very close together, then sprawled onto the bed in a contented, sleeping heap.

Sophie and Warren had practice the next morning. Jessie agreed to go along, and keep Betsy so they’d save another bit of day care.

They had just gotten started. Jessie was happily goo-gooing at Betsy. Suddenly, she sensed someone sitting next to her. She looked over. It was a good looking guy, about her age.

“I’ve never seen you around before. Are you a new member of the Kelleher Fan Club?” he asked with a smile.

Jessie laughed. “Nope, I’m the oldest member of the Kelleher Fan Club. I’m Jessie, Sophie’s best friend. I go to school in Milwaukee, I came up to visit for the weekend.”

“Ah. Nice to meet you, Jessie, I’m Ryan—Ryan Killen.”

“Ah. You’re the one that skates with The Snot, right?”

Ryan cracked up laughing. “The Snot?”

“That’s what Sophie calls your partner.”

“I suppose that’s apt. Yes, I skate with Courtney Rogers.”

“What, are you here spying on Warren and Sophie?”

“Nah. We practice before them, so sometimes I stick around. I just enjoy watching them skate. I’m **not** Courtney—I’ve been a fan of Warren and Sophie’s since they first competed at Nationals.”

“Do they know you watch?”

“Yeah,” Ryan said. “They don’t mind. I’ve assured them I’m not trying to cheat or steal anything or any of that. If it were **Courtney**, it might be different. But I’m not Courtney.”

“If you’re that different—how can you stand her?” Jessie asked.

“Well, you know—she’s a great skater.”

“Ah. So this is all about skating?”

“From my end it is,” Ryan said.

“There’s a story in there,” Jessie said, eyebrows raised.

“Well, I think it’s more to Courtney.” He leaned in towards her. “Keep this under your hat. We’ve been lovers for a number of years. She was all of 13 the first time. I was 16.”

“WHAT? Sophia told me she was all Christian and moral and shit.”

“All an act.” Ryan sighed. “Jessie, **please** don’t say a word to anyone. Warren and Sophie have an inkling, I know, but nobody else does. When Sophie got pregnant, we were still in Juniors but knew we’d be moving up. Courtney had this grand idea to position herself as the Anti-Sophia in the press. Actually, it was her mother’s idea. You think **Courtney** is bad? You ain’t seen nothing. Anyhow, it’s all an act.”

“You love her?”

“Not hardly,” Ryan snorted. “I give in because I don’t want to lose the skating partnership. I think I felt something at first, but not anymore.”

Jessie looked at him in amazement. “She’s blackmailing you into sleeping with her?”

“More or less.”

“Jesus. Skating must be real important to you.”

“Yeah.”

Skate America was the first competition of the season for Warren and Sophia. It was a short trip for them, just down to Chicago, at the end of October. They were glad to see

Crash—and surprised to see Warren’s sister Kristin, who had come as Tom Bellamy’s guest.

The first order of business for them, at the opening ceremonies, was accepting the Brian Wright Memorial Trophy. It was presented to them by the USFSA president, Curtis Ingalls. Afterwards, he told them, “God knows I have other issues with the two of you—but **this**, you deserved.” They were surprised, and thanked him.

The skating part was easy. None of their upper-level competition was at Skate America, so they breezed to an easy victory. Evan and Shawna were second, and a Hungarian team that had been ninth in the world last year were third.

For their exhibition, they didn’t premiere the one that the Sports Illustrated article had talked about them working on, “At My Most Beautiful.” They were still working on that one, and saving it for later in the season.

They had worked out another one. Sophia had taken a picture of her wedding dress to their costume designer, and said, “Make me something that looks as close to that as you can get, but that I can **skate** in.” The designer had done a marvelous job. The bodice and sleeves were an exact copy of Sophia’s wedding dress, though the skirt was more in keeping with a skating dress than a wedding dress. Sophie completed the ensemble by wearing the actual headpiece from her wedding outfit. Warren, of course, wore a tux. The crowd applauded and whistled when they saw the outfits. Then, when the music started, they all laughed. It was Nick Lowe’s “I Knew The Bride (When She Used To Rock and Roll).” It was a fun and lighthearted program that Sophie and Warren loved doing, and that the audience really appreciated.

The next week was Skate Canada, held this year in Vancouver. Their only competition there were the world Silver Medallists, the British team of Brenneman and Watts. It was a close competition, but they won it as well. They gave another audience “I Knew The Bride.”

Their two victories had gotten them into the Grand Prix final, which would be about a month and a half later in Toronto.

But, between now and then, they had another half semester of school, and then finals, to worry about. And things were **not** going well. Sophie was keeping up all right, but there were too many mornings that she had gotten up and found Warren passed out in a chair at the kitchen table, surrounded by books and study materials. He really had a brutal schedule this semester.

It was a few weeks after Skate Canada—the week before Thanksgiving, in fact—when Sophie came out of the bedroom late on a Thursday night and found Warren, again, passed out asleep at the kitchen table.

“Poor guy. He’s going to **wreck** his back with this. I need to wake him up and get him into the **bed**.” She tried shaking him, but he just grumbled and kept sleeping. Then Sophie got an idea.

She grinned wickedly and crawled under the kitchen table. She pushed his chair out enough to give her some headroom, and undid his pants. Fishing in his boxers, she found his dick. It was completely soft. Well, we have to fix **that**, she thought.

She worked his dick with her fingers a bit, until it started to wake up just a little. Then she slurped it up with her mouth. She sucked on it hard, satisfied with its rapid swelling. When it reached full erection, she **really** went to work on it.

And **nobody** could sleep through **that**. Warren, head still on the table, sleepily opened his eyes, rapidly becoming aware of an insistent warm, wet tugging on his dick. “God!” he gasped, suddenly fully awake. He looked down and saw Sophie curled up under the table, her head in his lap, her mouth swallowing his dick.

She noticed he was awake. “Hello, Snugglegear,” she purred. “Sit back and relax. And, after I finish, you’re going to get your ass into **bed**. We’ll have no back problems at Nationals. Got me?”

“Yes, ma’am,” he grinned. She grinned back, then went back to work on his dick. She plunged down on the shaft, then slipped back up again. Then she forced her mouth all the way down, feeling the head of Warren’s cock slip into her throat. She held it there for a minute, feeling it pulse and throb all through her mouth and throat, then she slid off and repeated the action. It didn’t take much of that before Warren was pouring his cum into her mouth. She swallowed every drop.

“Wow,” Warren gasped.

“Glad you liked it,” she grinned. “Now get to bed!”

“Yes, Pookie,” he chuckled. They went into the bedroom. She started taking his clothes off. “I’ve been neglecting you,” he said.

“Yes, but your schedule is insane. I know that. Luckily, Thanksgiving break is coming up. You will be required to do at least one complete thorough job on me on one of those break nights.”

“You got it.”

“But, now? Sucking you off got me horny. So, tonight? You have to lie back for a few minutes and let me play.” She reached down and wrapped her hand around his dick, coaxing it back into erection. Then she stripped off her nightie and panties, and lowered herself onto his erection.

“Ah, that feels **so** good,” Sophie hissed. “Just a quickie, dear, I won’t keep you awake much longer. And you don’t have to do any of the work.”

“I love you, you know that?” he said.

“Love you too, Snugglebear.” She started sliding up and down his dick. “Ah, so damn good.”

“Oh, yeah,” Warren agreed. “You can wake me up any time for this.”

“Oh, you!” She picked up her pace a little bit. It wasn’t long before she was howling her climax.

“You still not there?” she gasped afterwards.

“After **that** blowjob? I may last until Christmas.”

“You think so, huh?” Sophie grinned. “Just let me get my legs back.” She rocked gently on him for a while. Then she suddenly raised up all the way. When she went to settle down again, she leaned back. Warren gasped as he realized that she was lowering her ass down on his dick.

“Lube?” he asked.

“Honey, your lovely friend there is **sopping** with my juices,” Sophia giggled. “It’s not going to be a problem.” She was right. Once she got the head past her tight sphincter, she slid right down on it. “Oh JESUS!” she moaned.

“God, Soph,” Warren gasped. “You’re right, it won’t be long in **there**.”

“What I thought,” she grunted. She slid her ass up and down on his dick. She saw in his face that he was getting closer, so, trying to keep up, she hissed, “play with my pussy!” Warren was happy to oblige, and reached his hand up in between her legs. His fingers found her opening, and he slid two in. His other hand came up and went right for her clit.

“DAMN!” Sophie shouted, and immediately began approaching her climax. Warren did his best to keep his hands on her pussy as she banged her ass up and down on him. He did fine, as she quickly went over the edge. The clamping of her ass on his dick returned the favor.

“Told you I’d take care of you,” Sophie said dreamily as she slumped on the bed next to him.

“Yes, you did. Twice, in fact.” He smiled at her. “You’re into anal lately.”

“I know. It’s so **nasty**. And it makes me cum **so** hard. Probably because it is so nasty. I don’t want to be an old boring married fart yet.”

“Pookie, when we’re seventy and been married fifty years, you **still** won’t be an old boring married fart.”

“Oh, Snugglebear, you say the sweetest things!” She kissed him. “Now. **Sleep**. In this **bed**! You’re overtired and you’re pushing yourself beyond your limits.”

“After that performance, sweetie, I’ll sleep like a baby.”

“You make sure of it, love.”

Luckily, the Grand Prix final wasn’t until after finals at school. It was the end of a crazy semester, but they had four weeks of Christmas break to look forward to. And next semester, while difficult—especially with Nationals and Worlds in the middle—wouldn’t be as brutal for Warren as this one had.

“You know my sister Kris wants to be a doctor also, right?” Warren asked Sophie on the plane to Toronto. “Well, remind me to tell her **not** to take Embryology, Genetics, and Calculus in the same semester!”

They got into Toronto, practiced, and saw old friends. Then it was time to compete. The other medallists from last years’ Worlds were there, the Brits and the young Russian couple of Kuznetsova and Vasilyevskiy. The French team of Borisina and Dravouche had also made it to the finals. Although the Hungarian team of Krasvalyi and Szubacsko had finished third at Skate America, they had won another of the events which was enough to get them here. The final spot went to the Ukrainians, Yurchenko and Ushuziyets, who had just beaten out Shawna and Evan and the Irish team.

With two free dances still being performed at the Grand Prix final, only one of the two Original Dances was done. The one chosen was the Bossa Nova. Warren and Sophia did their Austin Powers routine.

The judging was all over the place. All six nations represented in the competitors had judges on the panel, along with Canada, Finland, and Austria. Warren and Sophia managed to come out of the original dance in second, behind the Brits.

The first free dance was this year’s free dance, and that’s where the judging **really** got jumbled. Brenneman and Watts got hammered—from first in the OD to last in the first free dance. The French, Borisina and Dravouche, came up with a free dance that was proclaimed the best of their career, and they finished second. Warren and Sophia won, but it wasn’t easy. A couple judges had them down in fourth, and one had them sixth—that is, dead last.

However, because of some of the scrambling, they went into the second free dance with a commanding lead, knowing that if they finished first or second in the second free dance, they’d win the competition. And they were using “Riverdance” as their second free dance.

They won the second free dance, and the title. The Russians were second and the Ukrainians third. But they lost a few ordinals in this free dance as well, and weren't confident.

"Once the Judging Mafia gets their ducks in a row, we're toast at Worlds," Sophia declared. "This was a test run. They know who they have to work with."

"Yup," Warren agreed.

--End of Chapter--

KRISTIN DISCOVERS (Chapter 131)

After Warren's wedding, Kristin didn't see Tom for almost a month. But, a few days before Labor Day weekend, during one of their three-times-a-week phone conversations, Tom asked if he could come up for Labor Day weekend. Kristin was thrilled.

She volunteered to help find a hotel for Tom to stay at. After they got off the phone, she went down and asked her mother's advice.

"Why get a hotel?" Peg asked. "Tom can stay here, honey."

Kristin looked at her in amazement. "You're going to let him stay **here**?"

Peg laughed. "He was already here for a week, wasn't he? And you guys started going out then, didn't you?"

"Yeah, but now he's coming here **just** to see me. I'm just surprised. Happy, mind you, but surprised," Kristin laughed. "If he doesn't have to pay for hotels, he might come up more often."

"Good," Peg smiled at her. "Look, Kris. You guys haven't, you know, done anything?"

"God, **No!**" Kristin burst out. "Just kiss."

"Well, then."

"But, you know," Kristin faltered, "I mean, what if, you know, I mean...."

"What if it gets more serious than that?" Peg asked with a smile. Kristin nodded, blushing. "Well, if he was in a hotel room, you'd just go over there, so what difference does it make? Look, Kris, you're responsible and smart. And, don't forget, when your brothers were your age, they were **well** into their sex lives."

“But they’re boys.”

“Since when am I sexist?” Peg laughed. “Girls have the same urges that boys do. I know that.”

“MOM!”

“Well, it’s **true**. Anyhow, the only difference is that girls have to be more careful. But you know that.”

“Yes, well....”

“Kris. You might want to think about going on the pill.”

Kristin gasped. “But, Mom, I mean—we haven’t—I don’t know....”

“Better safe than sorry.”

“OK. Well, I’ll think about it.”

Kristin went back upstairs, shaking her head. What a strange conversation **that** was, she thought. She knew her mother was open, but **still**. She and Tom hadn’t gotten anywhere **near** any of that!

Ah, well—she was glad Mom was going to let Tom stay here, however. She happily called him and shared the good news.

He came up for the whole Labor Day weekend, and once more later on in September. He and Kristin **really** got along well. She felt more comfortable with him than she did outside of anyone besides family and her one best friend Marie. She’d **never** felt like this around a **guy** before. The time in between visits was taken up with frequent phone calls and even more frequent IM sessions.

Early in October, she got a surprise. Tom was coming up again for the weekend. The night before, he called and told her that he didn’t have practice Friday, as his coach had another commitment. “So, I can come up early. How about I pick you up at school?” Kristin happily agreed, and gave him directions to Wilkins Academy.

That Friday, Kristin found herself waiting for Tom out in front of her school, surrounded by a bunch of other students. Kristin wasn’t social at **all**. She kept to herself—except for her aforementioned best friend Marie—and her fellow students didn’t know much about her. They were surprised to see her here in front of school.

“Kristin Kelleher? What are **you** doing here?” one of them asked.

“Waiting for a ride,” she said softly.

“You’re not usually here.”

“I usually go home with my mother.” The group of girls looked at her blankly. “Mrs. Kelleher, the senior English teacher.”

“Oh,” one of the girls said, “she couldn’t drive you today?”

“No, it’s not that.” They all looked at her. What the hell, she thought, and took a deep breath. “My boyfriend is picking me up.”

“ **You** have a **boyfriend**?” one of them asked.

“Yeah,” she smiled. “And he lives in New York, so we only see each other like every other weekend. He usually can’t get here until around seven or eight on a Friday night, but he got to leave early today, so he’s picking me up here.”

“How’d you get a boyfriend that lives in New York?” another asked.

“Well, he came up here last July to work with my brother. And he stayed at my house for the week. We got to know each other then.”

“What do you mean, work with your brother?”

“Choreography.”

“What are you **talking** about?”

“None of you knows who my brother is?” she asked. They all looked at her blankly. She wasn’t surprised, she **never** talked about this. She was kind of surprised she was talking about it now. “Are any of you figure skating fans?” A few of them nodded yes. “What’s my last name?” she said with a smile.

One of them picked up on it. “ **Warren Kelleher?!?!?**”

“Yup, Warren’s my big brother. Sophie’s my sister-in-law. And they choreographed my boyfriend’s long program. That’s how I met him.”

“Evan Pogdar?” one of them guessed.

Kristin cracked up laughing. “I’m not Evan’s type.” They looked at her. “I’m a girl,” she giggled. “Evan’s gay. Plus, Warren and Sophie don’t choreograph for other dance teams. Competitors, and all that.”

“Brett Tomlinson?” another asked.

“Nah. Warren **did** do their choreography. But Brett’s in love with his partner, Andrea.” She giggled. “**He** just hasn’t figured that out yet. Anyone that spends seven seconds with them has, though.”

“All right, **who**?”

Kristin smiled. “Tom Bellamy.” And found she was enjoying this—especially at the gasps and murmurs that went through the skating fans in the group.

“Tom Bellamy is a **hunk!**” one of them said.

“That he is,” Kristin agreed.

“I don’t believe you.”

“You don’t have to believe me. Here he comes.” She pointed as she saw his car drive into the lot.

He pulled through the lot and parked in front of the waiting area. He jumped out of the car and walked over to Kristin, pulling her into a kiss. Kristin happily kissed back. Then he opened the passenger side door and let her in. As he walked around the car to get back in himself, she looked at the dumbstruck faces of her fellow students and grinned.

“What was that about?” he asked as they pulled away.

“Showing you off,” she laughed. Surprised—he knew how shy she was—he laughed right along with her.

Tom had spent the whole drive up from New York laughing at himself. When Terri, his coach, had told him that there would be no practice on Friday, he couldn’t get to Boston fast enough. And only three or four months ago, he just would’ve shown up to practice by himself anyway!

Tom had been skating-focused for quite some time. Oh, he had other interests—though he hadn’t been in a school building for some time, he was smart. He read a lot, and about a lot of different things. Plus there was his piano-playing. But one of those interests was never really girls.

Because he was a skater, he knew a lot of teenaged girls—and he found them mostly silly, shallow, and flighty. Now, he had a prominent silly side—but he wasn’t shallow or flighty. Leaving home at 13 to pursue a skating career tended to make a person more focused than that. And the attitude of the girls he knew just drove him nuts. So, he figured girls were pretty much a non-issue until he—and, more importantly, **they**—got older.

And then he met Kristin. Shallow? Flighty? Not even a little bit. She was sweet and kind, very smart, and incredibly mature in a lot of ways. Plus, they had a lot in common. He was **so** smitten even **he** could barely believe it.

Of course, one of the ways she **wasn't** all that mature was in relationships. Then again, neither was he. It was kind of the blind leading the blind. He was determined to take it slow and easy.

She'd been having similar feelings lately. She'd not been impressed with the teenaged boys she'd come in contact with, for a lot of the same reasons. They were shallow and obsessed with 'appearances' and being macho. Now, she knew that guys that weren't like that **did** exist, but she also knew they were rare. Kristin had a standard—and that standard was easy to identify. It was her big brother Warren, who she'd been hero-worshipping since she was 5. And she saw the whole Warren-Sophia relationship unfold, and knew how Warren had treated Sophie even when they were still in high school. That's how **she** wanted to be treated. So, Warren was her standard, even as she knew he was a rare bird.

Tom, to her shock, met the standard.

The only thing that worried both of them, just a bit, was Kristin's shyness. Tom **wasn't** shy, he was rather social, and he worried that Kristin might freeze up if he had her in a social situation. Kristin knew this, and worried herself.

This is why Kristin was glad that she had done what she did that day after school. She found she **liked** showing Tom off. And she found it easier to talk to the girls, because of him.

They went out for supper and a movie that Friday night. Saturday, when they woke up, Kristin shocked Tom.

"Hey, how about we go to a football game today? Wilkins has a big game."

"You want to go there?" Tom asked.

"Yeah," Kris admitted.

"You **do** like showing me off!"

"Well, a little," Kris grinned. "Plus, I always keep you cooped up in the house on Saturday afternoons when you're here. And I want you to meet Marie, my best friend."

"I'd love to go."

When they arrived at the stadium and found Marie, Marie was shocked.

"Kristin Kelleher! **You** came to a football game? I do believe I'm gonna faint!"

“Yes, I came to a football game.”

“Unbelievable. What’s with the hunk?” she asked, looking at Tom.

Kristin broke up laughing. “Marie, this is Tom. Tom, Marie.”

“Nice to meet you,” Marie grinned. “So, this is the famous Tom? You didn’t tell me he was gorgeous.”

“If you watched more figure skating, you’d have figured it out on your own,” Kristin teased.

“Yeah, yeah. Not my thing,” Marie said. “No offense,” she told Tom.

“None taken,” Tom grinned.

A bunch of other students had filed into the stands. Most of them knew Marie, and were busy greeting her. They knew **who** Kristin was, but didn’t really know her. Kristin looked around and felt a little lost.

“Relax,” Tom said, squeezing her hand. She smiled gratefully at him.

Just then Allison Ventrone showed up. She was Marie’s other best friend, but she got on Kristin’s nerves. “Hey, Marie,” she said. Then she looked over. “Kristin Kelleher? You actually came out of your **room** to attend a school event? Catch me, Marie, I **may** just **faint**.”

“Be nice,” Marie admonished.

“Well, I’m just **shocked**,” Allison continued, standing next to Kristin. “It’s not every day you see the school hermit at a football game.” Just then she spotted Tom. Allison **was** a skating fan. “Aren’t you Tom Bellamy, the skater?”

“Guilty as charged,” Tom grinned.

“What the hell are **you** doing here at a football game in Massachusetts?”

Tom laughed. “It seemed like a cool thing to do on a Saturday afternoon. I live in New York, so when I come to see Kris, I come for the whole weekend. So, we needed something to do, so here we are. I like football anyhow.”

“This is Allison, by the way,” Kris told him. “And, Allison, you obviously know who my boyfriend is, so I don’t have to introduce him.”

Allison blinked rapidly. “**Boyfriend?**”

“Yeah,” Kris said. “We’ve been going out since July.”

“Her brother choreographed my long program this year,” Tom told him. Allison nodded—she **did** know that Warren Kelleher was Kristin’s brother. “So, I stayed at her house for the week.” He grinned at Kristin. “And sparks flew.” Kristin giggled.

“He drives up from New York a couple times a month to see me,” Kristin told her.

Allison just shook her head. “Unbelievable.” She went over and sat next to Marie. “I think you and I need to start acting like wallflowers,” she said to Marie. “Maybe **we** can get a hunk like that to ask us out!”

Kristin, having heard what Allison said, just giggled.

The rest of the game was fine, Kristin even got into it. She didn’t know a lot about football, but Tom and Marie explained the stuff she didn’t get. She ended up having a good time, and even got along reasonably well with Allison.

Driving to get some supper afterwards, Tom said to Kristin, “What happened to you?”

“What do you mean?”

“You seem, I don’t know, like you’re loosening up. Is this the same girl who went into an absolute **panic** when I caught her playing piano?”

Kristin smiled, and then said, very softly, “You help my confidence.”

“Good!” Tom exclaimed.

After eating, they were back at her house, chatting with her parents. The talk turned to skating—and to Skate America, which was only a few weeks away. They were talking about it, and then Tom had a brainstorm.

“Hey, you should come!” he said to Kristin.

“Huh?”

“You should come. To Skate America. I’d love to have you there. And you’ll get to see Sophie and Warren, they’ll be there. It’ll be great.” He turned to her parents. “She’d have to miss a couple days of school, though, I skate on Thursday and Friday, then the exhibition on Sunday.”

“That’s fine,” Peg said, “her schoolwork is exemplary, she can afford to miss a couple days. I’m used to this with Warren.”

“I’ll get you a flight, and a hotel room. What do you say?”

“I’d like that,” Kristin said.

“Great! Let’s go up on your computer, I’ll see if I can book the arrangements.” They went up, and quickly found Kristin a flight to Chicago Wednesday evening. “I’ll already be there,” Tom told her, “so I can get you at the airport.” Then they went to book a hotel. That was harder.

“Damn, the one where I’m going to be staying is full. I can get you in **this** one, but it’s not close.”

“Crap. I really want to go,” Kris sighed. “Well, if I have to be booked into this one, then that’s OK.”

“I don’t know. Getting you back and forth to the arena isn’t going to be easy.”

Kristin asked him, “Do you know what kind of room you have?”

“It’s a suite. Only one bedroom, thought. Two beds in it, but only one bedroom.”

Kristin thought for a minute, then, very softly, said, “Are you sharing your room with anyone?”

“Huh?” Tom said, stunned.

“Well,” Kris said haltingly, “if you’re not sharing your room with anyone, I could, you know, stay there.”

“You’d **do** that?”

“Um, well, yeah.”

“No, I’m not sharing my room with anyone.”

“Then that’s settled,” Kristin smiled.

Amazing, thought Tom

A little less than three weeks later, Kristin stepped off the plane in Chicago. Tom met her with a hug and a kiss, then gave her a worried look.

“We have a problem,” Tom said, then took a breath. “The room only has one bed. They screwed up. I tried to change it, or get you in your own room—no dice. It’s a suite, though, and there’s a couch in the other room, so I can sleep there.”

“No way,” Kristin declared. “You have to skate. No way are you sleeping on a couch. How big is the bed?”

“Well, huge. It’s a king.”

“Then we can both fit,” Kristin said. Tom was completely stunned. “It’s OK,” she smiled, “I trust you.”

They got Kristin’s bags and headed towards the car Tom had rented. Tom’s head was reeling. Kris was going to sleep in the same bed? She trusted him **that** much? He wasn’t sure if he trusted **himself** that much!

After a late supper, they headed towards the room. They took turns in the bathroom changing into bedclothes. Then they went to bed.

It was very awkward. Neither was used to sleeping in an occupied bed, and Tom was rather hesitant to touch Kris at all. So, he tried to huddle on his side of the bed. Kris, however, backed right into him. Twice.

“I’m sorry, I think I’m being sucked into the middle of the bed,” Kris giggled.

“It’s OK. I’m not fond of the edge either.”

“Good,” Kris said, and let her back snuggle into Tom’s chest. Tom blinked, then went for broke—he slipped his arm around her waist. She sighed, “That feels nice,” and closed her eyes. Tom, amazed, didn’t think he’d be able to sleep all that well. He was wrong. They were both asleep in minutes, utterly comfortable.

The next day was the short program for the men. Tom skated very well, and ended the evening in second place, behind only the defending World silver medallist, Yakashi Kitaro of Japan.

It was the next morning that everything changed.

They had settled into bed that night spooned and cuddling, the awkwardness gone. But something had happened during the night. When Kristin awoke in the morning, she felt strange. It took her a moment to realize why. During the night, Tom’s hand had migrated—and was now wrapped around Kristin’s breast.

Kris gasped. The warm tingling coming from her breast was thrilling. She felt a throb building in the pit of her stomach, and a warm rush gathering between her legs. Her nipple was as hard as a rock, pushing at Tom’s hand through her nightie.

Just then, Tom woke up.

He didn’t realize that Kristin was awake. He **did** realize, after a minute, just where his **hand** was. Hissing out an “Oh **shit**!” he quickly pulled his hand off Kristin’s breast and put it back around her waist.

Kristin’s eyes opened. “Tom?” she said.

“Sorry,” Tom replied sheepishly.

“For what?” she said. And then she grabbed Tom’s hand, pulled it off her waist, and placed it back on her boob. For good measure, she pushed on the back of it for a minute, driving it back into her boob. Then she sighed contentedly.

“Kris?” Tom asked, flabbergasted.

“Oh **God** Tom, don’t stop!” she hissed.

Tom was incredulous. What happened to the shy, demure virgin he was dating? He couldn’t believe it. But he didn’t stop. Now awake, he massaged her boob with great gusto.

“Oh, Tom, that feels **so** good!” Kristin enthused. “If I had known it was going to feel **this** good.....”

Emboldened, he took his other hand and gathered her hair with it. He pulled it back, giving himself a clear avenue, and started kissing and nuzzling her neck, and sucking on her earlobe, as he fondled her boob.

“Oh **my**!” she groaned. Then, suddenly, she said. “Stop! Wait!” Tom withdrew his hands, figuring she had had enough.

He was wrong. She sat up, and started unbuttoning her flannel nightie, fingers trembling just a bit. Before Tom knew it, she was pulling the nightie over her head. And there she sat, in all her glory, wearing nothing but panties, blushing furiously.

“You’re so beautiful,” Tom whispered.

Kristin smiled—blushing deeper—then settled herself back to where she was, spooning into him. His hand came back up to her now-bare breast. He cupped it with his hand, fondling it, and dove his lips back into her neck. She sighed happily, then moaned.

“What **happened** to you?” Tom whispered in her ear.

“I’m **so** turned on!” she admitted with a giggle.

“Kris, what do you want to do?” Tom asked.

“Oh! Well, I mean, I don’t think....I’m not ready....I mean...” she sputtered, blushing.

“You don’t think we’re ready to make love. That’s fine.”

“It **is**?”

“Kris, when it happens, it’ll be my first time, too.”

“It WILL?”

“Uh-huh. I’ve fooled around some, but I’m still a virgin.” He kissed her neck again. “So you don’t want to make love, but you’re horny out of your mind.”

“Yes,” she gasped, his hand still working her boob.

“I can help you,” he said. “Take off your panties.”

Kris gasped, and gulped—and then took off her panties. Tom’s hand quickly moved down from her boob to between her legs. She spread them slightly to give him access, then gasped as his finger lightly traced her pussy. He moved his other hand underneath her, and reached around with it to cup her boob again.

Kristin leaned back into him, breathing heavily. His one hand fondled her boob, while the other one was delicately playing with her pussy. She couldn’t **believe** how this felt!

Just then, Tom’s finger found her clit. And she just went **crazy**.

Her hips were bucking. She was moaning and gasping. Tom did all he could to keep his hands in contact with her pussy and boobs as she writhed next to him. He gripped her as tight as he could with the hand that was on her boob, but she was still bouncing all over the bed. Tom was amazed. He wasn’t all that experienced, but he knew enough, and had heard enough, to realize that Kristin was **very** responsive. Who knew?

Tom was pretty sure that even **Kris** was surprised.

Just then, Kris blurted out, “Oh God...I mean...I feel...I think I’m gonna....OH GOD!”

“Oh, goody, Kristin’s going to have an orgasm!” Tom whispered in her ear. “Cum for me, Kris.” Kristin’s eyes went wide, and she **screamed**, and came all over his hand.

After she was done, he moved his hands back around her waist, and cuddled her as she tried to regain her breath. “Are you OK?” he whispered after a bit.

“My sweet Jesus. I don’t **believe** how **great** that was!”

“Good,” Tom said.

“Oh, man.” She then turned over so she was facing him. She leaned in and gave him a hellacious kiss. She was still naked, so Tom was definitely **reacting**. “Oh man,” she repeated. “I think I’m in orbit.” He just grinned at her. “How are **you** feeling?” she asked.

“Fine,” he said.

“Really?” She pointedly looked down at his sweatpants that he had worn to bed. The tenting effect was clearly apparent. “Now it looks like **you** are turned on,” she giggled.

“Well, what do you expect?” he laughed. “You’re naked, you’re gorgeous, and I just got to watch you have an orgasm.”

Kristin giggled, and blushed. She put her hand on his chest, then, slowly and tentatively, started sliding it down. “Can I help you?” she whispered.

“Up to you.”

“Do you want me to?”

“Well, yes, but it’s up to you.”

She stared at him. “Take off your pants,” she whispered. He looked into her eyes. She nodded. He slipped off his sweatpants and underwear. She looked down, and gasped. “I’ve never seen....you know....”

“I know.”

“What should I do?”

“Just, whatever you feel like doing.” Tom wasn’t quite sure how to handle this situation, not with his limited experience, and what experience **he** had had was with a girl **far** more experienced than Kristin.. He decided to just play it by ear.

She reached down and lightly gripped his cock in her hand. She looked on, fascinated, as she slid her hand up and down it. “Is this OK?” she asked.

“Wonderful,” he smiled.

She smiled back, and continued running her hand up and down his cock. She looked on, pleased, as his eyes clenched shut and his breathing got a little more ragged. “A little faster?” he asked, and Kristin was glad to comply. After a few minutes of that, he howled, “Oh, God **Cummming!**” and he did just that. Kristin giggled as it covered her hand—and a little landed on her stomach. Still giggling, she looked around and found some tissue to clean herself up with. After she was done, she went back to the bed, and back into his arms.

“Wow,” she said softly.

“You can say that again.”

“Thank you,” she whispered.

“Thank **you**,” he replied. “I didn’t expect this.”

“Neither did I. But I’m sure glad it happened!”

Tom skated absolutely light-out that evening, and won. Defeating the World Silver Medallist was quite a coup. When they returned to bed, that evening and the next, they continued exploring each other’s bodies. They watched Warren and Sophie **and** Liz Cushman win on Saturday, and Kris enjoyed the exhibitions on Sunday.

She flew back to Boston Sunday evening, and was picked up by her mother.

“Mom?” she said tentatively as they drove away from Logan Airport, “there was something you wanted to talk to me about a couple months ago. I brushed you off, said it wasn’t needed. I think I’d like to discuss it again.”

“What are you talking about?” Peg asked.

“Well, I think that I might like to go on the pill,” Kristin admitted.

“Really? Did something happen this weekend?”

“Well, sort of.” Kristin told her mother the events of the weekend.

Peg listened, and smiled at the end. “I think my baby girl discovered her libido.”

“And **how**,” Kristin agreed.

“Do you think you and Tom are going to go all the way?”

“I think it’s a possibility. I think there’s going to come a point where neither of us is going to want to stop. I don’t think this point is going to come **tomorrow**, mind you, but I’d rather be safe than sorry.”

“How do you feel about Tom?”

Kristin sat for a minute, then took a deep breath. “Mom, I think I’m in love with him.”

“That’s the answer I was looking for,” Peg laughed. “I’ll call the doctor tomorrow.”

Kristin went back to school Monday morning feeling like a whole new person. She went to lunch and sat with Marie. Allison, and a couple of their other friends, sat down at the table with them. Normally, this would’ve caused Kristin to retreat into her shell. This time, it didn’t.

“Hey, Kris,” Allison said, “I saw that boyfriend of yours skate lights-out at Skate America this weekend.”

“I know, wasn’t he great?” Kris agreed happily.

“Yeah. And that long program really suits him.”

“Yup,” Kris agreed. “My brother and sister-in-law, the choreographic geniuses.”

“That they are. So I take it you were glued to the TV screen all weekend?”

“Hell, no, I was **there!**” Kris told her. “Tom came up with this brilliant idea of flying me out for it. So I was in the stands, screaming my head off. “

“Ah,” Allison grinned. “So, having you in the stands was his inspiration, **that’s** why he won.”

“No doubt,” Kristin laughed. “I’ll take all the credit.”

Marie watched this exchange in utter shock. She watched a few others over the next couple of days, too. On Wednesday, she came over Kristin’s house, ostensibly to study.

“All right,” she said as soon as they had gotten into Kris’s room, “what the hell has **happened** to you?”

“What?” Kris asked.

“You’re like a different person! People come to the lunch table and you **talk** to them! People say ‘hi’ in the halls and you don’t try to blend into the wall! What happened to my best friend, the wallflower?”

“I dunno. I guess I just stopped being scared of everything.” She looked at Marie.

“Something happened this weekend.” Kris gave her the rundown.

“My **God**,” Marie exclaimed. “You actually had sex! Well, not completely—but **still!** I’m stunned, Kris. I thought poor Tom was going to be waiting **forever** for that.”

“I think he did, too,” Kris admitted. “The way it happened, I just didn’t have any time to be nervous, since it was such an accident. You know me, Marie. I’m scared of everything—but of boys and love and sex most of all. And then it happened, to a degree. And all I could think of was, what on **earth** was I scared of? And if this was my **biggest** fear, and it turned out to be so good—why am I scared of everything else?”

“I hope this guy is worthy of you.”

“Marie? He treats me like Warren treats Sophie.”

“Oh my **God**,” Marie knew all about Kristin’s standard. “You’re kidding.”

“No. He really does. It’s amazing.”

“You can say **that** again!”

Tom didn’t have time to see Kris through the first couple weeks of November. He had another competition the weekend before Thanksgiving. He had been hoping to go home for Thanksgiving—his parents live in Minnesota—but they decided to go to New York and cook Thanksgiving dinner for him there.

Friday, the day after Thanksgiving, at about 3 in the afternoon, Kris got a call.

“Good. You’re home.” Tom said.

“Yes,” she laughed, “why?”

“I’m about ten minutes away.”

“You’re coming here? Now, isn’t **that** a nice surprise! I thought your parents were in town to spend Thanksgiving with you.”

“Yeah.” He took a breath. “They’re here, with me. They want to meet you.”

“OK.. Well, I’ll see you when you get here.” Kris hung up. “Oh SHIT!” she said.

“What?” Peg asked, walking into the room.

“Tom’s on his way. He’s ten minutes away. With his **parents**! They want to **meet** me!”

“Yeah? So why are you so nervous?” Peg laughed.

“I don’t know, I just **am**.”

“It’ll be fine, honey. I’m looking forward to meeting Tom’s parents.”

“I’m glad **one** of us is,” Kristin muttered. “Really, Mom. His parents just drove **five** hours. On one of the few times they get to see their son. To meet me. That’s kind of, I don’t know, **serious**.”

“Yes, it is,” Peg smiled. “That’s a **good** sign, sweetie.”

“Well, when you put it that way,” Kristin grinned. “I just hope they like me.”

“What’s not to like?”

“Mom, you know what? You’re the best.” Kris gave her mother a big hug. Then she looked down at herself. “I don’t know if I’m dressed for this.” She was wearing a pair of jeans and a Wisconsin sweatshirt.

“I don’t think they’ll expect you to gussy up, since you only had ten minutes’ notice,” Peg laughed.

“True.” Just then, the doorbell rang. Kristin went over to the door and opened it. Tom stepped in and eagerly wrapped her up in a soul kiss.

“Well, hello,” she giggled.

“Hi, gorgeous,” he grinned. He stepped in, an older couple following. “Kris, these are my parents. Mom, Dad, this is Kristin. And that’s her mother, Peg.”

“It’s so very nice to meet you, after all we’ve heard about you,” Tom’s mother told Kristin.

“It’s nice to meet you, too,” Kristin said shyly.

Tom’s parents insisted on taking Kristin, Peg, and Jim out for dinner. Kristin started shy, but got better as the evening went on. It was just impossible for her to stay shy when Tom was around.

“So, Kristin,” Mrs. Bellamy asked her over dinner, “you’re a Junior in High School, Tom tells us?”

“Yes. I go to Wilkins Academy. Mom teaches there.”

“Have you thought about college?” she asked.

“I’m hoping for Harvard,” Kristin told her.

“Really?” Mr. Bellamy said. “Is that realistic?”

“Very,” Peg put in. “Wilkins is very tough, and Kristin has a shot at being valedictorian. She can go pretty much anywhere she wants.”

“Really?” Tom exclaimed, grinning. “Jeez, I knew I was dating a brain, but I didn’t appreciate the full extent of the braininess.”

“Oh **stop** it!” Kristin grinned, blushing. “Like you’re a dummy.”

“Well, no. But I’m not going to Harvard.”

“You **could** have,” Mrs. Bellamy said. “If it weren’t for skating.”

“Y’see? You’re just overextended. I have nothing in my life but school.” She grinned at him. “OK, I **used** to have nothing in my life but school.”

“I know, I’m **such** a distraction,” Tom laughed. “Maybe if I saw you more than twice a month, you could blame me.”

“Well. Maybe I’ll go to Columbia,” she said impishly.

“Don’t get my hopes up,” he smiled back.

Tom’s parents had rented a hotel room for the night. On the way back, his Mom said to him, “Tom? She’s delightful.”

“Yeah, she’s pretty special, isn’t she?”

They didn’t see each other after that for more than a month. Tom had the Grand Prix Final, and then they ran into Christmas. Tom went home to Minnesota for Christmas, and had Nationals to get ready for. They decided, however, that they **really** wanted to spend New Years’ together, so Tom came up for that. He arrived late on the 30th.

On the 31st, Kristin noticed he was on edge and apprehensive about something. So was **she**, but she knew it wasn’t for the same reason. So, she asked him.

“No big deal, I’m waiting for a phone call. I most **likely** have news, that I’m dying to share with you, but I won’t know for sure until I get this phone call.”

He finally got it, later that afternoon, and sat down with Kristin, a big smile on his face. “That was my phone call. That was Terri, my coach. She’s just a coach in our rink now, but she got a new opportunity—to take over the whole program, be the head coach, at another rink. So, after this season, sometime this spring, she’s moving, and I’ll be going with her.”

“Where?” Kristin whispered.

Tom couldn’t hold back the shit-eating grin. “Acton, Massachusetts.”

“That’s only about an hour from here!”

“Yup!”

“YIPEEE!” Kristin shouted, and launched herself into his arms. “That is **so** great!”

“I’m going to be around so much, you’re going to beg to get rid of me.”

“Not a chance!”

“Good,” he laughed. Then he got serious, and looked into her eyes. “Kris? I love you.”

Kristin caught her breath. “Oh, God, I love you too,” she whispered.

They shared the happy news with Kristin's parents, then they all got Chinese food for New Year's Eve dinner. After eating, the Kellehers headed out for a party. Ryan was out with Laurel, so Tom and Kristin were alone. They chatted and watched TV for a while, then Kristin stood up and said to Tom, "Come with me." He followed her upstairs—and into her room.

Kristin sat on the bed. "Sit," she said to Tom. He sat next to her. "You had your surprise. Here's mine." She took a deep breath. "When we came home from Skate America, I decided to do something. It was a just-in-case thing, but I think it's time for just-in-case." She took another deep breath. "What I did was, I went on the pill."

"You **did**?"

She smiled at him. "After what happened at Skate America, it almost felt like it was inevitable. So, I wanted to be prepared for when the time came that I felt I was ready." She looked right into his eyes. "I'm ready. I want you to make love to me. Tonight."

Tom hissed out a breath. "Oh, God. I think I'm stunned."

"Good," she giggled.

"Kris, are you **sure**? We've only been together a few months, and we don't see each other that often...."

"And you love me," she interrupted. "And I love you."

"Yes," he smiled.

"Good," she smiled back, her hand going to the buttons on her blouse. "Then show me."

"Gladly. Starting now." He grabbed her hands, and pulled them away from her blouse. Then he replaced her hands with his own, and started undoing the buttons. She smiled, and shuddered, as he got her blouse undone. He next got her bra off, and his hand went right for her boob, rubbing it gently. He leaned in and kissed her while his hand massaged her tit. His other hand went for her pants, and she helped him strip them off.

She sighed as he kissed and fondled her. She reached for his shirt, trying to get it off, but his arms were in the way. He laughed and grabbed it, quickly stripping it off. They both worked on his pants. When he was completely naked, his lips went back to hers, and his hand went back to hers.

She took his other hand, and led it towards her pussy. "Look," she whispered, "I know it's going to hurt, so, I want you to, you know, do me with your hand first."

"Sure. But I'll try not to make it hurt too much."

“I know you will, but I want you to get me going,” she smiled at him. His hand went down and started slipping up and down her pussy. Her hand returned the favor, going right for his dick, working on it. Completely worked up in her mind, she came very quickly. Her tugging on his dick as she came quickly brought him over.

“Aw,” she giggled, “did I kill it?”

“Not hardly,” Tom laughed. She kept her hand around the shaft. It started perking up quickly. “Y’see? I’m young.”

“Yes, your recuperative powers are quite excellent,” she giggled.

It only took a few more minutes until he was at full-staff again. “He’s ready,” Tom said.

“Oh, God,” Kristin hissed. “Oh, God, we’re really going to do this!”

“We can stop now, no harm, no foul.”

“No **way**!” she stated. “That’s why I wanted you to do me with your hand first. I’m **so** worked up right now!”

“OK.” He moved over and positioned himself between her legs. He reached in at her pussy again. “Just making sure you’re wet.”

“Dripping,” she giggled. “Go ahead, lover. Put it in me.”

“Don’t forget, this is my first time, too. I may screw this up,” he smiled.

“I doubt it,” she smirked at him. He reached down, and guided his cock towards her pussy. He gently pushed. The head slipped in neatly.

“NNNNNGGGGGHHHHH!” she howled. “Oh DAMN I didn’t expect that!”

“Hurts?”

“God NO! Oh MAN. What’s the opposite of hurt?” she gasped.

“Good,” he grinned. “This part probably will, though.”

“I know,” she puffed. “Go for it.” He pulled back slightly, and quickly plowed through her hymen. “Ayyieeee!” she howled.

“Sorry.”

“It’s...ungh...okay.” She gasped. “It really didn’t hurt. More took me by surprise. Keep going.” He did.

“AAAGGGNNHHH! Oh GOD! Oh GOD!” she howled, getting louder with every inch. He finally got himself all the way into her, and couldn’t even identify the noises coming from her mouth.

“Are you OK?” he said, worriedly.

“SHIT! SHIT! Oh God FUCK ME!” she howled. “NOW!” That’s when the light finally dawned in Tom’s head. She wasn’t in pain—she was in **lust**, in a **big** way. He started deliberately moving in and out of her—and she didn’t stop howling. It only took a few minutes.

“OhshitohshitohshitCUMMING!” she howled. “Oh GOD!” Tom looked down at her, orgasming up a **storm**, and couldn’t believe it. He held himself all the way in, trying to prolong things, while she bucked and spasmed beneath him.

“Oh!” she said as she came down. “Oh! I can’t **believe** how **good** that was!”

“I’m stunned.” He moved in and out of her slowly again. “I’m also not done yet.”

“Nnnnnngggg,” she groaned. “Oh! Oh! Oh! OOOOOOOOOHHHH!!!” He had started plunging into her again, and she just went supernova. Kristin couldn’t believe it. She had expected pain, awkwardness, a less-than-thrilling experience. She had expected to be uncomfortable. She expected it to be a “get it out of the way” kind of thing. What she **hadn’t** expected was a very quick and explosive trip to Orgasm Land, not for her first time. But that’s what she got.

She was yelping every time he thrust into her. Her breasts were heaving and flushed. Her legs, wrapped around his hips, were spasming. And she felt it building. Her eyes flew open, she gripped his shoulders, and yelped, “oh GOD AGAAIIINNNNN!!!!”

That was pretty much all Tom could take. As she came down, he started thrusting into her fast. “Oh GOD,” he moaned, feeling it coming on fast.

“Yes!” Kristin hissed. “Cum in me, Tom. Cum in me. Cum in me,” she chanted like a mantra. Listening to **that**, he exploded.

Neither of them actually passed out, but it was a close thing. They collapsed next to each other on her bed, completely wrung out. As soon as Kristin regained her breath, she hurled herself across Tom’s torso and snuggled into him.

“Oh **my**,” she breathed.

“You can say **that** again. I’m shocked. I’m used to my shy, demure, quiet little girlfriend. Then she takes me to bed and **completely** loses her mind.”

Kristin giggled. “Was that a complaint?”

“Are you **kidding**? That was the most spectacular thing I’ve ever seen.”

“Yeah,” she said. “I think I amazed **myself**. Did I **tell** you to cum in me?”

“Repeatedly,” Tom laughed. Kristin blushed all over. “God, Kris. I never thought it would be this good.”

“Ditto. That’s right, it was your first, too.”

“Yeah. Wow,” he laughed. Kristin joined right in. “Are you OK?”

“Yes. Fine.”

“No pain?”

“No, there was just a little pinch when you pushed through, that’s it. It doesn’t hurt at all now.” She grinned at him. “Why, did you want to do it again?”

“Maybe later, he’s all tuckered out at the moment,” he laughed. “God, Kris. I’m still in shock.”

“Uh, **you** are in shock?” she laughed. “You ever hear anyone else talk about their first time?”

“A few, yeah.”

“Me, too. Warren’s was good, but Sophie was experienced. Sophie’s was **brutal**. Ryan’s was quick, messy, and unsatisfying. Marie’s was, too. What in the **hell** just **happened** to us?”

“I don’t know, but I’ll take it.” He looked at her. “God, Kris, I was **so** worried about hurting you. Not only did I **not**, but you came like a banshee, twice. I feel like I’m walking on air.”

“You should be. You were magnificent. You didn’t hurt me because you were gentle. Remember that.”

“Oh, I don’t think that was all of it,” he laughed. “Kristin Kelleher, you are a sex bomb.”

“WHAT?” she laughed.

“You are. You almost started cumming right away. I was flabbergasted.”

“Oh, it just felt **so** good, right from the beginning. It was like a brain meltdown.”

“Right. Like I said, you’re a sex bomb.”

“Only with you,” she giggled.

“Well, I **hope** so,” he laughed.

“Don’t worry. I’m convinced it was all you, and I don’t intend on testing the theory.”

Tom roared with laughter. “Good.” He looked at her. “Kris? Thank you. You gave me something precious tonight. I’ll treasure it always.”

“You gave me the same thing, you know,” she replied, a wee bit misty. “And I’ll treasure it always, too. It was like magic. Thank you.” They fell asleep together in a contented pile.

Tom only had one more day and night to lavish attention on Kristin, so she took full advantage of it. She’d see him again, in a couple of weeks, though—she’d be attending Nationals.

In the meantime, she had to go back to school. And, it was strange—she just **felt** different. More confident, more at ease, less nervous. That had been building since she’d started seeing Tom—but, now that they’d made love, it was even **more** so. Everyone picked up on it, but nobody moreso than Marie.

“Something happened,” Marie said the first time they had a quiet moment together.

“Yeah,” Kristin agreed. “Tom and I made love on New Year’s Eve.”

“WOW!” Marie said, very surprised. “How was it?”

“Heavenly. Happy New Year to me!”

“You lucky dog.”

“Yup. In more ways than one. Oh, and did I tell you that he’s moving this summer? To Acton. A mere hour away. And Daddy’s getting a new car, so I get his old one.”

“You **are** a lucky dog.”

“I’m in love, Marie. He’s just **perfect**. Me, Kristin Kelleher, with the most perfect boyfriend. Who woulda thunk it?”

--end of chapter—

Author's note: Kristy Sargent's a real person, a pairs skater. (Well, she's Kristy Wirtz now.) What I talk about here really happened to her. Perception is everything, of course, though <G>. Some of my readers think that the capriciousness of skating federations to their skaters is made up completely in my own mind. Nope, sorry. **Some** things in DoaL come from real life.

Warren and Sophia were as relieved as it gets just to get back to Oceanview for Christmas. After their fall semester, and after the Grand Prix Final, the three weeks they'd be home would be **very** relaxing. Yes, they'd have to prepare for Nationals, but that's all they'd have to do.

Since they no longer had a coach in Wisconsin, they were very glad to see June again.

"You've done well this fall, guys," she told them after their first practice with her. "I know it's been tough on you, what with school and the wedding and competing and Betsy, but you've done well."

"Thanks," Warren told her, "but I think our luck is due to run out sooner or later. We're still waiting for the backlash from what happened last year."

"It's possible, but all you can control is the skating."

"Yeah."

They had an enjoyable Christmas, with everyone—especially the grandparents—getting the traditional **pile** of presents for Betsy. With no school to worry about, their sex life got back to normal—meaning two nights out of three! Jessie, also home for Christmas, joined in, but only some of the time. She knew what the last semester had been like for them, and didn't want to wear out her welcome—she knew they needed "alone" time.

A couple of days after New Years, they were happy to get a visit from Warren's sister Kristin. They'd only really seen each other at Christmas.

"How you been holding up?" Kristin asked them. "You looked horrible at Christmas, Warren. You look a little better now."

"I was so damn tired I was lucky I knew what my name was," Warren laughed. "My schedule this semester was particularly brutal."

"How are you **two** doing?" Kristin asked perceptively.

"Great," Warren told her. "She cuts me a lot of slack."

“I learned my lesson,” Sophie said ruefully, “from freshman year. Now that we live together, I can see it for myself, anyway. And I see how hard he’s tried to be attentive to me—but I also watched the poor guy studying five, six hours a night.”

“Yeah, and with babies screaming and practice interrupting and whatnot,” Warren sighed. “Next semester will be much better. I’m back down to 15 credits instead of 18, and I won’t be taking embryology or genetics.”

“But you have Worlds smack dab in the middle,” Kristin reminded him.

“True, but we had two competitions in the middle last semester,” Sophie reminded him.

“What **are** you going to do when it’s your first year in med school and it’s an Olympic year?” Kristin laughed.

“I’m **not**,” Warren declared. “Do I look insane to you? I’m taking a year off before med school. That year is going to be the last of our skating career, so that’s what it’s going to be about—skating, and only skating. We’re going to do every competition and show we can get away with that we get invited to, and then go knock ‘em dead at the Olympics. And **then** I’ll go to med school.”

“And we’ve squirled a lot of money away,” Sophie told her, “and we have a few more endorsement deals coming up after school gets out for the summer. So I’m not going to be working when Warren’s in med school. Except we’ll probably still choreograph. And that’s mostly going to be **me** if he’s in med school.”

“And that’ll make things a lot easier,” Warren said. “Having Sophie home with the kid.”

“Well, if I have my way, **kids** by then,” Sophie grinned. “I want him to put another baby in me as soon as the Olympics are over.”

“And I won’t take much convincing,” Warren smiled. “We always said we wanted a houseful of kids. We just started too early. As much as we love Betsy, and we’re glad we had her, it’s not easy,” he sighed. “Kris, try not to get pregnant until college is over, OK? It’s easier.” Then he grinned. “Of course, **why** on earth am I telling this to my innocent, naive, virginal sister?”

Kristin blushed bright red, and got a strange look on her face.

“OK, hold on!” Sophie burst out. “I saw that blush! And that sheepish little look!”

“Huh?” Warren said.

“Warren, I think innocent, naïve, and virginal is erroneous,” Sophia grinned. Kristin gasped, and blushed deeper. “Well?” Sophie demanded, still grinning.

“Oh, all right,” Kristin sighed. Then she smiled softly. “New Years Eve.”

“Congratulations!” Sophie said.

“OK, I’m slow on the uptake,” Warren said.

“Tom took my virginity on New Year’s Eve,” Kristin confirmed softly.

“Wow. Color **me** stunned,” Warren laughed. “Was it OK?”

“Yeah,” Kristin grinned.

“He didn’t push you, I hope,” Warren said sternly.

“Tom?” Kris laughed. “Yeah, right. Warren, in the way he treats girls, Tom’s like **you**. I initiated everything.”

“Yeah, I remember that,” Warren laughed.

“I’ll bet you do,” Sophie chimed in.

“No, this was my decision,” Kris continued.

“Any regrets?” Warren asked.

“Not one,” Kris smiled. “Oh, and he’s moving, because his coach got a better opportunity. He’s moving to Acton.”

“That’s great!”

“I can’t wait to go to nationals!” Kristin enthused.

“Oh, isn’t that sweet,” Warren teased. “She’s all excited to go see her big brother skate. I’m touched, Kris, I really am.”

“Whatever you say,” Kris laughed.

They arrived at Nationals, which were in Denver this year, January 10th. Warren celebrated his birthday the next day—his 21st—by practicing. “Well, at least **I** will be able to buy the champagne for our one-year anniversary,” he joked. On the next day, there was a phone call in their hotel room. Curtis wanted to meet him, to talk. He specifically asked for Warren. Sophie, knowing why, just laughed.

Warren was commonly thought—and obviously by Curtis—to be the **reasonable** member of the team. Sophie was the loose cannon. Of course, that only works if you don’t know, as Curtis didn’t, that both the Pink and True Colors exhibitions were **Warren’s** idea. They both knew this existed, and they both found it amusing. Neither of them were afraid

to break rules—and Warren was the one whose artistic vision more often strayed “out there”. Not that Sophie disagreed with any of this, mind you. But the vision of the team that lots of outsiders had—that of Sophie the extremist twisting Warren’s arm to go along with her—was erroneous.

Warren was willing to play his part, however, and met Curtis at the coffee shop in the hotel.

“First question. Any surprises with the exhibitions?” Curtis asked.

“No,” Warren laughed. “You’ve seen I Knew The Bride. If we do two, the other one will be to an REM song called At My Most Beautiful. It’s romantic, it’s sweet, and it’s fully clothed. No worries.”

“OK. There has been a hubub within the USFSA at that Sports Illustrated article. Some people were offended by it. But, I have to tell you, some people, well, it made us think of a few things.

“Do you **really** think there was a problem from the organization because of Sophie’s pregnancy?”

“From some people, yes,” Warren told him. “We had things said.”

“Look, having a young skater get pregnant hasn’t really happened,” Curtis said. “We didn’t know how to handle it.”

“Well maybe you should’ve talked to the Canadian Federation. I wonder if they feel good about completely abandoning Kristy Sargent when she got pregnant years ago? 18 years old, unmarried, her boyfriend dumps her, her **partner** dumps her, and the federation writes her off. It’s a miracle she was able to come back and start winning Canadian championships again. At least Sophie and I had each other.”

“Look, an unmarried skater getting pregnant at 19 is a scandal.”

“What is this, 1950?” Warren laughed. “Happens all the time, Curtis. It was a mistake and an accident and bad timing, but a ‘scandal’ it was **not**. The fact that some people at the USFSA **thought** it was is what frosted our bottoms.”

“OK. I **do** think you guys might have had a bit of a legitimate complaint on that. But why do these things build on each other?”

“What do you mean?”

“It’s a constant game of one-upsmanship.”

“You’re wrong,” Warren told him. “The **only** thing we’ve **ever** done as one-upsmanship was True Colors. Pink wasn’t. Pink was an artistic choice based solely on that. We didn’t **think** of how anyone would react.”

“Come **on**, Warren! How would you think there wouldn’t have been a reaction to that!” Curtis said.

“You read the SI article. It’s all in there. Michael Weiss. And, I have to say, that we got criticism and Allison Bowman didn’t—well, that **really** pissed us off. Jesus, Curtis. First of all, **we** choreograph our own stuff so we don’t skate a step we haven’t designed. Can Allison say that? Someone **made** her skate that program. And that program bordered on kiddy porn. Sophie and I are adults. And we **look** it. Every pedophile that watched nationals is drooling over Allison. Quite honestly, I almost called her ‘camp’ and offered to do her exhibition this year, but she’s coached by Ron Aztov and he’s a complete ass. They’re playing with fire with her, and she’s a talented skater. And **we** get the flack from you.”

Curtis sighed. “Well, I thought you’d be reasonable. We were trying to use **you** as an example.” He sighed again. “We knew that would never work with Ron Aztov.”

“Ah,” Warren said. “I see. But it was still stupid, Curtis. Allison needs protecting. She’s 15—well, she’s 16 now—she still looks 13. She’s a minor. If you go after Aztov in the guise of protecting Allison, you’d be looking like an organization that **cares** about the **skaters**. Since Sophie and I make our own decisions, and everybody knows it, you going after us only makes you look like prudes.”

“Yeah, but it wasn’t just Pink. It was the Maxim thing, too.”

“Curtis, the Maxim thing was the greatest bit of publicity that American ice dance has gotten in a very, very long time—and you **know** it.”

“We’re not sure we want that kind of publicity.”

“Remind me to remind you that you said that, when the television negotiations come up again,” Warren laughed.

“Touche,” Curtis laughed back. “But True Colors was over the top.”

“Yep,” Warren agreed. “We don’t do things halfway.”

“Well, it’s done, so that’s why I wanted to talk to you—to make sure this thing doesn’t escalate any further.”

“We won’t if you won’t. Curtis, **don’t** push us.”

“Look, you’re part of an organization.”

“Oh, fuck that,” Warren told him. “Come on, Curtis, do you really believe that all-for-one bullshit? And we’re the two people with **more** friends among our fellow skaters than anyone! But we don’t react well to being pushed, no matter what fancy title someone has.”

“You need more discipline.”

“I am **self** disciplined, as is Sophie. We only react when pushed to the wall. Curtis, you need to remember that you are dealing with two **rape** victims, OK? When you push us into a corner, our first instinct is to go for your balls. That’s never going to change. Stop pushing, and we back off.”

“Fine. How do we end this, right now?”

“Easy. The way it stands now? We’ve made our point—however, to keep it from escalating, you need to swear to me that the judging at this championships is on the up and up.”

“I swear it. That was an idle threat. The judges, in fact, have been specifically **told** not to pay attention to anything except what goes on on the ice here. It’s been made clear. We don’t need any more questions about the legitimacy of the sport.” He sighed. “However, I can only speak for American judges, Warren. It might be different at Worlds. There are elements in the ISU that are pissed off at you—and the Eastern European, and Italian, and French judges have never liked you guys anyway.”

“Fine. That’s not **your** problem. We won’t take it as such. If you tell me American judges haven’t been instructed to hammer us, that’s good enough for me.”

The National Championships themselves were anti-climactic. The four defending champions—Warren and Sophie, Tom, Liz, and Brett and Andrea—won without a problem. The biggest near-upset was Evan and Shawna **barely** beating Courtney and Ryan for the silver.

Warren and Sophie got to do both exhibitions. *I Knew The Bride* was well received, as it had been all fall, and the reception for *At My Most Beautiful* was **rapturous**. Liz did a thing that Warren had worked up for her, a playful number skated to Martina McBride’s *My Baby Love Me (Just The Way That I Am)*. Crash was in the audience to see it, he had flown out to Denver for Nationals.

And Allison Bowman, who had moved up to the silver, did another kiddy porn number. This time, Curtis did say something to the press. “If we speak out about the Kellehers, two adults that do their own choreography, we have to speak out about this. This isn’t Allison’s fault, but her coach has to get his act together.” Allison was distraught, but Warren caught up to her and quickly offered to choreograph an exhibition for her next year. She accepted. Her coach blew a gasket, but Warren told Allison, “Don’t forget—coaches and choreographers work for **you**, not the other way around. Don’t put up with it.

He's got no say. This is **your** decision." Allison agreed—and Allison's mother, a nice woman who loved and worried about her daughter, backed her up. Allison would be visiting Boston to work with Warren and Sophie this summer. She asked Warren to do her competitive programs, as well. After checking with Liz—who didn't have any problems with Warren and Sophie doing both of them, even though they were competitors—Warren and Sophie agreed.

"Another one for the stable," Sophie laughed.

"Yup, because Liz, Tom, and Andrea and Brett all want to come to us again."

"What a nice little sideline we've developed!"

---end of chapter---

IT ALL FALLS APART (Chapter 133)

After Nationals, Warren and Sophie headed back to campus for spring semester. It would still be a challenge, but Warren's schedule was a bit more reasonable—three less credits, no labs, no Embryology and Genetics in the same semester—and Sophie's was manageable as well.

They managed to grab a little more time for themselves. They were lying in bed one evening in February, after having made love.

"Hey, I forgot to tell you," Warren said. "I heard from Crash earlier today, in between classes. He called." Warren grinned at Sophie. "He heard from his first-choice law school. He got in."

"And where might that be?" Sophie smiled back.

"UCLA."

"Oh, man, I'll bet Liz is **thrilled**."

"He called her last night. He told me he heard this **scream** come from the other end of the phone."

Sophie cracked up. "I'll just **bet**. Well, look at this. Both of our long-distance relationships are resolving themselves. Crash is moving to LA, and Tom's going to be a mere hour away from your sister."

"Yup. Boy, has my sister **changed**, or what?"

"See what good lovin' will do?" Sophie giggled.

"Yeah, I'll say. Hey, I always hoped that she'd find someone to get her out of her shell. Tom **shattered** her shell. Although, I must admit, I'm flabbergasted she's already slept with him."

"She told me a little secret," Sophie grinned at him, "but I'm not sure it's something you want to know about your baby sister."

Warren mock-glared at her. "Fine. Go ahead. You can't bait me like that."

Sophie giggled. "Apparently, Kristin found out, and in one hell of a hurry, that she really **really** likes sex."

"Oy. Ah well, I know she's careful." He looked at Sophie. "Speaking of careful, we need to watch out for that International Date Line thing again, what with Worlds being in Beijing."

"Don't worry, Snugglebear, got it covered. Once bitten, twice shy, and all that."

"No little sister or brother for Betsy?" Warren teased.

"Sure. Just not **now**." She looked up at him slyly. "Once we get past this whole both of us in school and going to the Olympics thing, I plan to let you knock me up at will."

"Ah," he laughed.

About a week later, there was a knock at the door. Warren answered it.

"Alexa! How are you?" he said, letting her in.

"Hey, Prep Stud," she teased. "Hiya, Betsy. Where's Sophie?"

"Class. What brings you around?"

"Just wanted to see you. We haven't had much time to hang out this year."

"Don't I know it. Want a coke?"

“Love one.” They sat in the living room, chatting, watching Betsy toddle around.
 “So, how's Mike?” Warren asked.
 “Great. Do you realize we've been together for two and a half years? **Me**? With one guy that long?”
 “It must **really** be love,” Warren teased.
 “It is. The M word has come up in conversation.”
 “It's a frickin' parade to the altar, isn't it?” Warren laughed.
 “With you and Sophie in the lead, big surprise. And then Cait and Paul. Cait asked me to be her maid of honor.”
 “Yeah, she's asked Sophie to be a bridesmaid. I'm going to be one of Paul's ushers. So, how are you dealing with monogamy?”
 “Fine. Really. I guess I'm a one-guy girl at heart, now that I've found the right guy,” Alexa grinned.
 “Yeah, well, that's **guys**,” Warren grinned.
 “Oh, that. Well, Mike knows about and doesn't mind my occasional dalliances with girls.”
 “Ah,” Warren laughed.
 “Just once in a while,” Alexa told him. “Mike knows I'm bi. I kind of have a girlfriend. Her name's Eileen and she's a junior. She has a very steady boyfriend herself, both her guy and Mike know all about it. They're friends, so they'll go out with the boys, you know, and Eileen and I will stay in,” she grinned.
 “Whatever works,” Warren said.
 “Yeah. Well, you can't talk, I know all about Jessie.”
 “Touche.”
 “Anyhow. How are you holding up? I know things have been hectic.”
 “Better this semester than last, but, yeah.”
 “How do you manage?”
 “No sleep, no sex,” Warren laughed. “Well, not **enough** sex. Not for the two of **us**.”
 “Three times a day isn't enough for the two of **you**,” Alexa teased.
 “Not quite but close,” Warren admitted.
 “How is Sophie dealing with **that**?”
 “Better than you'd ever suspect,” Warren told her. “She's fine. Horny, yes, but fine. It's different when you're living together. She **sees** what I'm going through with my schoolwork.”
 “True.”

 Worlds were at the end of March in Beijing. It was a long flight, and Warren and Sophia were glad to get it over with. They rested in their hotel, then went to find some friends.
 Tom Bellamy was the first they happened upon. “Hey, Tom, how's my sister?” Warren asked with a laugh.
 “Your sister is great,” Tom laughed back.
 “I figured I'd ask you—you see her more than I do.”
 “Yeah, and even I don't see her enough. Soon, that'll all change. Thank goodness. I can't wait to move.”
 “When?”
 “Terri's going up in the next month. I'll follow after the tour.”
 “You doing the whole tour?” Warren asked him.
 “Yeah. Well, almost all of it. I'm taking a week off in May.” He grinned. “I have to take some chick to her junior prom.”
 “Cool,” Warren laughed. “I'll bet she's thrilled.”
 “Yeah. She knew it would conflict with the tour, so didn't think I was going to take her. I surprised her.”
 “Good!”
 They were soon joined by Liz, and the four of them took off to discover Beijing.

 It started right away, with the first of the two original dances, the Bossa Nova. It looked to Sophia and Warren that the Judging Mafia had expanded. It wasn't just the usual suspects—Russia, Italy, France, Ukraine. Nope, Germany was in on it, the Czech Republic, Hungary, a few others. People were jockeying to move their teams up, and got in on the pre-judging. The ones left out in the cold were Sophia and Warren, the British team, and the Irish (who had no judge on the panel). The French finished a laughable first, the young Russian team were second, the Italians third, the Hungarians fourth, and the Ukrainians fifth. Sophie and Warren finished sixth. Brenneman and Watts, the Brits, were all the way down in ninth. Evan and Shawna were dumped to eleventh.
 Things didn't change much in the second original dance. The young Russians and the French flip-flopped, leaving them tied for first. Sophie and Warren beat the Ukrainians, putting them tied for fifth. But the lines

were pretty much set, and Sophie and Warren had virtually no chance at a medal. Especially after the judges for the free dance were drawn—and the panel included judges from the five countries that were ahead of them, plus the Czechs and Germans, who were in on it.

They finished sixth. The most laughable part was that the French, Borisina and Dravouche, won—with one of the most boring, simple, and tedious free dances in memory. If the Russians, Kuznetsova and Vassilyevskiy, had won, there might have been some justification. Their free dance was, at least, **good**. But too many people saw this **terrible** free dance win, saw the British team light up the audience with a powerful and difficult dance and finish ninth, and saw Sophie and Warren's terrific Aaron Copland dance finish sixth.

The press conference turned out to be explosive. Warren, to his credit, told Curtis exactly what they were going to say. Curtis, who was as incensed at the outcome as Warren was, told him “You're going after the ISU, not the USFSA. I'm required to stay out of it publicly, of course, but go for it.”

Warren did. His first comment, about the French team's free dance, was, “If that's a World Championship worthy free dance, I'm Christopher Dean.”

Sophie joined in. “If I ever choreographed that piece of dung, I'd quit choreography in complete disgust with myself. And don't get me started on the lack of difficulty.” Then she said it. “This was rigged, from top to bottom. It was a heist job. Print that. Play it on TV. This competition was rigged.”

The president of the ISU, a slimeball from the speed skating side of the sport with no knowledge of figure skating who believed everything the Russian Federation told him, reacted as one would predict. “Are you accusing the judges of this panel of dishonesty?” he sputtered.

“Yes. You bet your ass,” Sophie said. Warren nodded agreement. “You have crooked judges. Period. You should fix it.”

“You have no proof!”

“The proof is in the final standings,” Warren maintained.

That was explosive enough. People started taking sides. “Never criticize the judges,” was an unspoken rule in figure skating. Of course, Sophie and Warren were never ones for rules. And, they **did** find people on their side.

The day after their press conference, they were vindicated. Alice Krenshaw, the American judge on the panel, called her own press conference. She had the backing of the USFSA, but was putting her international career at risk and she knew it—but she couldn't keep silent anymore. She had been approached to be part of the conspiracy. She had audiotapes of phone calls from the Russian judge to prove it. It was made clear to her that, if she didn't play ball, Warren and Sophia would finish exactly where they ended up—sixth. Cooperation on her part would get them back in the medals. She, of course, didn't play ball.

The news put the ISU into a complete uproar. Warren and Sophia thanked Mrs. Krenshaw for her integrity, then smiled as they watched the fur fly.

There was one other bad thing that happened to the American team at Worlds, but this one was just bad luck. Brett Tomlinson got the flu. He and Andrea skated, but Brett, weak, fell twice. Andrea also fell once, on a throw jump where Brett didn't have enough energy to really get her in the air. They dropped all the way down to fifth.

Liz rang up yet another world championship without much of a challenge. And Tom, in another upset, again won the silver medal, as he had at the Grand Prix Final.

One of the bigger disappointments for Warren and Sophia was that only the top five in each discipline were allowed to take part in the exhibitions. Having finished sixth, they didn't skate.

They headed back to Wisconsin upset at the outcome, but not surprised—and delighted and amused by the ensuing firestorm.

A DECISION IS MADE (Chapter 134)

Warren and Sophia got back to Wisconsin after Worlds, shrugged off the disappointment of Worlds, and threw themselves back into the last month-plus of classes. They were planning on joining the tour for a month after classes ended. But they only put in minimal practice on the ice, concentrating on their studies, Betsy, and each other.

Also, they wanted as much time as they could to visit with friends. Since most of their friends would be graduating, they weren't sure how many would still be around. They knew two, for sure, would be—Papa Bear and Caitlin, as Papa Bear would be attending Wisconsin's medical school. Many others might not, so they wanted to hang with them as much as possible.

They also wanted to lavish attention on each other. One Friday night, Warren waited until Betsy had been put down to bed. Then, grinning, he beckoned Sophie into their bedroom.

"No studying tonight, Snugglegear?" she grinned.

"Nope, all caught up."

"Feeling frisky?" she teased.

"For you, Pookie, I **always** feel frisky. I just don't always have the time to show you."

"But tonight you do?" she asked. Warren nodded. "GOODY!"

Warren laughed, led her into the bedroom, and quickly started stripping off her clothes. When he had her completely naked, he led her over to the bed. As she settled down on it, he abruptly grabbed her wrist, pulled a rope from under the mattress, and quickly tied her wrist to the bedpost. He moved over to do the other one.

"You get tied up tonight, my lovely little Sex Toy."

"OOOOOOOHHHHH!!!!"

Laughing, Warren secured her wrists, then moved down to her ankles. He quickly got them secured, leaving her immobile and spread-eagled on the bed.

"Now that I've got you where I want you, what should I do with you?"

"Whatever you want, Master. Oh, you haven't tied me up in **such** a long time!" Sophie exclaimed happily.

"I know." His first act was to gently kiss her. She returned the kiss, and, as she started getting into it, Warren reached down and tickled her. She exploded with laughter and squirmed against her bonds. "WARREN!" she hissed, still giggling, as he tickled her again. With her giggles still echoing, he moved down and nibbled on her breast. His hand slipped down between her bound legs, and he ran his finger gently up and down her pussy. He felt her wetness run out of her pussy and onto his hand, as her breath got more ragged. He zeroed in on her clit and rubbed all around it. She started moaning and bucking against his hand and her bonds.

"Close, Pookie?"

"Oh, God, getting there," she moaned.

"Can't have that," he grinned, pulling his hand away from her pussy.

"WARREN!" she gasped. "Please!"

"Warren?" he asked with a raised eyebrow.

"Oops, sorry, Master. Please let me cum, Master."

"Nope. Not yet. Since you refuse to remember who's the master around here. **I** am the Master, **I** get to cum first." Having said that, he straddled her body around her shoulders and aimed his cock right at her mouth. She happily opened it and took his cock in.

They had hit on light bondage as a way to scratch Sophie's submissive streak a few years before. They only did it once in a while, but Sophie enjoyed submission every so often. And, to her, the **most** submissive act she did was having her mouth fucked. Tied up like that, unable to move her hands to assist her or move her head much, all she could do was open her mouth and let Warren slide his cock in and out of it. She **loved** it. They didn't do any pain or torture—though this was kind of uncomfortable, with her jaw straining and her nose getting bumped by his pubes—but Sophie enjoyed the submissive aspects. Using your mouth as a passive fuckhole was pretty submissive as far as Sophie was concerned. She got wet just thinking about it. With Warren **doing** it, she was **really** wet. She just lay there, letting her mouth be fucked, loving it, until Warren grunted and poured his semen down her eager and waiting throat.

"Oh, God, I love it when you do that," she gasped after she swallowed.

"And since you were a good little cumslut, you shall be repaid," Warren grinned. "And you love it when I do this even more." With that, he moved down and dove in between her legs.

Sophie immediately began howling. She was wound up to begin with, so it didn't take much of Warren's mouth on her pussy to make her explode. She ground her pussy into his mouth—as best she could being tied up—screaming. Warren just kept going. He brought her to another one, before he pulled himself up, crawled in between her legs, and mounted her.

Sophie **loved** this. Bound, spread-eagled, open and wet to him, unable to do anything but surrender to the relentless pounding of his cock in her pussy. It made her feel helpless and ravaged. She started cumming almost immediately. Warren held out long enough for Sophie to scream her way through three.

After he had cum, he got off of her and slipped off of the bed. He went out to the living room.

One of the Christmas gifts they had gotten, from Warren's parents, was a digital camera. Warren came back in the room holding it. He took a look at Sophie—still bound to the bed, still flushed and heaving, cum leaking out of her pussy and pooling in a puddle beneath it—and snapped off a couple shots. Sophie still had her eyes closed and didn't realize what he was doing.

"Sophie. Smile," he said. She opened her eyes, saw him with the camera, and giggled. "Oooh, **naughty!**" she said, and smiled for him. After he had a few pictures, he went over and untied her. As soon as she had her hands free, she immediately wrapped him in a bear hug. "Oooh, thank you Snugglebear, that was magnificent!"

"Ditto," he grinned. "You're so sexy all tied up."

"Uh-huh!"

As the semester came to a close, Sophie and Warren found themselves quite busy—with graduations. Jessie's was first. She graduated from Wisconsin-Milwaukee on a Friday night. After a celebratory supper with Jessie's parents, who had, of course, flown in for the graduation, the three of them drove down to Chicago the next day to see Crash graduate from Northwestern.

The next week was finals week for Warren and Sophie. Jessie went back to Madison with them, to stay for the week. Wisconsin-Madison would be graduating the following Saturday, so Warren and Sophie would see all their friends graduate.

"So, how's it feel to be a college graduate?" Warren teased Jessie one night that week.

"Great, except now I have to go get a **job**. And, worse, I have to go back to Massachusetts to do it."

"Why's that a problem?"

"Because there's not much for me in Mass. I've lost touch with the old gang out there. Crash is going to be in LA, and, besides, he's Liz's now. And, worse, you guys are going to be here."

"Only for another year," Sophie reminded her.

"What about after that?"

"Well, the year after that is an Olympic year," Warren told her, "and we're coming home for that. Remember, we have no coach here, so we want to have June around for the Olympic year."

"But, after that, there's med school," Jessie said.

"Yup. BU or Tufts," Warren told her. "Time to go home."

"Well, that's good, but it's going to be a long year," Jessie said. "Plus, there's that whole job thing."

Warren and Sophie looked at each other, and nodded. "Jess, why don't you stay here?" Warren said to her.

"Since you're a graduate from the Wisconsin system, you'd have first crack at jobs at the med center here, and I **know** they're hiring nurses. Just for a year, and then you'll have a year's experience under your belt."

"Hmmm. I'd need to find a place to live, though," Jessie said.

"You'd live **here**, of course," Sophie told her. Warren nodded agreement.

"Oh, no, I couldn't do **that**! Where would I sleep?"

"Where do you think?" Sophie smirked.

"C'mon guys. No **way**. Yeah, we sometimes share a bed, but actually **living** together? You guys are **married**! I'd just get in the way."

"Bullshit, and you know it," Warren told her. "Jess, we love you. Besides which, it'd be a help. You could help with Betsy. You could help me with the cooking." He leered at her. "You could help when I have too much homework and Sophie's horny."

"And if the sleeping arrangements really bother you, we'll buy a bed and throw it in Betsy's room," Sophie told her. "She sleeps through the night now, and there's plenty of room in there."

"Look, you've always said this is temporary," Warren said. Jessie nodded. "Well, this will be it, then. This will be the year we give ourselves to be together, the three of us. Unless, of course, you find someone, which would be fine. But, barring that, this will be our year."

"We really would love to have you," Sophie reiterated. "We **love** you, Jess. And I'm not talking about in bed right now. We love your company, both of us. And it **is** going to be another hectic year, and having you around **would** be a help."

"And it would be good for you, too," Warren added. "The Med Center's a great place to work, from what I've heard—and it's a great place to learn for a young nurse. The year there would do your career a world of good."

"All right," Jessie smiled. "You've convinced me. We **are** going to get that other bed, though. You guys will need **some** private time."

"Good," Sophie smiled.

They happily watched their friends graduate. Mike had taped "WHO'S GOT A JOB?" on top of his mortarboard, making everyone crack up. Mike actually had a job, but it was still funny. Sophie and Warren got the chance to meet some of their friends' parents.

Of course, the ones they already *had* met, they weren't all that thrilled to see again--Alexa's parents. The fact that they came, surprised even Alexa. They had barely spoken to their daughter in over three years. Warren said to Sophie, "It might have been better if they hadn't come," after he heard Alexa's father say something like "we paid for it, so we came to see the results of all our money." They were still cold to Alexa. Alexa informing them of her future plans didn't help—she and Mike had both found jobs in Chicago, and they were moving in together. Alexa's parents, of course, did not approve. Alexa couldn't care less, and told them so.

The other parents were a lot better, and Sophie and Warren had never met most of them. They found out that Papa Bear was truly a chip off the old block—his father was **just** like him, in looks and personality. Cait's parents were sweet—and thrilled to finally meet "our daughter's famous friends." Paul and Cait had been living together for the past year, and everyone thought it was fine. Cait's parents clearly adored Paul, and Paul's parents felt the same about Cait. That was nice to see.

Jessie made her plans. She already had scheduled a job interview at the med center, and was moving her stuff into Warren and Sophia's place. She'd be alone for about a month while they duo were on tour, but that was OK—it'd give her time to settle in.

After enjoying watching their friends graduate, Sophia and Warren took off for New York City to join the tour.

STILL WELCOME TO TOUR (Chapter 135)

Warren and Sophia joined the tour in New York City. All of their friends were happy to see them.

They met with Ted Kantor, who ran the tour. "Two slots, one before and one after intermission. That OK?"

"That's fine," Sophie told him. "I must admit, I'm a bit surprised. Sixth place at Worlds and we get two slots?" she laughed.

"Oh, to hell with that," Ted said. "You're former world champions, you're three-time national champions, and we all know that that sixth place was a rip-off. I don't have to worry about corrupt judging decisions—just which skaters my audience is coming to see. You guys are near the top of that list."

There was no show the first night they got in to New York—that'd be the next night—so they went around that evening to gather some friends for dinner. They went to the room that Evan was sharing with Tom Bellamy. Evan opened the door and let them in. Tom was on the phone.

"Your sister," Evan laughed, pointing at Tom on the phone. "They're planning the big reunion when we get to Boston next week. It's disgustingly lovey-dovey around here."

"Yeah, and now **we're** here," Warren laughed. "The lovey-dovey-ness just quadrupled."

"Yep," Evan snorted.

"Ev. You need a man," Sophie teased him.

"I just had a relationship **end**."

"Oh. Damn, Evan, I'm sorry," Sophia said.

"Yeah. And there's too many fucking straight guys in the world," Evan said in disgust, making Warren and Sophie crack up. "Anyhow. Where's Betsy?"

"Liz has her. She's coming with us for supper, but she insisted on playing Auntie Liz all afternoon since we got into town."

"Oh, yeah? And how did **you** guys occupy your afternoon?" Evan teased.

"You **don't** want to know," Warren laughed.

They got to Boston a week later. That would be Tom's last gig on the tour for a week—he was staying in Boston for Kristin's prom. Kristin came to the show, of course, deliriously happy to see Tom.

"I'm even happy to see **you** guys," she teased Warren and Sophie. "This one, too," she picked up Betsy.

"Aunny Kris!" Betsy gurgled.

"Boy. She's getting better with the talking," Kris marveled.

The show went well—Warren and Sophie loved it when the tour stopped in Boston, so they could skate for family and friends. Tom seemed to like it, too.

They held an after-show get-together in the hotel ballroom, as they often did. One of the things that often happened at these is that, if there was a piano in the room, the rest of the cast prevailed upon Tom to play for a bit. He gladly did so, enjoying playing for his friends. He did so on this night, too, favoring his friends with some ragtime.

Then he wagged a 'come here' finger at Kristin. She tried to shake it off, but he was persistent.

"Oh, wow, this ought to be interesting," Warren said, seeing what was going on.

"What?" Evan asked.

"Tom's trying to get Kristin to play."

"Your sister?"

"Yeah. She's **very** good, but terrified to play in front of people."

"Well, he got her over to the piano," Evan pointed out.

"Hey, guys," Tom told the cast, "This is Kristin. She's my girlfriend, and Warren's sister. I want her to play because she blows me away."

"I do **not**!" Kristin hissed, blushing. "Tom, please...."

"Kris," he said softly, "trust me. If you play for these people you will **not** regret it."

"OK," she sighed.

"Play the Pathetique," he suggested. She blew out a breath, nodded, and sat down at the piano. She brought her hands to the keys, and began playing.

Kristin didn't notice that the room **completely** hushed when she started playing. She didn't notice Shawna, sitting at Warren's table, hiss out a "My GOD!" answered by Liz saying, "Yeah, she can really **play**." She blocked all of that out, concentrating on the notes. She **did** hear, however, the absolutely thunderous applause that was unleashed when she finished. She heard that just fine. She blushed the color of cranberry juice—and couldn't stop grinning.

"More!" Evan shouted, a demand that was quickly echoed from others in the room. Still blushing, Kris leaned back over the piano and played some Chopin. When she finished that—to more applause—she changed pace and launched into Fleetwood Mac's "Sara", singing along to her playing. She wasn't as good a singer as she was a pianist, but she was good. She ended with Mozart's Sonata Facile.

When she got back to the table that Warren was at, Warren's friends were looking at her in complete astonishment. "You need to play in front of people more often," Evan told her.

"I'm completely stunned," Christine Arsenault added.

"Thanks," Kris mumbled, still blushing.

"I'm not stunned at her playing—I've heard it," Warren said. "I'm stunned she **did** it **here**."

"So am I!" Kris agreed, laughing.

A week and a half later, the tour was in Pittsburgh. Sophie and Warren were in their hotel room, just hanging out. Suddenly, there was a knock on the door. Warren opened it, and it was Evan. He looked excited.

"The Speedskater is **out**!" he said triumphantly.

"Huh?" Warren asked.

"He's out! The ISU board voted to remove him as the head of the ISU."

"This is **great** news! Who's his replacement?"

"Joan Wilton," Evan said. Warren and Sophie nodded approvingly. Joan Wilton was British, a former pairs skater, a long-time judge, and a woman considered to have integrity **and** to think about the **skaters** first.

"Oh, and that's not all," Evan went on. "Three members of the ISU has been expelled—including Ivan Zhelkov."

"Wow!" Sophia said. Ivan Zhelkov was the Russian representative to the ISU, the head of the Russian federation, and as corrupt a skating official as you'd ever find.

"There's more," Evan went on. "No Russian or French judges at any ISU event for the next year. And some individual judges have been suspended. Grigoriy Kamenskiy was suspended for **life**." Kamenskiy was a Russian dance judge, and the worst of the lot.

"My GOD," Warren was shocked. "How the hell did this **happen**? I'm thrilled, mind you, but I **never** thought I'd see this day!"

"The ISU has been deluged by complaints. One of those came from the television network, you know. They were threatening to get out. Their contract with the ISU ends after this year. The IOC said something—figure skating's an Olympic sport, after all. Since they got all that proof with the audiotape at Worlds, and all these people complaining, they almost **had** to clean house. Oh, you will be glad to know that Curtis voted for all of it."

"Good for Curtis," Sophie said.

That was the topic of discussion amongst all the skaters before the show. **After** the show, too—and it wasn't just skaters. Warren and Sophie were standing there, chatting with some other skaters, when a blonde woman in her thirties came up to them. "You!" she spat out. "You two just ruined this fucking sport!"

"Excuse me?" Warren said, "and who are you?"

"I'm Paula Rogers. My daughter is Courtney Rogers. My baby's going to be a world champion, and **you** just fucked that up! All your whining and complaining. Hey, most people in skating know the rules. If you aren't willing to play by the rules, get out!"

"The rules? I thought the rules were about great skating?" Sophia asked.

"You silly little thing. It's about whose ass you can kiss. It's about whose palm you can grease. At least it **used** to be. Until **you** two made a stink! You **got** your World Championship, what **else** do you want?"

"Fair judging," Warren said. "You think it might be more productive if Courtney was working on becoming a better skater."

"She's the best, it's her partner that's bringing her down."

"I tried to teach her a bit of our program," Warren laughed. "She couldn't keep up. She couldn't come close. Don't delude yourself—she's not that good. Sophie blows her away. That's why, in fair judging, they'll never beat us. Ryan's actually good—he's closer to my level than Courtney is to Sophie's." His pleasant look became more of a glare. "And that's what it's all about to people like you. You can't win fairly, so you want to **cheat**. Those days are over. Thank goodness." He and Sophia then turned and walked away from her.

A few minutes later, Ryan Killen came over and sat with them. "I see you've encountered the Barracuda," he said quietly.

"Yeah," Warren snorted. "How **do** you stand it?"

"It's getting harder," Ryan admitted.

"At least now I know where Courtney gets it," Sophie said.

"Yup," Ryan agreed. "Look, Courtney's a great skater, and we're a good team, at least **on** the ice. That's why I put up with it." He took a breath. "Have you guys figured out that Court and I are lovers?"

"WHAT?" Sophie said. "I thought she was all Christian and that. And how can you **sleep** with her?"

"The morality play is an act," Ryan said. "As for sleeping with her? The attraction was genuine at first. I was only 16, she was all of 13, and I thought she was beautiful and magical." He sighed. "Now? I don't really have a choice, not if I want to keep my skating partner."

"**You** need a **life**," Sophie told him. "Away from Courtney."

"I know," he sighed, "but we're stuck in Madison and I don't know anyone there."

"You know **us**," Warren smiled. "And we know people. Our social life is limited because of school and Betsy, but, you know, we'll help if we can."

"Thanks. That means a lot," Ryan smiled.

LIZ AND CRASH (Chapter 136)

Towards the end of July, Crash flew to Los Angeles. There was an orientation session at the UCLA Law school, plus, he needed to find a place to live.

The tour had just ended, so Liz was there to meet him. They'd both be going back to Boston after about a week—Liz needed to work on choreography with Warren and Sophie.

Liz drove Crash back to her apartment, where they deliriously raced each other to her bedroom. They didn't emerge until late the next morning.

The orientation, which was Monday through Wednesday went well. Hunting for an apartment was not going well. He had looked at the paper every day and had visited some places on Thursday while Liz was at practice. He checked some more listings after eating dinner at her place Thursday night—but, after a few minutes, threw the paper on the couch in frustration. "This is ridiculous," he griped. "I knew LA was going to be more expensive than Chicago, but this is insane. Everything I've seen is either **way** out of my price range, or a colossal dump."

"I know. This place costs a fortune," Liz agreed.

"You **have** a fortune, miss Olympic Gold Medallist And Idol Of Millions," he teased. She hit him with a couch pillow. "Well, you **do**. I, alas, am just a humble law student, scraping away on a shoestring."

"Oh, what a sob story," Liz giggled.

"I know, ain't it a tragedy?" he grinned. "Seriously—I have some money, and I'll get a job out here part-time at a firm, but the rents really are insane."

"Jason? You could move in here," Liz said quietly.

"What?"

"You could move in here. We could live together."

Jason looked at her for a minute. "Isn't that a little bit premature?"

"Probably," she giggled. "But we have been going out for almost a year."

"Well, off and on," he pointed out. "We haven't spent more than a week together at any one time over the whole year. We've gone months without seeing one another. It'll be a huge change."

"I know," she said. "Jason, think of it this way, though. Why are you going to law school out here, and not in Chicago or Boston or somewhere else?"

"Well, you."

"Right. So I'm kind of responsible for you being out here, right? So, if you get yourself in financial difficulty, or end up living in a dump, I'm going to feel responsible. I have plenty of room here. The bed's a queen. You're coming out here for me anyhow, right?"

"Yeah, but, still....." Crash was still unsure.

"Jason. There's not someone else, is there?"

"Of **course** not!"

"OK. Is it that you're not over Jessie?"

"Sort of. Probably not the way you mean, though." He took a breath. "Liz, I love you. I **don't** love Jessie. Well, I **do** love Jessie, part of me will **always** love Jessie, but I'm not **in** love with her. I **am** in love with you." He sighed. "What it is, is this. Part of me thinks that Jessie and I ended because we just grew apart and wanted different things. But part of me thinks that Jessie and I ended because I fucked up, and badly. And now I have you, but we haven't spent much actual time together and now you're talking about moving in. I'm afraid of fucking up. And Jessie and I never lived together." He grinned slightly. "Good thing, there probably would have been blood on the walls. But taking this big of a step, after how Jessie and I ended—well, it's terrifying."

"I understand," Liz said. "I do. But I think we can make it work. Look, I didn't end with Rich all that great, either. And it's the same thing—either he was intolerant of my lifestyle, or I was too pigheaded about my lifestyle. Maybe it **was** me, you know? But, I don't know, it's just **different** with us. Even though we haven't spent enough time together, I just feel it." She grinned, but it was half-hearted. "Besides which, I'm gone a lot."

"And you're worried about that," Crash said perceptively. Liz nodded. "I'm not Rich, Liz. The fact that you're an independent, successful woman is one of the **reasons** I fell in love with you. Besides which, you're going to have to deal with **me** sitting here with my nose in law books."

"I can handle that."

"The other thing is, are you going to be able to handle me not **being** there?" Crash asked. "Nationals, well, I can pretty much always go to that, because of when it is. And I'm sure you really don't care much about some of the lesser competitions. But, OK, take the Olympics next year. February, in the middle of my second year in law school? I might not be able to go. I'm going to try my damndest, believe me—but I might not be able to make it."

"I know," she said. "I hope you do. But I understand. We're both busy." She looked at him. "Honestly, this is one of the reasons I want to live together. Just think—when I come home from Skate America in October, you'll be **here**. I won't have to find you. I won't have to drive to some other apartment to see you. Likewise, when you have an exam or a paper or even if you're studying to death and need a back rub—I'll be here. With how busy we are, I think this is the only chance we've got to have any kind of normal relationship."

"OK. Then let's do it."

"Oh, thank goodness!" she exclaimed. "I've been working up to asking you this since the moment you got here."

"You have?" he laughed.

"Yeah. You getting frustrated looking for a place made it so much easier," she grinned. "Love you."

"Love you too."

"Shall we go celebrate?"

"Sure. You want to go out?"

"Hell, no. I want you to go try out your new bed," she giggled, "now that you **know** it's your new bed."

"Ah," he grinned and stood up off the couch. He took her hand and pulled her up to him. "That sounds like a perfectly wonderful idea." They went into the bedroom and fell on the bed, kissing and rubbing one another. "Yeah, this bed will definitely work," Crash joked.

"I hope so, you've been in it all week." Crash was reaching for her shirt and lifting it over her head. She wasn't wearing a bra. His hands went right for her boobs. She moaned as her nipples stiffened.

"I will **never** get tired of how responsive you are," Crash laughed.

"Good. I'm glad somebody won't." Crash heard something in that, so he withdrew his hands and looked at her. She sighed. "Rich didn't like it."

"EXCUSE ME?"

"He said he never knew if it was him. He said it could've been anyone, and I would've reacted the same way, and he didn't like that."

"You don't have to worry about that," Crash said with a grin. "**I know** it's not me, and I still love it."

"It **is** you. Look, I got a lot less responsive with Rich when things started to go downhill. Yeah, I get off easily—but a lot easier when I love the guy I'm with."

"I don't mind either way. You're a great boost to my confidence in any case," he grinned, and went back to her boobs with his hands. He fondled them and rubbed her nipples with his thumbs, as her breathing got more and more ragged.

When Crash got to the point where he'd usually move his hands down off her boobs and head lower, he didn't. He kept one hand on her boob, and moved his mouth onto the other one. He pressed his face into her boob and suckled on the nipple, curious as to how far he could take her just by this.

He didn't have long to wait. A few minutes of that, and she stiffened, shuddered, and squealed.

He looked up at her. "Did you.....?"

"Yeah."

"That's amazing."

"It's only happened to me once before, ever."

He grinned, and went to take off her pants. Her panties were, of course, sopping wet. He quickly lowered his face in between her legs. He ran his tongue up and down her swollen labia, and then dipped it into her opening. She clutched the sheets in her hands and hummed. "Oh, God, so good, so good," she moaned, as he ran his tongue up and down her pussy. After getting her good and worked up, he circled his tongue all around her erect clit. "UUUNNNNGGGHH!" she moaned, and quickly started rocking her hips back and forth on the bed.

He did his best to stay with her, but mostly had to content himself with keeping his tongue extended as she rocked back and forth on it. He moved with her as best he could, as her moans got louder. Then she **jerked** upwards, mashing her pussy into his face, and spasmed up and down off the bed. Crash pulled away after she came down and looked up at her.

"Mmmmm," she groaned, "that was a good 'un."

"Damn, I love watching you cum," he said.

"Good, because I love cumming," she giggled. Waving her hand at him weakly, she said, "Now. Undress." He did, laughing. "Good. Now lie down," she said, pointing next to her on the bed. "I want to try something."

"OK," Crash said, and positioned himself, figuring out what she was going to do. He was right. She crawled up on top of him, straddling him, and lowered herself down on his erection.

"I've never done it this way," she told him.

"Fine by me. I have a great view," he grinned.

She started moving up and down, looking for a rhythm. Once she found it, she steadily moved herself on him. He reached up and grabbed her hips, to assist her. Liz wasn't a big girl, so Crash's assistance was almost lifting her right off him. Their pace picked up, Liz squeaking out an "EEEE! EEEP! EEEP!" every time she hit bottom, as their bodies thwacked together. She quickly climaxed twice, before he thrust deep inside her and came himself.

Afterwards, they were cuddling together, and Liz said, "Just think, honey. When you move in, you can do that all the time."

"Well, considering we've done it at least once every night I've been here this week, I predict that you are **going** to wear me out."

"But what a way to go, eh?" she laughed.

"Too true," he agreed. "So, tell me—have you told your parents that you were going to ask me to move in?"

"I told my dad. He's cool with it. But now he's got to find a way to break the news to Mom. She's a wee bit traditional for this. They both like **you**, though, that helps." She grinned at him. "And **your** Mom is going to **freak!**"

"No doubt," he agreed with a laugh. "But, you know what? I expect it. She didn't like Jessie, you know, and I thought that was just a conflict. I've figured out differently. She's already upset that I'm going to school out here. 'You picked UCLA because of that **girl**, didn't you?' she said. Anyone I go out with, she's not going to like. I just refuse to worry about it."

"She's damaged you some."

"Well, let's not get carried away, I was never abused or neglected. She's a great Mom, she's just way overprotective. And accommodating—I grew up indulged, because of her. That **has** cost me. Because it's made me selfish, and it's made me over-reliant on her approval."

"You know, I've learned a valuable lesson from your best friend and his wife. Follow your heart, no matter who else it pisses off."

"Good point," Crash laughed.

"They're not scared of anything."

"And Warren **used** to be scared of his own shadow. Anyhow, you're right. And my heart tells me I should be right here."

"Good!"

"That's a big step," Warren said to Liz.

"We know." Liz was at Warren's parents' house, there to work with the duo on her choreography. It was a Sunday, and they'd start work the next day, but today they were just hanging out. "It's the solution to a lot of problems, though. Jay was going to have a problem finding a place to live, and it gives us more time together to see where we're at with each other. We're both going to be so busy, that'd be a problem if we were living in different places."

"I get you. But, trust me, there's a lot of adjustments. And the key to living together is compromise. And, sorry Liz, I know he's my best friend—but compromising isn't Crash's strong suit."

"Neither is it Sophie's," Liz giggled.

"True. But then you have to understand what kind of relationship you're going to have." She just looked at him. "Liz, I am the most pussywhipped human on the face of the planet." Liz just looked at him, then **cracked** up. "It's true. So, look, compromise isn't that important if you're the one in control—and Sophie's the one in control. However, what she's learned, through painful trial and error, is that I have limits. I cede control a lot of the time, but I have limits. There are times when I **am** capable of putting my foot down. It used to take Sophie by surprise, because it happens so seldomly. What she's come to recognize is that I only do it when it's important."

"OK."

"The other thing is that **I** have come to recognize **my** problems with this, and Sophie's come to recognize them, too. I won't take control back, even when I feel I should, until it gets to the point that I'm bitter and resentful. So, Sophie gives it up, voluntarily, every so often, just to be on an even keel." He grinned.

"Sometimes it's more symbolic, like the whole bondage thing....."

"Excuse me?" Liz laughed.

"Oh, you didn't know that? Every so often, Sophie likes to be tied up in bed. And call me Master while she's at it."

"I would've put **any** amount of money down it'd be the other way around," Liz laughed.

"Nope. That's one way of her giving me control. But, yeah, it's **still** all about compromise. I compromise far more easily than Sophie does, so I **do** it more often. She's come to realize that she **can't** take advantage of that and walk all over me."

"I see."

"Honestly, Liz? That breakup freshman year? In hindsight, it was the best thing that ever happened to us. It made her more willing to compromise and it made me more assertive. You think of all the things that happened after that—the rape, Betsy—I don't think we ever would've survived them if the breakup hadn't happened."

"Wow. Well, I have to tell you, Warren, I hope Crash and I can make it **without** having to go through a breakup!"

"You will," Warren smiled. "You've already gone through your trials and tribulations, think of it that way. Long distance romances suck. And he was completely true to you, I know that for a fact."

"I know he was," she smiled, "even though I told him it wasn't necessary."

"Y'see? You two know how to compromise already," Warren grinned.

A VISIT HOME (Chapter 137)

Warren and Sophie returned to Oceanview for pretty much all of the month of August. Jessie came for part of the time, but was back in Wisconsin earlier than the other two. They worried about her being alone, but she didn't mind. "Believe me, I can't wait for you two to come back, but the peace and quiet is actually nice. Since I've never lived alone, it's a nice change, at least temporarily."

The reason Warren and Sophie came home—besides visiting—was choreography. It was easier for them to secure all the ice time they needed in Oceanview than it was in Madison. Plus, their clients were used to coming to Boston, and they were all invited to stay with Warren's parents. "I love it, actually," Peg told Warren. "That's why we don't mind doing it. It's fun, I get to meet all these skaters. And they're so nice, the

ones you work with. I don't think I have to tell you how fond I am of Liz Cushman. And that I love Tom to pieces goes without saying."

"Yeah, you love my skating clients staying here, but I'll bet Kristin loves it even more after last year," Warren joked.

"No doubt," Peg laughed. "I know you've seen some of it, but you haven't been around full time. Warren, he has been **so** good for her."

"Yeah, I know. Tom's a great guy, just what Kristin needed."

"I'm beginning to think that they are you and Sophie all over again."

"I'd figured that out, yes. So how's Ryan?"

"Ryan is just fine," Warren heard from behind him. Ryan was walking in the door. "How's it going, big brother?" They hugged.

"Not too bad, little brother." Warren smirked at Peg. "Listen to me. **Little** brother. He's four inches taller than I am!"

"That's why I'm the basketball player and you're the ice dancer," Ryan teased. "Where's my sister in law and my niece?"

"Over Sophie's. She sent me along ahead so I could catch up. We'll all be here for supper tonight. How's Georgia Tech?"

"Great," Ryan said.

"Saw you play a little on TV."

"Well, that's all I played this past year is a little," Ryan grinned. "Next year will be different, though—our point guard last year was a senior, so the starting job's up for grabs, and I mean to grab it."

"Great! How's the school part?"

"Hard, but fun. I've decided on electrical engineering as a major."

"That's excellent. And how's Laurel?"

"Great!" Ryan said with real enthusiasm. "Things are going wonderfully. I worried, you know—our relationship really wasn't much until we got to school, because of the distance between us here. We knew we liked one another, but going to school and having each other close by was kind of a test, you know?" Warren nodded. "It's wonderful. Actually, it's perfect. We compliment each other very well. I was never a slacker, but I'm better at studying now. She was never an asocial nerd, but she loosens up better now. She's even turned into a **fanatical** basketball fan."

"That's hilarious."

"You should see if she can drive out here for dinner," Peg asked. "We'll make it a big bash."

"Let me call her," Ryan said.

The dining room table at the Kellehers' was mighty crowded that evening. Peg and Jim, of course, were there, as were Warren, Sophie, and Betsy. Laurel was able to drive over and join them, as was Tom.

"Betsy's not bad at feeding herself," Kristin commented. "A little messy, but not bad."

"Love tatoes!" Betsy proclaimed.

"She does love potatoes," Sophie grinned. "She's doing a number on the ham, too."

"So," Tom asked, "have you guys thought of any music for me yet?"

"Yeah," Warren grinned, "I've narrowed it down to Malaguena or Carmen." In other words, the two most overused pieces of music in skating history.

"Oh, **thanks**," Tom grinned. "I thought you were **creative**."

"I'm fascinated," Laurel asked. "How do you pick music?"

"Mostly intuition, especially for us," Warren said. "For other skaters, it's a combination of intuition, plus knowing someone else's skating."

"He's absolutely brilliant at music," Tom told her. "They're both fantastic choreographers, but I think that has something to do with just **knowing** what music to use. The music choices have stretched me—and I mean that in a good way. The music's made me a better skater."

"When he goes to med school—and, especially after, when he's a resident—I'm going to have to do most of the day-to-day nitty-gritty choreography," Sophia said, "but I told him he still has to find time to pick the music."

"And I will," Warren said. "But, as I was saying, you have to know the skaters some. Here's three examples. Tom, here, is good and getting better. We can stretch with him, but there are some limits. On one extreme from that, we can throw **anything** at Liz Cushman and she can handle it. On the other extreme—we're going to have to be very careful with Allison Bowman. She's never had a **real** program before—her coach has been doing her choreography, and he **sucks**."

"Sounds like **me** before you got your hands on me," Tom laughed.

"No, it was never that bad for you. Terri's not nearly as hopeless as Ron Aztov. She's a good coach, he is **not**. Plus, she had no problem with you working with us and integrated our choreography into your training. Ron's going to give Allison loads of shit about this," Warren predicted.

"No doubt," Tom agreed.

After dinner, the "kids" were all hanging around, just chatting. At one point, Ryan was in the bathroom and Tom and Kristin had taken Betsy for a walk, leaving Laurel alone with Warren and Sophie.

"You guys have been going out since you were very young, right?" Laurel asked them.

"Yeah, we were 14," Sophie told her.

"And Ryan was how old then?"

"Eleven," Warren said.

"So, he spent his whole adolescence with you two together," Laurel said. "OK, **now** I understand."

"Understand what?" Warren asked.

"How that big basketball-playing galoot boyfriend of mine somehow turned out to be a complete hopeless romantic," Laurel smiled. "He was watching Big Brother."

"Yes, he was," Sophie laughed. "See, dear, you've set a good example."

"He sure did. He **dotes** on you," Laurel said.

"He's well-trained."

"Ah, jeez," Warren groaned.

Liz's choreography went like a dream. She decided to skate her long program to Peter Gabriel's "Passion." It had been used before, but it was right up Liz's alley. She did an exhibition with them, too. Wanting something a bit dramatic and punchy but still poppy, Warren found for her Chantal Kreviazuk's "In This Life." She loved it, and the exhibition was quickly done.

Tom was also not any trouble. He'd decided on Bach for his long program—a stretch, but a **good** one, and he and Warren and Sophia were all pleased with the program. The exhibition was David Lee Roth's "Just A Gigolo." Warren and Sophie almost kept that one for themselves, but decided it was better for Tom—and Tom was having a **blast** with it.

Allison Bowman was a completely different story.

The first problem was that apparently Ron Aztov, her coach, had been treating her as an unthinking, unfeeling robot. She had no say in her music, choreography, or movements, at **all**. Every finger movement was dictated by Ron. Because of that, she had **no** confidence in her ability to feel anything on the ice.

Warren decided to try an experiment—he decided to choreograph her exhibition **first**, to get her used to moving to music and trying to feel it before they tried adding the complicated technical requirements of her competitive program. The music Warren had picked for her exhibition was Stevie Nicks's "Has Anyone Ever Written Anything For You?", a gorgeous piano ballad.

It was slow going. Allison started out wanting Warren and Sophia to dictate **every** movement to her. Finally, Warren said, "Allison. Just skate. Listen to the music and just skate. We'll worry about choreography later. Just skate to the music."

She did, growing with confidence on every pass. It wasn't a **program**, yet, but it was a young skater grasping for her artistic 'voice'. She had musicality, Warren and Sophia had seen that from the start, but she'd never been allowed to draw on it. Warren was **making** her draw on it. It was working. On the second day, in the afternoon, Warren and Sophie moved in, and turned her innate movements into a program.

When that was done, they moved on to her competitive long program. Endeavoring to keep it simple, they had chosen Swan Lake for her music. She understood better, after having done the exhibition, and they were able to develop a program remarkably quickly. It didn't lose any of her technical acumen, but it was **much** more complete artistically than anything she'd ever done.

Her mother flew out to fetch her on the last day. After she saw the programs, she turned to Warren and Sophia and said, "I don't know much about skating. But even I can see the difference. Thank you. And I'm so glad her exhibition is passionate and beautiful instead of suggestive." She gave Warren and Sophia a wry grin. "Then again, you two did passionate and beautiful when you were **naked**, so why should I be surprised?" They both chuckled at that. "How do you feel, Allison?" she asked her daughter.

"Great! This really was an education. I feel like I've learned more about artistry in a week than I have in my entire career."

"Good," Sophie said. "Now. If you need **any** help, you get a hold of us. If you want us to watch something at Skate America or something, we will. And **don't** take any shit from Ron Aztov!"

"I won't!" she promised.

After all that, it was time to work on their **own** programs.

They had made a decision. After what happened at Worlds—even with the apparent changes in the ISU—they decided to pick their programs based on themselves first, the audience second, and the judges not at all. They'd done that all along to some degree, but they **really** did it this year.

First were the original dances. The first one was a shuffle. They picked Ringo Starr's version of "You're Sixteen" for that. It was a happy, cute, lighthearted program.

The second OD was a rhumba. Rhumbas are supposed to be pretty steamy. Sophie and Warren went for steamy, all right, choosing to skate to Sade's "Smooth Operator." They tweaked that program quite a bit, looking for a good balance between technical content and the inherent artistic sensuality of it.

The free dance? That was another story entirely.

Sophie and Warren had skirted around it before, but never crossed the unspoken line. Big Band was fine, Sinatra was fine, modern classical of the Copland variety was fine. Riverdance worked. Romeo and Juliet straddled the line, but that was a ballad.

But skating to full-out rock and roll was **not** done in ice dance. The theory was that the, as Sophie called them, "old fuddy-duddy judges" wouldn't go for it. Warren and Sophia decided not to care. Mindful of where this year's World Championships were to be held—East Rutherford, NJ, at the Meadowlands—they went right for the jugular, and with a regional twist.

Their free dance would be all Bruce Springsteen. And not any of his ballads, either. Two rockers, albeit with different beats: "Ramrod" and "Give The Girl A Kiss." They took the sax solo of Ramrod and choreographed an absolutely **stunning** serpentine step sequence to it. The side-by-side steps were later, to Give The Girl A Kiss. The program as a whole just never stopped moving. They were thrilled with it.

"Well, if you want to rock out, you've accomplished that," June, their coach, laughed.

"It's just time to rock out, we think," Sophia told her. "Hey, if we win, we win. If we don't, we don't. But we'll have the crowd on our sides!"

BACK IN WISCONSIN (Chapter 138)

Sophie and Warren returned to their apartment towards the end of August. Jess was **very** happy to see them. It was a little strange for them, though. Jess was working, as was Caitlin. Papa Bear was in med school. Alexa and Mike were gone, as were some of their other friends. Taking a year off because of Betsy had put them behind. It wasn't that bad, but they felt a little off-kilter.

"Don't look a gift horse in the mouth," Jessie told them. "School's better than work."

"I thought you liked your job," Sophie said.

"I **do**, but I went from 15 to 18 hours of school a week to 40 hours of work."

"But you don't have to study," Warren laughed.

Warren and Sophie got back into the swing of things very quickly. Their classes were fine. They had to study—and Warren had also bought a review book for the MCAT and was studying that, too—but it wasn't too onerous. Jessie being around helped—she helped with some of the household chores, and with Betsy. She was working first shift, 7 to 3, so they still had Betsy in day care when they needed to for class, but Jess helped them out at other times.

One thing she'd do is go to their weekend practices with them. She'd bring a book, and keep one eye on her reading material and the other on Betsy. Betsy was good, for a two-year-old, so this was pretty easy for Jess. The folks around the rink got to know her. "Hey, Jessie," someone called to her one Saturday. It was Ryan Killen.

"Hey, Ryan, what's up?"

"Just came here to steal some of their moves," Ryan laughed, loud enough for Sophie and Warren to hear him.

"That won't work," Warren yelled back. "You might be able to steal mine, but Courtney can't **do** Sophie's, so you're out of luck."

"Too true," Ryan smiled, then sat down next to Jess. "What you doing?"

"Just reading. Watching Betsy for them." She pointed to the floor, where Betsy was happily busying herself with some toys.

"So, you're living with them now?" Jess nodded. "I don't mean this the wrong way, but don't you get in the way? I mean, they are still kind of newlyweds."

Jess cracked up laughing. “No, I don’t get in the way.” She looked at Ryan. “Look, you told me your big secret, so here’s mine. If your partner every finds out about this, I’ll kill you.” Ryan nodded. “Well, I don’t just share their apartment. I share their bed.”

Ryan’s eyes bugged **right** out of his head. “Both of them?” he squeaked.

“Yeah. I have my own bed, in Betsy’s room, but I don’t spend much time there—and that’s at **their** insistence.”

“But...I mean....” Ryan sputtered.

“Just for now, you understand,” Jessie told him. “I love both of them, and they love me, and there’s no man in my life, and I like sex,” she laughed. Ryan’s eyes bugged out again. “But they don’t mind sharing for a while.”

“Unbelievable,” Ryan grinned. “Are you bisexual?”

“Not really, just with Sophie,” she told him. “I like it with **her**, but I’m not attracted to other girls at all.”

“Ah. How did this all come about?”

“I was coming off of a bad breakup. With Warren’s best friend, actually—Jason, he goes out with Liz Cushman now. We’re friends now, but the breakup was messy—we’d gone out for **years**.” She told him the rest of the story.

“Ah,” Ryan said. “Well I can’t comment on anyone else’s sex life, considering what **I** sleep with.”

“Still?”

“Not often, but Courtney corners me every so often.”

“Well, my sex life is strange, but at least I **enjoy** it,” Jess laughed.

“Hey, sex is sex,” Ryan said. “What I miss more is, you know, emotional involvement.”

“Yeah,” Jessie agreed. “I have that, but it’s not the same.”

“Anything’s good,” Ryan asserted.

“True. They’re the best, I know that—but I also know that they belong with each **other** in the long term. They love me, and I love them, but their connection with each **other** is so strong it boggles my mind. I mean, shit—just watch them skate.”

“Believe me, I have,” Ryan laughed. “Hey,” he shouted to them. “I still haven’t seen your free dance.”

“OK,” Warren yelled back. “Since it’s all fast and rocking, I know Courtney would never be able to keep up,” he laughed. Ryan laughed back. Jess adjusted the tape player for them, and they ran through the Springsteen.

“Wow,” Ryan said when they were done. “That sucker never stops moving, does it?”

“Nope,” Sophia agreed.

“And Springsteen. Wow. I wish **we** had the guts to skate to music like that!”

One Thursday afternoon, Sophie had a meeting with a professor. Jessie had just gotten home from work. Warren was there with Betsy. They were chatting, and Jessie said, “War, I’ve been meaning to ask you something.”

“Shoot.”

“You know how you told me to make myself at home, to use you guys’ dresser for my stuff and all.”

Warren nodded. “Well, I was going through the dresser making room for myself when you guys weren’t here.” She grinned at him. “So what’s with the handcuffs and restraints and blindfolds?”

“Oh, **that**. Sophie likes bondage, every once in a while.”

“Really! I never knew that!”

Warren looked at her, bemused. “Jess, is that a glimmer I see in your eye?”

“Yup. I want us to tie Sophie up. I have some ideas.”

“We don’t do pain,” Warren cautioned.

“Neither do I,” Jess agreed.

“What do you have in mind?” Jessie told him. A grin spread across his face. “Ooooh, I **like** it!”

The next night was a Friday. The threesome ate, chatted a bit, then put Betsy to bed. When she was in her room and asleep, Jess pulled Sophie off the couch and led her into the bedroom, Warren following behind. When they got to the bedroom, Jess started taking Sophie’s clothes off.

“Oooh, Jessie’s horny,” Sophie giggled.

“Yes, but not the way you think. I have **plans** for you.”

“Plans?”

“You’ll love it,” Warren interjected. Sophie looked at him. “Yes, I’m in on it,” he grinned.

Jessie had gotten all of Sophie's clothes off by then, and led her to the bed. "Lie down," Jessie commanded. Sophie did so, and Jessie reached under the bed and withdrew the restraints. He pulled Sophie's wrist up to the headboard.

"**You** are going to tie me up?" Sophie said.

"Oh, I'm going to do more than tie you up," Jess grinned.

"OOOOOOO!"

"That's right." Jess got the other hand tied, then grabbed the blindfold. "I can't tie your ankles yet, I have to do something first," Jess said while stripping her own clothes off. Warren was doing the same. Once Jess was nude, she went to fetch a bag she had hidden earlier. She withdrew a few things out of the bag.

"Now, Sophie, this is **very** important," Jessie said. "If you don't do what I say, it could be painful for you. I need you to spread your legs as wide as they will go, and you can **not** move. Not an **inch**. I'll hurt you if you do. Got me?"

"Uh, yeah, but..."

"No buts." When Sophie got her legs spread, Jessie withdrew a can from the bag. She squirted the can right between Sophie's legs.

"What is **that**?" Sophie gasped.

"Shaving gel," Jess grinned.

"You're going to shave me down THERE?!?!?"

"A necessary preparation for the festivities to come. Plus, I think it'll be sexy. Don't move," Jess said. Sophie did her best not to even **flinch**, as she felt Jess work the razor around her sensitive areas.

"Oh, I was right, this **is** gonna be sexy," Jess enthused.

"Just don't cut me!" Sophie blurted nervously.

"Never." Sophie tensed as Jess moved the razor perilously close to her labia, but Jess handled it just fine.

"Warren? A wet washcloth, please," Jessie said. Warren went to fetch one, and Jessie used it to wipe up the remaining shaving gel.

"You're gonna soak the bed," Sophie laughed.

"We have one of those pads underneath the sheet," Warren told her. "We'll have to change the sheet, but the mattress will be fine."

"And we're going to need that pad, because we're not done," Jessie said. "Now, voila!" she said, waving at Sophie's completely bare pussy. "I was right. That is **so** sexy." She giggled. "Soph, you look fourteen again."

"No, actually, she had more hair than that at fourteen," Warren laughed.

"Shit, I think I had more hair than that at **eleven**," Sophie said. "I've always kept it trimmed, but I've never **shaved** it."

"It really is sexy," Warren told her.

"And, Warren, I think she liked it," Jessie smirked. "Look at that erect little clittie. Anyhow, time to tie up her ankles." Warren helped Jessie do just that.

Sophie relaxed her legs so that they could tie her ankles to the bed. When done, she was helpless, completely bound, and still blindfolded. She waited expectantly as she heard Jessie and Warren rustling through the bag and whispering to one another. One of them left—she found out it was Warren when Jess said, "Hold on, Warren's getting something ready." Jess was lightly stroking Sophie's nipples, which just increased her already-building slow boil.

Then Sophie heard Warren come back in the bedroom—and then she felt something. Something warm, wet, and sticky was being drizzled on her breasts. She gasped, and her nipples went **completely** erect. She felt the substance being dripped all over her breasts, down her stomach, and even a bit on her thighs. Some of it oozed down between her legs. It felt **so** nice and warm.

"That's the hot fudge," Warren chuckled. "Got the whipped cream, Jess?"

"Yup." Sophie heard the squirting of the can, and the warm wet stuff on her boobs was joined by a cold blast of fluffiness. The contrast made her yelp. That, too, was spread down her stomach and onto her thighs.

"Here's a couple of cherries for her boobs," Warren said. "Should we put some in her pussy?"

Sophie laughed. "That pussy hasn't seen a cherry in a long time."

"Good point," Warren laughed.

"Besides, I got something else for that," Jess said. Sophie heard the bag rustle again.

"Ooh, **good** idea," Warren said, "but won't it be too mushy?"

"Nah, look, it's still a little green. Ripe enough to eat, but not too ripe to be mushy."

Oh, God, Sophie thought, knowing just what it was. A **banana**? Then she felt it, as Jess pushed it halfway into her. "Oh GOD!" Sophie moaned. It felt so weird, but **so** great!

“Got the camera?” Jessie asked. Warren grinned, and produced his digital camera.

“CAMERA?” Sophie hissed.

“But of course. We’re sending the pictures into Human Gourmet magazine,” Jessie laughed. “Nah, Soph, we just want to be able to show you what you looked like. Trust me, it’s great. All set, Warren?”

“Yup.”

“Good. Now for the fun.” Jess and Warren each got on the bed, one on each side of Sophie, and started working on the stuff on her boobs. They circled their tongues through the whipped cream and the hot fudge, licking it off of her boobs. Sophie was going **crazy**. Warren and Jessie got through the whipped cream on top, and had hit the fudge on the bottom, and were swirling their tongues around Sophie’s nipples to get all the fudge. Sophie had been worked up enough, what with all that gooey mess on her boobs and the banana in her pussy, but their tongues were **really** working her over. She unconsciously strained at her bonds and moaned deeply as their tongues roamed over her.

Her breasts heaved as Jess and Warren hit bare skin. They sucked on her nipples for a while, then started moving down her stomach. They cleaned up the fudge and whipped cream from her stomach, then moved down to her thighs. She squirmed and whinnied.

“Oh, this feels so **great**!” Sophie blurted, as Warren and Jessie moved up her thighs, licking all the gooeiness off. When it was all gone, Jess moved up, kissing up Sophie’s stomach on the way to her boobs. Warren went for the banana.

He started nibbling on the end that was protruding from Sophie’s pussy. She felt it quiver inside her as he took little bites up its length. She gasped as Warren moved upwards on it. His nose ticked her clit. He got to the end of the part that was protruding, leaving a little bit as a fingerhold. Then he slowly started pulling the rest out of her pussy, eating it bit by bit as it came out.

“Nnnnnnnngggggg!” Sophie moaned. She could feel the banana slowly sliding out of her, and, with her pussy shaved, it felt like Warren’s face was **everywhere**. And Jessie was still working over her tits. Then, the banana was gone, and Warren’s face **was** everywhere. Sophie’d never had her pussy eaten when she was shaved. It just made everything more **intense**. His face burrowed into her shaved mons as his tongue worked up and down her pussy. When he latched his lips on her clit, his chin burrowed into the flesh all around her labia. The sensation of skin-on-skin was incredible. Sophie came in a hurry.

As she was coming down, she heard Jessie say, “Hey, Warren. Come here.” He got out from between her legs, and Sophie could hear the rustling of the sheets. She heard Jess giggle and Warren gasp, then Jessie touched Sophie’s lips and said, “Hey, Soph. Open wide!”

Sophie did, smiling, anticipating Warren’s cock sliding into her mouth. Which it did. What she **didn’t** anticipate was the added extra. Jessie had covered Warren’s cock with the hot fudge! Sophie, delighted, took it into her mouth and devoured it. Meanwhile, Jessie had slipped down and taken Warren’s place between Sophie’s legs. Sophia hummed happily as she sucked all the hot fudge from Warren’s dick, as Jessie nibbled on her clit. She ran her lips up and down Warren’s cock, licking off all the fudge and getting Warren right close to the boiling point while she was at it. Of course, **Sophie** was getting pretty close to the boiling point herself, with Jessie’s tongue working away at her bare pussy. They went almost simultaneously.

“Oh, God,” Sophie groaned. “Jess, get him back up for me, I need to be fucked!”

“Sorry, dear. You’ve had two cums already. I haven’t had a one. He’s going to eat me out first.” Sophie groaned.

“I’ve got something to keep her busy,” Warren said. He went into their goody drawer and got the timed vibrator. He set it, then slid it into Sophie. “It goes on for a minute then off for two. It drives her nuts,” Warren told Jessie with a grin.

“Nnnnnnnngggggggg!!” Sophie groaned as it flicked on. “NO!” she blurted as it flicked off. “Nnnnnnnnnngggggggg!” as it switched on again.

“Oooh, I **like** that thing!” Jessie laughed.

“You would, you sadist,” Sophie panted. “NNNNNNGGGGGGG!!!”

Jessie was still laughing. “Come on, Warren. Do your thing.”

Warren chuckled, and crawled between Jessie’s legs. “Jess, I should shave **you**.”

“I dunno,” Jessie said.

“Do it,” Sophie advised. “It’s....nnnnnnngggggggg!....incredible.”

“Maybe. But not **now**,” Jessie laughed. Warren just grinned at her and went to town with his tongue.

Sophie was going nuts, what with that infernal vibrator switching on and off—plus the euphoric noises that Jessie was making next to her. Finally, after far too long, Sophie felt the vibrator being withdrawn, and rapidly replace by Warren’s dick. All it took was that first long stroke and a little bump-and-grind by

Warren and Sophie exploded. Warren wasn't anywhere near done, and managed to bring Sophie to climax once more before he came into her.

Afterwards, they were all completely spent. It took Warren and Jessie a couple minutes to get the energy to get Sophie out of her bonds. When they did, she reached over and hugged them both. "Thanks, guys. That was **so** much fun! We have to do this again."

"Good thing I bought the extra-large jar of hot fudge," Jessie smirked.

MORE DISCOVERIES (Chapter 139)

Liz Cushman arrived back from the rink after another day at practice. She walked into her apartment and stumbled into the kitchen. There she found Crash hunched over a pan.

"Hi, honey," she said, walking up and kissing him. "Wait a minute, **you're** cooking?"

"Yup," he grinned. "I can, you know."

"Wonders never cease," she grinned back. "Whatcha making?"

"Galumpki."

"Scuse me?"

"Galumpki. Polish dish—stuffed cabbage. You'll love it."

"I'll take your word for it," she grinned.

"Trust me. Anyhow, you've been doing a lot around here, I know. You were letting me get used to the law school workload and I appreciate it—but you need a break."

"You're so sweet," she grinned. She watched him spoon a meat mixture into steamed cabbage leaves and roll them up. "Can I help?"

"No. Sit," he pointed to the table. "I told you, you get a break tonight." She giggled and sat at the kitchen table. "You can sit there, watch me play with cabbage, and tell me how your day went."

"Fine," she grinned. "Hard. Sophie and Warren are dead, I've decided."

"Why?" Crash laughed.

"The program they set for me is a ballbuster," she giggled. "It's **so** hard, when you incorporate the technical elements into it, too. I get done with it and I feel like I've spent a day with the Thighmaster."

"Well, they're ice dancers, they forget about all them pesky jumps."

"Yeah," she laughed. Crash had finished his preparations, and popped the pan of galumpki into the oven. He rinsed off his hands, and sat down at the table with her.

"How were classes today?" she asked.

"Fine. It's getting—well, not **easier**, but I'm getting more used to the routine."

"That's good. How long those things take?" Liz asked, pointing towards the stove.

"Half hour."

"Good." She stood up. "C'mere," she said, and led Crash into the living room. She pointed to the couch, he sat, and she sat next to him, curling up into him. "I need a cuddle."

"Your wish is my command," he grinned. They sat there, just cuddling and kissing for a while.

Then, Liz said, "Jay?"

"Hmmm?"

"You know, when I talked to you about moving in here, the reasons I gave you were all valid. But, I'll admit it—I was worried. I knew we were kind of jumping into this. But I have to say—so far, it's working like a dream. I know it's only a little over a month, but I'm so glad you're here."

"I feel the same way. There are days I have to pinch myself," he grinned. Liz giggled at that. "Jeez, you've even somehow made me all domestic."

"Oh, when I walked in today and saw you cooking, I got a hell of a case of the warm-and-fuzzies," Liz grinned.

"That's my Lizzie, queen of the warm-and-fuzzies."

"That's my Jay-Jay, keeping me that way," she grinned. "My **God**, listen to us--we're worse than War and Soph."

"Nope. Not possible. Can't be done," Crash deadpanned. They looked at each other and burst out laughing.

"Hey, Snugglebear, guess who I got an email from today?" Sophie asked.

"Paul McCartney," Warren teased.

"No, you goof. Siobhan, my cousin."

"Oh, cool. How's she doing. All settled in at school?"

"Yup," Sophie told him. "She seems to love it. I'm glad, she's so young."

"Not any younger than **I** was when I first went to college. OK, a couple months younger, but I was still only 17 when we came here."

"I know. All you damn prodigies," Sophie grinned. "She didn't start school a year early like you did, though, you know. She skipped third grade. Anyhow, she's doing very well, and she loves Stanford."

"Good for her."

"Yup. She got a sophomore as a roommate, and she says that's turned out really well, because her roommate's introduced her around. Oh, and guess who her roommate is. Sheila Mitchell."

"The swimmer? Won all those gold medals this summer?"

"The same. Siobhan jokes that she can't stand it, she's surrounded by Olympians."

"She'll get over it!"

"You want me to **what**?" Kristin asked.

"I want you to play. In the talent show. I think you should," Tom told her.

Wilkins Academy had a talent show every autumn. This year, it would be the first Saturday in October. Peg, Kristin's mother, had mentioned it because she was helping out with it this year. Tom and Kristin were there, just hanging out, and Tom thought it sounded great.

"I can't play in the talent show!" Kristin insisted.

"Sure you can."

"Easy for **you** to say. You're used to performing in front of people."

"I didn't used to be, though," Tom informed her. "The first couple of times I did it, I was terrified. I used a few techniques."

"What, imagine the audience in their underwear?" Kris laughed.

"No, that one **doesn't** work. You end up laughing too hard and fall down in the middle of the triple lutz. Or, in your case, an arpeggio. No, the best thing is that you know where someone you love is sitting. I used my parents when I first started skating. I'd come out on the ice and look **right** at **them** until the moment I started skating. I'd pretend they were the only people in the world. When the actual skating starts, it's easier anyway."

"OK, so if I did it, would you be there?" Kris asked.

"Of course. Are you kidding? Wouldn't miss it."

"Well, let me ask you this then: **why** do you want me to do it?"

"You'll only understand that **after** you do it."

She looked at him, took a deep breath, and then said, "OK. Fine. I'll do it. I must be **insane**."

"Nice ass!" Jessie yelled.

"Well, thank you very much," Ryan Killen grinned, as he came up and sat beside her.

"RYAN!" she laughed. "Actually, I was talking about Sophie." She pointed at the ice surface. "That practice dress is too small."

"It's a pre-pregnancy one," Sophie giggled, having heard them. "It still fits **well** enough, but there's a stubborn seven pounds I got while pregnant that I've never been able to get rid of."

"Yeah, and all in the **ass**!" Jessie joked again.

"Can we skate now?" Warren mock-pouted. Everyone laughed, and Warren and Sophia started practicing.

"How you been?" Jess asked Ryan.

"Well enough. Our practices have sucked, because Courtney's really got a hair across her ass, but that'll pass. Eventually."

"Yeah, when she's **dead**," Jessie snorted.

Ryan laughed, then got serious. "Listen, Jess, I was wondering....um, do you have any plans for this Friday?"

Jess froze. "No," she managed to get out.

"Well, I was wondering," Ryan said again, "well, if you would like to go out with me. Maybe dinner and a movie?"

"You're asking me out?" Jess hissed, shocked.

"Yeah."

"Even though you know about my, well, lifestyle?" she said, waving at Warren and Sophie out on the ice.

"I asked you on a date, not to marry me. What you do on your own time is your own business." He grinned at her. "At least for now." Then he sobered up again. "But I get the feeling that your lifestyle, as you call it, isn't enough for you. Not anymore."

"No. No it's not. As much as I love them, you're right, it's not."

"Jess. I like you. A lot."

Jessie grinned. "I like you a lot, too, Ryan. What about Courtney?"

"What I do off the ice is no longer any of **her** business."

"Good. Yes. I'd love to go out with you Friday."

"Great!"

It was a Saturday. Tom Bellamy was sitting in his apartment, watching TV, Kristin curled up on the couch with him. He had been getting extra practice in, because Skate America was only a few weeks away, so Kristin drove out to Acton this weekend. While they were sitting there, just cuddling, the phone rang.

Tom picked it up. "Hello? Oh, hi Warren! Yeah.....really? Oh, that sucks. Yeah.....I think so but I'll call her. Let me get back to you."

"My brother? What was that about?" Kristin asked after he hung up.

"I'll tell you in a couple minutes. I need to make a few calls." Kristin watched, bemused, as Tom called a couple people. When he was done, he turned to her.

"You met Allison Bowman," Tom said. Kristin nodded. "Evidently she called Warren in tears today. Her coach, Ron Aztoy, has completely gone off the deep end. Yelling, screaming, demanding she scrap the programs Warren and Soph choreographed for her, the whole bit. She called Warren for advice."

"Damn. I liked Allison. She's sweet. What is she going to do?"

"She's leaving Ron. In fact, one of my calls was to Terri, my coach. Terri's going to take her on."

"That's great! Terri's a good coach, and she'll have you to look out for her," Kristin grinned.

"Now we just need to find her a place to live."

"You have an extra bedroom, Tom, you're not using it for anything," Kristin pointed out.

Tom looked at her in shock. "You wouldn't **mind**?"

"Of course not. I trust you."

Tom thought, not for the first time, how damn lucky he was. "You are something else, you know that?"

"Yup," Kristin grinned. "Go. Call Allison. Tell her her problems are solved." Tom grinned back and picked up the phone.

The next Friday, Allison arrived. Tom and Terri cancelled practice to help her move in. Kristin took off after school and drove to Acton to join them for the end of it.

When they were done, Tom, Kristin, and Allison were sitting on the sofa, relaxing.

"I can't thank you enough," Allison said, "for everything. Ron was getting completely out of hand. I like Terri already."

"Terri's great," Tom agreed.

"And thank you for letting me move in here," Allison smiled.

"Just so you know the ground rules," Kristin grinned. "He's taken."

"I knew that," Allison grinned back.

"Oh, and you'll have to put up with smooching," Tom pointed out.

"And you can just ignore those noises you might hear coming from his room," Kristin leered. "Like, tonight, if I have my way."

"Don't you **always** have your way?" Tom laughed.

"You're easy," Kristin teased.

"You two are a hoot," Allison laughed. "Don't worry, I think you guys are great together, and I know all about strange noises. I'm not nearly as innocent as I look."

"Good," Tom laughed.

"In fact, I'm close enough that my boyfriend might be able to visit. If I still have a boyfriend, that is," Allison said.

"There's a story in there," Tom said.

"Yeah. We've known each other since we were six. We've been best friends our whole life. When we were all of twelve, somehow we started kissing. Which turned into other things. And we went from best friends to boyfriend and girlfriend, just like that. However, he's from my home town—and I haven't lived there in over two years. I left to train with Ron two summers ago. I only go home for a few weeks at a time. We go right back into it whenever I'm home, but it's tough. I keep waiting for the email that says that he got tired of waiting and found someone else."

"That's rough," Kristin commiserated.

"Yes, it is. But it might just have gotten better. I picked Terri because she'll be a good coach, but I must say the location is much more desirable than California."

"Where are you from?" Tom asked.

"A small town just outside of Albany, New York."

"That's only a couple hours away!" Kristin said.

"Yup. And when I told Eddie about it, he was **thrilled**. So you might be hearing some noises from **my** room in a weekend or two," Allison grinned.

"Good!" Kristin laughed.

The next night was the talent show. Kristin watched the first few acts from back stage, her nervousness quickly mounting. By the time it was time for her to go on, she was practically panicking. She walked out on stage, almost shaking, and then looked out into the audience and found Tom. He smiled at her, and gave her a thumbs up. She smiled back, took a deep breath, and sat at the piano.

Since it was a talent show, there'd been all sorts of stuff presented on stage. Comedy, singing, juggling, skits. Kristin was almost going to play something pop, but decided to play Beethoven—Tom's favorite, the Pathétique Sonata.

Tom was right—it was easier once she started playing. Concentrating on the notes, it was easier for her to pretend she was playing alone, or just for Tom. She sailed through it.

And, the applause was **thunderous**. Now she knew what Tom meant.

DOMESTIC RESPONSIBILITIES (Chapter 140)

"Got any basil in this place?" Jess grumbled one night.

"Sorry, Jess, no basil," Warren told her.

"Who does the shopping around here anyway?" she said.

"He does," Sophie said, pointing at Warren.

"Good. I'm going with you next time," Jessie told him. "Hey, if I'm going to help with the cooking, I need to help with the shopping."

"OK," Warren grinned.

That Saturday, Warren and Jess headed out to the supermarket.

"So, you went out with Ryan last night. How was it?" Warren asked.

"Great. He's very nice, you know. Nothing like his partner."

"Yup!"

"I had a very good time. He asked me to go out again, I accepted, and we'll see."

"Great."

Jessie sighed. "I feel funny talking about this with you."

"Yeah, I know," Warren agreed. "But it's OK, Jess. I'm your friend first and foremost. I want you to be happy."

"Thanks," she grinned. "I don't know, it's almost like telling my boyfriend about my new boyfriend."

"Yeah, but it's different, you know that."

"I do know that. You guys have never tried to tie me down."

"Plus, it's new, with Ryan. Hey, if it doesn't work out, you know you have a place. If it **does**? Well, then, you won't be looking back, I don't think."

"Maybe. We'll see."

They got to the grocery store, and grabbed a cart. They walked through the store, chatting about not much, picking out their selections.

Afterwards, they loaded up Warren's minivan, and headed out.

"Now I have my fresh basil," Jess teased.

"And your fresh oregano, and your fresh parsley, and your fresh dill—I think we bought out the herb section."

"Well, **you** bought out the chocolate section."

"Oh, yeah? Who put the Nestle's Crunch in the basket, huh?"

Jess grinned at him. "Guilty." Then she turned and looked back out the windshield.

And **screamed**.

THE ACCIDENT (Chapter 141)

Warren opened his eyes and looked around. "Where am I?" he asked.

“In an ambulance,” a man in a uniform next to him told him.

“What happened?”

“You were in a car accident.”

“Jesus. I don’t remember a thing.”

“You knocked yourself out, but we think you’re going to be OK.”

“What about my friend, Jessie? The girl in the car with me?”

“I don’t know, pal. She’s in the other ambulance. What’s your name, anyhow?”

“Warren.”

“I’m Fred. We’ll get you to the hospital and get you fixed up.”

“Can someone call my wife?”

“Sure,” Fred grinned, and pulled out his cell phone. “Does your wife know you were out with your ‘friend’?” he joked.

“Jessie’s not just my friend, she’s my wife’s **best** friend. She lives with us. We were out grocery shopping. We do all the cooking, so my wife stayed at home with our daughter.”

“Nice arrangement,” Fred grinned. Oh, if **he** only knew, Warren thought! “What’s your number?”

Warren gave it to him, and the EMT dialed it on his cell phone. He handed the phone to Warren.

“Honey? It’s Warren. Don’t panic, but there’s been an accident. They’re taking us to the hospital at the University.”

Sophia showed up at the hospital only a few minutes after the ambulances did. She found Warren in the emergency room.

“Oh, Snugglebear!” she hissed, seeing him there.

“Hiya, Pookie.”

“You look horrible!”

“Thanks. How’s Jess?”

“I don’t know, I came to you first.”

“Where’s Betsy?”

“Paul and Cait have her. Do they know if there’s any damage yet?”

“No, but I can tell you—there’s something wrong with my right leg.”

“Oh, not your **leg**!”

“Yeah. I don’t know what, but it feels like it got run over.”

“Oh, Jesus. Do you know what happened?”

“Nope. The last thing I remember was cruising along, talking to Jess about all the fresh herbs she bought. The next thing after that is waking up in the ambulance. Hey, we’re not going to know anything until the doc gets here to check me out. Go see if you can find Jess.”

“Good idea.” She went, and came back a few minutes later.

“Warren? Jessie’s still unconscious.”

“OK, this is the deal,” the doctor was telling Warren, with Sophie there. “Warren, you had a mild concussion, but you’ll be fine there. It was very minor, but that’s why you were out for a few minutes—that, and shock. You have bruised ribs, but that’s minor. The big problem is your right knee.

“It’s bad, Warren, I won’t minimize it. Both your anterior cruciate and medial collateral ligaments are torn. There’s torn cartilage. It’s a mess. You’re going to need it reconstructed.”

“Oh shit oh shit oh shit,” Warren groaned.

“This is repairable, Warren. You’ll be able to live a normal life, no problem.”

“Will I be able to skate?” he asked. The doctor looked at him questioningly. “Sophia and I are competitive ice dancers. In fact, we’re past world champions. And the Olympics are less than a year and a half away.”

“Ah,” the doctor said. “My honest answer to that? I don’t know. However, there’s been athletes that have done quite a number on their knees and have come back from it. I’m a skier, myself—purely recreational, but I follow the competitive skiing, and I remember Picabo Street coming back from a hell of a knee injury.”

“You’re right,” Warren said.

“What we’re going to do is we’re keeping you overnight. Even with a mild head injury, we have to do that. And we’re going to have an orthopedic man check you out while you’re here. You’re going to need surgery, I know that much. But we’ll make sure the orthopedic guy knows about you being an athlete.”

“OK, Doc.”

A few hours later, Warren had been settled into a regular room. Sophie came in.

“Jessie’s still unconscious. I called her parents. They’re flying out here.”

“I talked to mine,” Warren told her, “and I told them **not** to fly out here. I told them I’d let them know what was going on—since I wasn’t in a coma or anything, and it was just my knee, there was nothing they could do.”

“Yeah.”

Just then, a policeman came into the room, asking to speak to Warren. “Sure,” Warren said, “but I have to tell you, I don’t remember anything.”

“Nothing?”

“I was driving, talking to Jessie about the groceries we had bought.” He turned to Sophia. “She’d bought **piles** of fresh herbs, I was kidding her about buying the store right out of them.” Sophia giggled. Warren turned back to the cop. “The next thing I remember is waking up in the ambulance. I don’t even know what I hit.”

“Another car.”

“Oh, **shit!**” Warren hissed. “The other people, are they, you know....”

The cop sighed. “The driver is a guy about your age. He’s in rough shape. They had to operate on him for some sort of internal bleeding. They don’t know if he’ll pull through. His girlfriend, who was in the passenger’s seat, is fine. Look, Warren, we have eyewitnesses. Every single one of them told us that he ran a red light. You had a green.”

“I’m glad witnesses told you, because I wouldn’t have been able to. I don’t remember.”

“I know, but everyone did, including the girlfriend, the passenger in the other car. She confirmed that he ran a red light. Also, he had a blood alcohol level of .17. You were tested, of course—yours was zero. This accident wasn’t your fault.”

“That’s good to know, but still.....”

"I know," the cop said sympathetically. "Anyhow, we might have some later questions."

"That's fine."

The cop left and Warren looked at Sophia. "Shit. I know it wasn't my fault, but, shit."

"I know, Snugglebear."

The next morning, Warren was waiting for the orthopedic doctor to show up. Sophia beat him there.

"Jess is still out," she told Warren worriedly. "She hasn't come out of the coma."

"Do they know what's wrong?" Warren asked.

"Severe concussion. That, and shock, are what's got her in the coma. They're confident she'll come out of it. But they don't know **how** she'll be when she comes out of it."

"They're worried about brain damage," Warren said.

"Exactly. Her parents are on their way. I'm so worried."

"I am too, Pookie. You know how I feel about Jess."

Just then the orthopedic surgeon came in. They discussed options. Surgery was really the only one, and the doc didn't know how bad things were until he got in there. Warren was going to stay in the hospital for a couple of days, and they'd hope to do the surgery soon, as soon as the swelling went down.

After the Doc had left, a teenaged girl, about seventeen, appeared in the door. She was accompanied by two people who were apparently her parents. "Are you Warren Kelleher?" she asked.

"Yes," he said, "can I help you?"

The poor girl looked downcast. "I'm Suzanne. I was, well, that was my boyfriend....I was in the other car. I just wanted to apologize."

"For what?" Warren asked. "You weren't driving. Come on in," he said, waving her in. She introduced her parents, and Warren introduced Sophie.

Suzanne sat in the chair by the bed. "No, I wasn't driving, but I should've been. I tried to get the keys from Adam. Evidently I didn't try hard enough. I knew he had been drinking."

"How is he?" Warren asked.

“He’s still in a coma.”

“Jessie is, too.” Warren said. Suzanne looked at him blankly. “My friend, the girl that was in the car with me.”

“Oh, **no**!” Suzanne wailed.

“Look. It wasn’t your fault. None of it.”

Suzanne started crying. Her parents looked on with dismay. “Are you OK?” she managed through her sobs.

“It’s just my knee,” Warren smiled. “They’re going to have to reconstruct it, but they think I’ll come out of it OK.”

“You won’t have any problem walking?” Suzanne’s father asked.

“Oh, no, I’m not even **worried** about that,” Warren laughed. “I tore two ligaments and some cartilage. Walking won’t be a problem. It’s skating that I’m worried about. The Olympics are 16 months away. And we’d like to compete **this** year, at least at Worlds, which is, what, five months away? I’m having surgery this week, and then we’ll see.”

“Skating?” Suzanne asked. “The **Olympics**? You might skate in the Olympics?”

“We already did once,” Sophia smiled. “We won a silver medal in the last Olympics. This time it’s gold or bust. We’re ice dancers.”

“I **knew** I recognized you from somewhere!” Suzanne’s mother said.

“Oh, God, you’re that good and you wrecked your knee?” Suzanne whined, dismayed again.

“Suzanne, it **wasn’t** your fault!” Warren reiterated.

“I really did try to get the keys,” Suzanne said, sobbing again. “But Adam gets, well, he gets upset easily when he’s been drinking.” Warren and Sophie shared a look—they strongly suspected that ‘upset easily’ was an understatement. “I didn’t push hard enough to get the keys.”

“Does he hit you?” Sophie asked quietly. Suzanne just looked at her, wide-eyed.

“My God,” her mother said, “we didn’t know **any** of this. Adam’s a little older, and we worried about that, but he always seemed like a nice young man.”

Suzanne looked completely disconsolate. Warren and Sophie shared another look. Sophie stood up, looked at Suzanne, and said, “Come on. We need to take a walk, you and I. Let’s go down to the cafeteria and see what we can rustle up for lunch. My treat.”

Suzanne looked at her, confused. “Come on. Trust me,” Sophie told her, while Warren was saying the same thing with his eyes to her parents. Finally, Suzanne looked at her parents, who gave her a nod, then shrugged and followed Sophie out the door.

When they left, her father asked Warren, “What was **that** all about?”

Warren sighed. “Sophie suspects, I can tell, that Suzanne’s only telling the tip of the iceberg. I think that guy’s doing a number on your daughter.”

“And your wife thinks she can do something?”

“When I first met Sophie, she was being abused by her boyfriend, and it had been going on for some time, with more than one boyfriend. Keep in mind that she was all of fourteen at the time.” Both parents gasped. “She’s lived it, and she counselled other girls about it back in high school. Believe me, she’s the **best** person for Suzanne to be talking to right now. It took a shock to the system to wake Sophie up, plus a sympathetic person in her life—that was **me**, by the way,” he grinned. “I think Suzanne just had the shock to her system. Sophie’s trying to be the sympathetic listener. She’s very good at it.”

Suzanne’s parents left, stopping off to see her and tell her to give them a call when she wanted to be picked up. A couple of hours later, Sophie came back to the room.

“As bad as you thought?” Warren asked.

“Yeah. Well, apparently, he’s a complete sweetheart when he’s sober. When he’s drunk, he’s a monster. And his drunk episodes are increasing. He’s 21, she’s only 17, that’s a problem right there. She’s completely cowed by him—and she’s truly in love with the **sober** one. What a mess.”

“It’s a moot point if he doesn’t get better.”

“And she’s **completely** broken up about that. You think she’s blaming herself for **you**? She told me she looks at **him** lying there in ICU and just cries ‘why didn’t I take the keys?’ The poor kid’s a mess.”

“And you’re conflicted. Because you know that **some** people like that **can** turn their lives around.”

“Yeah. My Dad. It’s the war in my mind—Scott on one hand, Dad on the other. And this is closer to Dad, because Scott was a monster drunk or sober. Did I tell you he’s back in jail?” Warren shook his head. “Yup, they let him out last year, and he did it to someone else. Some batterers never get better. But Dad **did**.”

“Yeah.”

“She’s got our phone number. And Mary’s card, of course. I think I convinced her to give Mary a call.”

“Good.”

Just then, a figure burst into the room. “WHERE’S JESSIE?” it demanded.

“Ryan? Calm down,” Sophie said.

“I just heard! A car accident? Where is she?”

“She’s in intensive care,” Sophie told him. “Ryan, they won’t let you in there. You’re not family. She’s still in a coma.”

“Oh, God,” Ryan said, slumping visibly. He lurched over to the chair next to Sophie. “Do they....I mean, is she going to.....”

“They don’t know yet,” Sophie said softly.

“Oh, God,” Ryan repeated. Then he visibly pulled himself together. “I’m sorry, Warren. How are you?”

“I’ll be fine,” he smiled. “They’re apparently going to have to put my right knee back together with wire and duct tape, but they assure me it’ll hold through our free program.” Ryan grinned at that, which was the intention. “Though you’ll probably get a free pass at nationals; well, except for Evan and Shawna.”

“I just hope you can recover.”

“Other athletes have. I’m just going to have to rehab like a madman during my senior year in college as a pre-med, that’s the problem.”

“Well, I hope you recover. Ice dancing needs you guys,” Ryan said.

“Thanks,” Warren replied. He shot a look at Sophie.

“Ryan? Come with me. Let’s see what we can do.” They walked down to ICU, where they found Jessie’s parents.

“How is she?” Sophie asked.

“No change,” Corrinne, Jessie’s mother, answered. “Still in the coma. They still think she’s going to come out of it, but.....” she sighed. “How’s Warren?”

“OK. They’re going to try to do his surgery this week. He’s in remarkably good spirits for an ice skater with a severe knee injury.”

“Good,” Corrinne laughed. “Who’s that with you?” she asked, looking out the door to the figure standing outside.

“That’s Ryan Killen,” Sophie said softly. “He’s part of another dance team.”

“The one with that bitch in it, right?” Corrinne laughed. She’d kept up with Sophie and Warren’s skating.

“Yes, but Ryan himself is a great guy. He stays to watch us practice sometimes, and he’s become great friends with Jessie. They had their first date Friday night. And, then, the next day……” She pointed at Jessie and sighed. “I think poor Ryan’s a little traumatized.”

“Son? Come on in,” Bill, Jessie’s dad, said. Ryan stepped tentatively into the room. “The doctors said talking to her helps.”

“Hi, Jess,” Ryan said to the inert figure on the bed. “You need to get out of that coma by next weekend, we have another date.” Everybody in the room chuckled at that, and Ryan looked up sheepishly.

“Good, Ryan, you tell her,” Corrinne laughed.

“It’s hard to talk to someone that doesn’t talk back,” Ryan said.

“Telling her to get off her ass so you can take her out is fine,” Bill laughed. “This **is** Jessie we’re talking about.”

“I have an idea. Be right back,” Sophie said. She ran down to the gift shop, and then ran back.

“How about reading to her?”

“Great idea!” Corrinne said. Ryan nodded agreement, and Sophie handed him a couple books. “Found these in the gift shop.”

Ryan looked at them. “Romances? Oy.”

“She loves them,” Corrinne said.

“Yeah, she trades them with my **husband**,” Sophie laughed.

“Warren reads this stuff?” Ryan asked.

“Yup. He **is** a romantic,” Sophie pointed out. “Plus, he likes the ‘action’ scenes.”

“Oh, jeez,” Ryan said. “That’s all I need is to read **that** out loud!”

“We’ll give you some privacy, we have to go check in at the hotel anyway,” Corrinne laughed. On their way out, they talked to the head nurse. “There’s a boy in there with Jess now. We approved of him being in her room. He’s reading to her.” The head nurse agreed.

Corrinne and Bill came back a few hours later, stopping to check up on Warren first.

“Mr. and Mrs. Reidel, I’m so sorry,” he said.

“We’ve talked to the police, Warren, we know it’s not your fault,” Bill said.

“I know, but I still feel bad. And I’m worried about Jess.”

“The doctors tell us to just wait. They really do think she’s going to come out of it.”

They talked for a while, and then headed down. The head nurse caught them as they walked past her. “Is that her boyfriend?” she asked them.

“The way we understand it, they’re friends that went on their first date just Friday night.”

“Well, you’ve been gone three hours and he hasn’t left her side. He’s been reading to her the whole time. I walked by and saw him stroking her forehead as he read to her. I’ve seen husbands that aren’t that devoted.”

Bill and Corrinne smiled at one another, then walked into her room. Ryan was hunched over, book in one hand, the other stroking Jessie’s arm, reading to her in a low voice. Bill cleared his throat.

“Hello,” Ryan said, faintly embarrassed, sitting up.

“We’re here to relieve you,” Bill smiled. “Go on, get something to eat. We don’t need both of you in a coma.”

“I guess I am kind of hungry,” he said, standing up. “I’ll be back later,” he told Jess.

He went out and found something to eat. Afterwards, he went to the local bookstore. He went to the romance section, and walked out with a bag full.

THE AFTERMATH (Chapter 142)

Warren had surgery on Tuesday morning. He met with the doctor the next day, with Sophia there.

“Warren, it went well. There wasn’t anything too tricky in there, so it looks like it’s just going to come down to time, and rehab. You’re not scared of hard work are you?”

“Not at all,” Warren said, “my problem is going to be that there’s not enough hours in the day.”

“You’ll make time.”

“I’ll have to, but it’s going to be tough,” Warren told him. “I’m married,” he said, pointing to Sophia. “We have a little girl who’s two years old. Plus, I’m a senior, here at UW. Remember your senior year in college, Doc?”

“Yeah, but I was a pre-med,” he laughed.

“Exactly. As am I.”

“Really? You carrying a solid GPA?”

“3.8, and that’s with a year’s sabbatical after my sophomore year, and that’s while maintaining a high-level figure skating career, **and** a girlfriend who became a wife, **and**—the past year—a kid.”

“Ah, that should get you into med school next year,” the Doc grinned.

“The year after,” Warren grinned back. “I’m taking next year off. It’s an Olympic year, so it’s going to be our last year as competitive skaters, then it’s off to med school for me.”

“So, you’re going to work his way through med school?” the Doc joked to Sophie.

“Don’t have to. We’ve gotten a lot of money from endorsements.”

“Well, mostly **her**, so I guess she **did** work her way through my med school,” Warren joked.

“This is the fringe benefit of being World Champions. They want you to do commercials,” Sophie joked. “So, med school is well taken care of, and he won’t graduate with a mountain of debt—and, as an added bonus, I don’t have to work, so, while he’s in med school, I plan to stay home and pump out more babies,” Sophie grinned.

“When we win the gold medal next year—notice I said when, not if,” Warren joked. “Anyhow, when we win it, Sophie keeps threatening to pull up her dress on the medal stand and have me knock her up right there.”

“Oh, if I’m ovulating that night, you’re in **big** trouble,” she joked. “Not before, though,” she grinned. “I skated in the **last** Olympics two months pregnant, don’t ever want to do **that** again.”

“How old are you guys?” the Doctor asked.

“Sophie’s 22,” Warren said. “I’m 21.”

“I’m the older woman by nine months,” Sophie joked.

“That’s a hell of a full life for kids your age,” the Doc marvelled.

“It keeps us hopping,” Warren agreed.

“So, since you’re pre-med, ever think of orthopedics?” the Doc asked Warren.

“I’d planned on pediatrics.”

“Ah. I’d thought of that, but then I decided I wanted to do surgery. And, in my practice, I see a lot of young people anyhow.”

“Really?” Warren said.

“Yes. I’m an orthopedic surgeon, but my specialty is sports medicine. I usually don’t operate on car crash victims,” he grinned, “but they called me in because you’re an athlete. Anyhow, when you specialize in sports medicine, you see a lot of kids; high school and college especially. Let’s see, in the past couple weeks, besides you, I had a high school pitcher with a torn rotator cuff; a football player here at UW with a knee; a high school football player with a dislocated shoulder; a young girl of 11 who plays soccer who broke her ankle, and so on. Most of my adult patients are competitive high-level athletes like yourself.”

“Hmmm. Something to think about,” Warren mused.

“You’ve got all four years of med school to think,” the Doctor grinned, “but you’re perfect, since you’re an athlete. You know all about conditioning, you know the demands on an athlete. And you’re about to find all about rehab.”

“Don’t remind me,” Warren grimaced.

Thursday at around noontime, it happened. Ryan was sitting at Jessie’s bed, reading to her, when her eyes fluttered open. She looked around, focused her eyes, then said, “Ryan?”

“You’re awake! Thank goodness!”

“Where am I?”

“You’re in the hospital. You were in a car accident. You’ve been in a coma for five days.”

“God,” she gasped. “I don’t remember a thing.” She grinned. “The last thing I remember is you kissing me goodnight after our date Friday night, and me going to bed.”

“It happened the next day. From what I understand, you went grocery shopping with Warren on Saturday, you guys were driving home, and some drunk guy ran a red light.”

“Oh, my. How’s Warren?”

“He tore his knee up, but they say he’ll be OK. How are **you** feeling?”

“Fuzzy,” she giggled. “It’s funny, I thought I was asleep. I remember dreaming. You were talking to me.” She blushed a little. “I remember it being kind of, well, naughty.”

Ryan laughed, and held up the book. “I’ve been reading you romances. They said it was good to talk to you, and Sophie told me you like these, so I’ve been reading romances to you. All those ripping bodices and thrusting loins.”

“That’ll do it,” Jess giggled.

“I have to go tell the nurse you’re awake. And you’re parents—they’re here, but went down to get something to eat.”

“OK,” she smiled. Ryan headed out. Shortly thereafter, the nurse came in.

“Well! Welcome back to the world of the living.”

“I think it’s good to be back,” Jessie grinned.

“How do you feel?”

“Fuzzy. A little disoriented. I don’t remember anything the day of the accident—Ryan told me what happened—so I feel a little strange. And **thirsty**!”

“I can fix that one at least.” The nurse stepped out, and returned with a cup of ice water. “Slow sips, you’ve been on an IV for almost a week. I have to ask you, that guy that was in here. They told me he’s not your boyfriend?”

“We had one date,” she smiled.

“Well, Jessica, I have to tell you—he hasn’t left.” Jess looked at her, wide-eyed. “Well, we wouldn’t let him sleep here, so he went home to sleep. Apparently he’s a skater of some sort, so he left every day to practice. He also occasionally went downstairs to eat. Outside of that, he hasn’t left in five days. He reads to you, talks to you—I walked by yesterday and he was brushing your **hair**.”

“Wow,” Jess hissed.

Just then Ryan returned, with Jessie’s very happy parents, and the room was bedlam for a while. Warren, checking out today, stopped by with Sophia. The doctor came to check Jessie out, and all were relieved to see that she didn’t seem much the worse for wear.

After a few minutes, the nurse suggested that Jessie might need some rest. Jessie agreed, and everyone started filing out of the room. “Not you,” Jessie whispered to Ryan.

After everyone else had left, Jessie pointed to the edge of the bed. “Sit,” she told Ryan. He did so. “I’ve been told you’ve been my guardian angel all week.”

Ryan blushed. “I just thought you needed the company. They said that talking to you would help.”

She grinned at him. “I don’t know if brushing my hair was in the job description.” Ryan **really** blushed at that. “The nurse told me.”

“It was all tangled,” Ryan said, looking down.

“I’m sure it was,” Jess smiled. She was sitting up in the bed, and, she leaned over, and wrapped a surprised Ryan into a hug. “Thank you,” she whispered. “You pulled me out of it, you know.”

“You would’ve come out in any case.”

“You helped,” she said, still hugging him. Then she kissed him on the cheek, and let go. “So,” she said, “Does Courtney know where you’ve been spending so much time this week?”

“No!” Ryan laughed. “I’ve been at all our practices, and I’ve even pretended I’m interested. So she hasn’t asked. She must not have gone looking for me this week. Thank goodness.”

“Good,” Jessie smiled.

“Look, you really **do** need your rest. So I’m going to take off.”

“Will you be back?” Jessie asked.

“In a few hours, that OK?”

“Yes. Thank you,” she smiled.

Warren and Sophie got to their apartment with much difficulty, Warren hobbling the whole way and both of them laughing at their halting efforts. Shortly after they got there, Cait dropped Betsy off.

“Hey, Cait, we can’t thank you and Paul enough for the help with Betsy.”

“Think nothing of it,” Cait said. “She’s delightful. Plus, it’s good training for when Paul and I have kids. Which we plan on.”

Betsy was sitting on Sophie’s lap and noticed the bandage and splint on Warren’s knee. “Daddy gotta boo boo?” she asked.

“Yes, sweetie, Daddy’s got a boo boo.”

“Daddy OK?”

“Yes, Daddy’s OK. It’s just going to take some time to fix.”

“OK,” Betsy agreed easily. They chuckled at her as she got down from Sophie’s lap and toddled away.

“You think it’s going to be OK?” Cait asked.

“We’ll see.”

That Saturday, two days after she had woken up, the doctors let Jessie go home. They had found nothing wrong with her, she’d healed just fine, so they let her go home, with orders to take it easy for a week or so. She was going to call Sophie to come pick her up, but Ryan insisted on driving her. She happily let him.

For the next week, he was at her beck and call. Warren had to go back to class, and wasn’t moving around very well, so they needed help with Betsy. Jessie was capable of helping to a point, but **she** needed some help. Ryan eagerly volunteered. Until late in the day, after Warren and Sophie’s classes, he was there, unless he had to practice.

After a few days of this, Sophie was sitting next to Jessie on the couch. “Someone is **seriously** smitten, isn’t he?” Sophie teased.

“Yeah. Ain’t it great?”

Sophie laughed. “How do **you** feel?”

“I’m still figuring that out—but, Jesus, Sophie, I think he’s the sweetest guy I know. Since ‘guys I know’ include Warren, that is saying a **lot**.”

“Too true.”

“I like him, I know that much. I need to get to know him better. But, jeez, he’s really proving his valor, isn’t he?” Jess asked.

“If you like a guy anyway, that whole ‘knight in shining armor’ thing goes right to your heart,” Sophie grinned.

“My heart, and a few other places,” Jessie grinned back. “That boy was reading me romances the whole time I was out. Believe me, they got through. I woke up out of a coma horny as hell.”

Sophia cracked up laughing. “Well, I’m horny too, and Warren’s out of commission for a bit....”

“Sorry, Sophie, I’m still a bit out of commission myself at the moment,” she grinned.

“I figured, but I had to give it a shot,” Sophie shrugged with a grin.

That Saturday, exactly two weeks after the accident, Jess felt well enough to go on an actual date with Ryan. They had a great time. They went to eat, then to a movie, all of which they spent cuddled up to one another. When they got back to the apartment, Ryan looked at Jessie, said, "I've been waiting to do this for two weeks," and proceeded to give her a kiss that stopped time. Then he grinned, and walked down the hall.

When she stepped into the apartment, Sophie said, "Jess? You look dazed."

"I am."

"Sit down! I thought this evening might be a bit much for you so soon."

"Sophie, the evening was fine. I'm not tired, and it didn't wear me out."

"I thought you said you felt dazed?"

"Yeah," Jessie grinned, "from the good-night kiss."

"Ah," Sophie laughed.

REHAB (Chapter 143)

"I am so bored," Warren moaned.

"The computer not interesting enough, Snugglebear?" Sophie joked.

"After a while, it kind of pales, you know? I'm caught up on my studies, especially considering I haven't been to class in over a week."

"We've got the wheelchair coming for next Monday, so you'll be there then come hell or high water."

"Which is good, I'm far behind enough as it is. Of course, we'd been missing a few days this week anyway because of Skate America."

"It sucks not going," Sophie said.

"Yup."

"Does that contraption drive you nuts?" Sophie asked, pointing at it. It was like a tub with some sort of whirlpool effect—it circulated cold water over the knee, to keep swelling down.

"Not really. It's cold, but that's it. It's the immobility that drives me nuts. I feel like I'm just wasting away to nothing. Too many years of practice and weightlifting, the inactivity is getting to me."

"You need exercise," Sophie grinned.

"True enough, but I won't get any until I can start my rehab."

"Sure you will," she said, and sat next to him on the bed. She instantly went to the waistband of the shorts he was wearing. "There's lots of types of exercise."

"Ah," Warren grinned. "Somebody's horny."

“It’s been a week and a half, you **bet** I am.” She had tugged Warren’s shorts down far enough to release his dick, then went to work on her own clothes. She got naked in a hurry, and crawled onto the bed. “Lie flat, sweetie,” she said to him, assisting him to do so. Then she crawled up and straddled his head.

“Sit on my face, and tell me that you love me,” Warren sang, as Sophie giggled.

“Good idea!” She lowered her pussy down to his waiting mouth. He greeted it with a nice long lick up its length. Sophie moaned at the contact, and kept moaning softly as he kept his tongue moving up and down her pussy.

Warren raised his hands to her hips and held her steady as he nibbled on her clit. Well, as steady as he could—she was bucking up a storm on top of him, and, unable to use his legs, he was having trouble getting any leverage. But he managed, gripping her hips as his tongue lashed around her clit.

After she came—with a howl—she crawled back down his body, straddling his hips. She grabbed his cock, aimed it at her pussy, and sank down on it with a sigh.

“You know,” Warren said, “I fail to see how I am getting any exercise here.”

“Well, your tongue got a workout,” Sophia giggled, “and now your dick will.”

“Ah,” he laughed.

She started moving up and down on top of him, tentatively.

“This is a wee bit difficult,” he said.

“Is it?”

“I can’t get any leverage so I can’t push up at you.”

She giggled. “That’s OK, sweetie, I got these nice strong skater’s legs. Just let me find a rhythm.” She kept moving up on him, making sure she took full strokes up and down. She found herself a good rhythm, then sped up a bit. He reached up and grabbed her hips to keep her steady. “OK?” she asked breathlessly.

“Oh, yeah,” he moaned. She slammed down on top of him, fast and hard, and he managed to buck up a little bit, using his undamaged left leg to get a little leverage. It worked—it wasn’t long before Sophie went, and Warren went right with her.

She collapsed next to him. “How’s your leg?” she asked after a bit.

“Fine. And the rest of me is better than fine.”

“I’m good,” she laughed.

Warren got back to class the next Monday, in a wheelchair, glad to be back after missing two weeks.

“How’d it go?” Sophie asked him that night.

“Fine. The Professors were all understanding and I’ll have some time to catch up. My molecular biology class actually has an exam on Wednesday but he’s going to give me until next Monday to catch up. And there were plenty of people willing to share notes.”

“Really?”

“Yup,” he laughed. “Funny how all of them were very female and usually cute.”

“Ah,” Sophie grinned. “Yes, it’s the Wounded Hero concept. All the better when said wounded hero is a world champion athlete. It’s like you’re putting out he-man pheromones.”

“Like I said,” he teased, “most of ‘em were damn cute.”

“Uh-huh,” she laughed. “Well, if one of **them** can figure out how to have you with all that paraphernalia on your knee, more power to ‘em.”

“You managed,” he grinned.

“Remember, Snugglebear—I’m very, very good.”

“That you are.”

“Don’t worry, sweetie—I’ll let you enjoy all the fawning attention.”

“Thank you so much.”

Warren started rehab that week, also. It was a week later that his therapist, a blonde in her thirties named Renee, stumbled in and saw him and had to shake her head.

He was locked into this contraption that forcibly moved his leg back and forth, bending and unbending his damaged knee. This thing was **sadistic**. The therapists called it The Torture Device. It was necessary, however, for regaining range of motion in the knee. They had put in on Warren earlier than they might otherwise have, because range of motion was extremely important to an ice dancer.

The therapists became used to seeing patients, especially patients in their first week or two in the thing, to be in extreme pain. Renee couldn’t believe it when she walked in and saw Warren, strapped into the machine, calmly reading a textbook.

“How’s it going?” she asked.

“Fine,” he said calmly.

“Most people find that thing to be very painful.”

“It is,” Warren grinned. “I just have to get through it, is all.”

“Are you on painkillers?”

“Just ibuprofen. I’ve got percocet prescribed, but I only take it at night. I have trouble sleeping on my back, and I **have** to with this shit on my knee, so I need the percocet to sleep. Outside of that, though, I’m avoiding it.”

“Why?” she asked incredulously.

“Mainly because I went back to class last week. I’m a senior pre-med, I can’t afford to not be able to think. That percocet zonks me. Plus I don’t want to become at all dependent on it. I don’t want it to be tough to wean off of. I’m an athlete in an Olympic sport, and you know what that means—drug testing,” he grinned.

“Ah. I can see that, the schoolwork part especially. I’m still stunned to see you here reading a textbook like you were calmly sitting on a bench.” He laughed at that. “And, we’ve talked about it—you’re one of the easiest patients we’ve ever seen! You don’t complain. You don’t whine, even though you have an ice

skating career that hangs in the balance. You come in here, smile at everyone, and do what we tell you. We wish they were all like you.”

Warren laughed. “Well, I got to do what I got to do, right? Here, sit,” he said, pointing to a chair next to him. “I’ve been through a lot. When I met my wife, she was 14 and being beaten. She’s been raped. She broke up for me for two months Freshman year which was torture worse than anything any of these machines can do to me. Shortly after that, I was raped.” Renee gasped at that. “The next year, she unexpectedly got pregnant. We skated in the Olympics with her two months pregnant. There’s been some other stuff. Honestly, having a fucked up knee that I have to deal with isn’t that much of a big deal.”

“How old are you?” Renee asked.

“I’ll be 22 in January.”

“That’s a lot in a short time.”

“Tell me about it,” he laughed. “But, you know what I’ve learned? It all works out. I recovered from the rape. Sophie and I are married now and deliriously happy about it. The kid is a delight. Life’s not always easy, but it works out, especially if there’s love in it.”

“That’s a wonderful philosophy,” Renee told him.

“Hey, despite some of the shit that’s gone on with me, I’m lucky, and I know it. I met my one true soulmate the day after my fourteenth birthday—how many people get to say that?”

“I see your point, but you don’t worry about this?” she pointed at the knee. “You’re not worried about skating?”

“Hey, if I never skate again, so be it,” Warren said. “I have Sophie, I have a ticket to med school. As for the skating, I have a World Championship, an Olympic silver medal, and a pile of prize and endorsement money. If it ends now, I can live with that.” He grinned at her. “That’s not to say I’m not going to work my butt off trying to get back, mind you. The Olympics are a year and a half away, **I would like a gold medal.**”

“I can see where you would,” Renee laughed.

That night, Warren and Sophie were snuggling on the couch, prior to going to bed.

“By the way, where’s Jessie?” Warren asked.

“Out with Ryan again,” Sophie giggled.

“This is getting serious, isn’t it?” Warren asked.

“I think so.” She looked at him. “You notice she’s been spending most nights in her own bed? I thought it was because she was worried about your knee. I don’t think that’s the case anymore. I think she’s weaning herself away from us.”

“As long as she’s happy,” Warren said.

“I agree. I just worry about what happens when Ryan’s lovely little partner figures out what’s going on.”

“Oh, shit—you’re right.”

ANOTHER ACCIDENT (Chapter 144)

About a month after Warren's accident, he got a call from Curtis Ingalls.

"How's the knee?" Curtis asked.

"Getting there. I'm rehabbing, but it's going to take some time."

"Nationals, you think?"

"I doubt it," Warren said. "Nationals are two months away, and I'm nowhere near ready to go anywhere near the ice yet. If we think we can get it together for Worlds, we'll petition for a bye."

"Which you'll probably get, considering who we're going to have to send to Worlds if you don't go," Curtis sighed. "Ryan and Courtney, and two unknown never-were's."

"Huh?" Warren asked. "I think you forgot about Evan and Shawna."

"You haven't heard?" Curtis asked in surprise.

"Heard **what**, Curtis?"

"You haven't. It's been a hell of a bad month for American ice dance." He sighed. "Shawna Vickers had an accident, about a week ago. She fell down a flight of stairs in her home. Warren, this was **bad**. She fractured her pelvis, broke her leg in three places, broke her ankle, shattered her kneecap, tore all kinds of ligaments. They almost amputated her leg. If she's **really** lucky, she **might** walk normally someday—but skating's pretty much out of the question. Her career's over."

"Oh SHIT!" Warren gasped. "Poor Shawna."

Warren got off the phone and told Sophie what had happened. Then he called Evan.

"We just heard. How you holding up, buddy?" Warren asked him.

"I'm fine, but Shawna's disconsolate."

"I can imagine," Warren said, "but you must be pretty upset yourself."

"Well, yeah—I lost my partner. Plus, she's my friend, my **best** friend. What a way to have your career end. I could always find another partner if I wanted to, but she's pretty much done."

"She still in the hospital?" Warren asked.

“Yeah. She’s in traction. She’s been operated on a couple of times already. So, how’s your knee?”

“Minor compared to this. It’ll heal.”

“That’s good. This year?”

“Maybe. We’ll see. I doubt in time for Nationals, though—but I hope I’m far enough along by then to petition for a bye to Worlds.”

“Damn, I was hoping you’d go to Nationals,” Evan said. “Courtney Rogers, National Champion, just turns my stomach.”

Warren laughed. “True, but I’ll be happy for Ryan.”

Ryan got to the rink for practice. There he found not only Courtney, but Courtney’s hideous mother.

“Did you hear?” Courtney asked excitedly.

“About what?” Ryan answered.

“Shawna Vickers! Her career is over!”

“Yes, I heard,” he said warily.

“This is **great**! Kelleher won’t heal in time for Nationals. The National Championship is in the bag, partner.”

Ryan shook his head. “Yeah, great. Winning a national championship by default. That’s what I always wanted.”

Miriam Rogers snorted. “Winning’s all that matters.”

“It’s the boost our career needs. National championships carry over into other competitions,” Courtney pointed out, “no matter how you win them.”

“Only until Warren and Sophie come back,” Ryan said.

“If they miss the whole year, they’ll just disappear off the radar screen,” Courtney giggled.

“I doubt it. But they don’t plan to miss the whole year.”

“HUH?”

“They’re going to try for Worlds,” Ryan informed them. “They think Warren can be ready by then.”

“How are they going to go to Worlds if they don’t go to Nationals?” Miriam said.

“Medical bye,” Ryan answered. “Which they’ll have no trouble getting.”

“Oh, really? We’ll see about that,” Courtney said ominously.

“Don’t you dare!” Ryan threatened.

“Ryan, you just skate. Leave the tough stuff to me,” Courtney grinned.

JESSIE’S MAN (Chapter 145)

“You **are** kidding,” Jessie said before swallowing a forkful of Moo Shi shrimp. “She actually **said** that?”

“Yup,” Ryan confirmed, digging into the fried rice. “She’s really starting to disgust me. Hey, I want to win a national championship, too. But not like **this**. Courtney has no compassion whatsoever. I mean, Jesus—Warren’s going to come back, no use feeling sorry for him, he’ll be fine—but Shawna’s career is **over**. And Courtney’s **happy** about this? It’s disgusting.”

They were in a Chinese restaurant, the Friday after Courtney had gloated over Shawna’s injuries. “How do you put up with her?” Jessie asked.

“There are times I ask myself the same thing,” Ryan sighed. “She actually wanted to go to bed the other night. I turned her down flat. I suppose her sliminess about Shawna helped me get away with that, because that’s the excuse I used. She wasn’t happy, but at least I had a legitimate excuse to turn her down, that I was pissed at her.” His voice lowered. “That was only part of the reason though.”

“Yeah, I know what you mean,” Jessie said. Then she sighed. “I’ve pretty much moved out of Sophie and Warren’s bedroom. I know you and I haven’t done anything, really, but it’s weird. It felt like cheating.”

“Yeah,” Ryan said. “I don’t mind, though, you know. I know that’s a special situation the three of you have.”

“I know, but—well, it’s hard to explain.”

“You don’t have to explain a thing to me, Jess,” Ryan said.

“Well, yeah, I do,” she said, taking a deep breath. “Ryan, my feelings for you, are, well, rather strong. And getting stronger.”

“Good. I thought it was just me,” he laughed.

“Nope,” she smiled.

“I have to tell you, I liked you anyway,” Ryan said. “I thought there was the possibility of something being there, potentially. But when I ever saw you lying on that hospital bed....” He shuddered. “And, since you’ve gotten out of the hospital, I can see the possibilities even more clearly.”

“Ryan, what you did for me in the hospital....well, I couldn’t have been more touched. And, you’re right, it’s gotten more so since I got out.”

“Yeah.” They ate in companionable silence after that.

After Ryan paid the bill, they grabbed the leftovers and headed out.

“Did you want to do something else?” Ryan asked.

“Absolutely,” Jessie said. “What did you have in mind?”

“Well, we could hit a movie.”

“Nah,” Jessie demurred.

“We could go back to my place,” Ryan suggested tentatively.

“What a great idea,” Jessie giggled. “Let’s.”

They got in Ryan’s car and headed towards his apartment. He let them in.

“Nice,” she said. “You’re neat, even. A lot neater than where I live.”

“I don’t live in an apartment with a two year old in it,” Ryan laughed.

“Good point.”

“You want a drink?”

“Actually, if you have any wine.....”

“Coming right up.”

Ryan went and poured them both a glass. Then he sat next to Jessie on the couch. They sat there for a few moments, sipping their wine. Then, Ryan said, "Damn, this is awkward."

Jessie laughed. "I suppose it is. So, let's change that." She put her wine glass down on the table. Then she took his out of his hand and placed it down. She smiled, and then leaned into him and kissed him. Their bodies wrapped around one another as the kiss got deeper. Jessie's hands roamed all over Ryan's back, as his hands ran up and down her waist. Then, Jessie broke the kiss, smiled up at him, and said, "I want you."

"I was hoping you would, but I wasn't trying to push it."

"Good, then I'll push it," Jessie laughed, running her hands over his chest.

"I think I'll let you," Ryan laughed back. "But not here on the couch." He stood up and held out his hand to her. She joined him, and they made their way into his bedroom. When they got there, she tackled him onto the bed.

He laughed. "Enthusiasm. I like that."

"Good," she smiled, and leaned in and kissed him. They rolled around on the bed, lips locked, hands roaming all over one another. Ryan moved his hand over one of her breasts and gently rubbed it. She moaned into his mouth.

He reached for the hem of her shirt and tugged. She helped him get it off then sighed happily as his hands reached behind her to the clasp in her bra. She shrugged out of her bra, and his lips came back to hers, as his hands gently fondled her tits.

He moved away from her lips and gently nibbled on her earlobe as his hands roamed across her boobs. His thumb flicked at a nipple. She softly moaned under the touch of his hands and lips.

Without a word, Ryan left her earlobe and started kissing down her neck. Passing over her shoulders with his hips, he kept going and headed right for her erect nipple. She moaned appreciatively as his lips closed over her nipple.

He gently nibbled on her tit for a while, as she ran her fingers through his hair. After a bit of this, he reached for the snap of her jeans. She eagerly raised her hips up and helped him slip the jeans off of her. Before he could settle back into his previous position, she stopped him, said, "Your turn," and went for his clothes.

In a short period of time, they were both naked, and Ryan was back nibbling on Jessie's boob, with his hand gently fondling her pussy. Jessie, in turn, had one hand lazily tugging at his cock, the other one rubbing through his hair.

This went on for a few minutes, both of them gently exploring the other. Then, Ryan looked up from Jessie's breast, and said, "This is **so** new to me."

“What?” Jessie grinned.

“It’s hard to explain, and now’s not the time.”

“OK,” Jessie grinned, “but you’re not making much sense.”

“I know,” Ryan laughed. “Just, tell me what you like.”

“I like what you’re doing. Believe me,” Jessie smiled.

Ryan smiled back, then went back to what he was doing. After a few minutes—which were made more enjoyable by Jessie’s happy sighs and groans—he started kissing down from her breasts, down her stomach. As he got to her navel, clearly headed between her legs, he looked up and said, “Um, do you mind?”

“Mind? Why on earth would I mind?”

“I’ve never actually done this before. Uh, some people think it’s gross.”

“Some people are idiots,” Jessie laughed. “Do **not** stop.”

He chuckled, and didn’t stop. He worked his way down and then buried his face between her legs. He’d always wanted to do this, but Courtney wouldn’t stand for it. What was I missing, he marveled to himself, as Jessie moaned under the gentle assault of his tongue running up and down her pussy lips. As he zeroed in on her clit, she groaned louder, and brought her legs up around his shoulders. She pressed her thighs into his head as he nibbled and licked at her clit—and he didn’t mind at all.

“My God,” she gasped, “are you **sure** you’ve never done this before?”

“Yup,” he said, muffled, then went back to it. It wasn’t long before she exploded, moaning deeply. He withdrew, letting her settle down a bit, then dove back in.

“Ryan, wait!” she said.

“Too much?” he asked.

“No, but....just get up here, next to me. Lie on your back.” Puzzled, he did so. She grinned at him, moved herself around, and—to his surprise—climbed on top of him, straddling his face. “If I start to suffocate you, just slap my ass,” she said with a grin, looking back at him. He grinned back, and she lowered her dripping pussy down to his mouth. He started back in licking it up and down—then he felt her mouth engulf his dick.

This was a first, too. Courtney wasn’t into oral at all. He couldn’t believe how good Jess’s mouth felt wrapped around his dick. He enjoyed it for a minute, then went back to licking her pussy. He had his hands on her hips, steadying her, rubbing his hands along

her flanks. As he again zeroed in on her clit, she started moaning around his cock, which just increased the sensations.

Since Jessie had already gone once—and since she strongly suspected that this was his first blowjob—it was no surprise to her that he went first. She felt it swell in her mouth, then he yelped, “Oh, God, Jessie, **cumming!**” He was very sweet to warn her, but she was having none of that—she gulped his whole length down and felt his cum splatter on the back of her throat. Since he—amazingly—didn’t lose a beat on her clit with his tongue even while he was cumming; and since she loved the feel of a guy cumming down her throat; she went right after him. She ground her pussy into his face and spasmed as she groaned around his deflating cock. She went right on cleaning off the remnants of his cum as she exploded above him.

To Ryan, it was like being hit by a freight train.

Jessie climbed off of him, rearranged herself on the bed, and snuggled into this shoulder, sighing happily. She went to kiss his cheek and looked at him. “Honey? You look upset.”

“No, not upset, not at all. Shell-shocked would be more accurate.”

Jessie giggled. She reached down and started lightly tugging at his cock. “Well, let me get this guy woken up again, then you’ll really be shell-shocked.”

“You’re amazing,” he said.

“You’re pretty damn fantastic yourself.” She flexed her hand around his dick, trying to coax it back to life. It didn’t take much coaxing.

As Ryan’s dick started reviving, so did the rest of him. He gently started kissing her face and neck, and ran one hand all over her body, the other one playing with her hair. Jessie sighed as his lips caressed her neck and his hand gently fondled her breasts and stomach. She gripped his cock and felt it grow in her hand.

She tugged on his cock, and whispered in his ear, “Make love to me.” She lay back on the bed, legs parted, open to him, smiling up at him as he positioned himself between her legs.

Ryan wanted to do this right—but there was a nagging thought in the back of his mind that he never **had**—done it right, that is. Even though they hadn’t made love yet, every one of his previous sexual experiences **already** paled completely, compared to this.

He looked down at her, open and waiting, smiling at him. He took his hand and positioned himself at her entrance—then he reached down and kissed her. She eagerly returned the kiss, and, as their tongues wrapped around each other, he slowly slid himself into her. She moaned into his mouth.

Ryan started a steady, slow pace, pulling himself all the way out of her then sliding back in to the hilt. Their tongues and lips were still fastened to one another as Ryan moved in and out of Jessie. She brought her legs up and hooked them at the ankles above his ass. After a few minutes, Jess broke the kiss and hissed “Oh my God, Ryan!”

He looked down at her and their eyes met. On an unspoken signal that Ryan was amazed he picked up on, he started moving faster. He gradually picked up speed until he was vigorously slamming in and out of Jessie. She slung her hips up to meet his thrusts, and started a low moan as he picked up speed.

Their hands found one another's'. Hers were on the bed, up beside her head. His, holding him up, found hers, and their fingers intertwined as he moved in and out of her. Suddenly, her fingers gripped his full force. She moaned, “Oh, Ryyyyyaaaaannnnnnn!” and stiffened beneath him, her hips coming off the bed. He felt her pussy contract around his dick, and thrust through it, reaching his own climax as she came down.

He tried to get off her, but she wouldn't let him. She kept her legs wrapped tightly around his hips, and pulled him by his shoulders so that he was right on top of her. Finally, after his dick had slipped out of her, she allowed him to roll them onto their sides. She was still plastered to him.

“Oh, my Jesus,” she finally gasped.

“I agree,” he chuckled.

“That was perfect. Just perfect. And I didn't even have to say anything,” she marveled. “Wow.”

She looked at him. “You've **really** never gone down on a girl before?”

“Nope. You seem surprised.”

“I'm **very** surprised.” She looked at him. “I know it's gauche to bring up other lovers when you're in somebody else's bed, but you have to understand—I have a basis of comparison. And you are **damn** good.”

“Basis of comparison?” he asked.

“You're going to drag this out of me, aren't you?” she grinned. He nodded. “Fine. Don't say I didn't warn you. Well, first of all, don't forget I spend part of my time in bed with another girl.”

“Ah,” Ryan said. “And girls are better at that, cause they know how it feels.”

“In theory. However, as good as she is, even Sophie's not as good as Warren. If pussy lapping were an Olympic sport, Warren would have a closetful of gold medals, OK?” Ryan looked at her—and cracked up laughing. “True story. But, honey, you were damn close. And on your first time? I was **very** happy to discover **that**, let me tell you.”

“Well, if I have that much natural talent, I’ll just have to keep practicing my technique, won’t I?” he said with a sly smile.

“Any time you want,” Jess beamed.

Ryan just grinned. “So, tell me,” she continued. “What did you mean earlier, about it being new to you?”

“You sure you want to hear this?”

“Yeah. Hey, you’ve heard some stuff about Warren.”

Ryan sighed, and stroked her hair. “True, but this isn’t as good. Courtney liked sex one of two ways. Completely dominating, or catatonic. Either she took all control of the situation, or she just lied there like a blow-up doll. Depending on her mood, but that’s what I got. The only foreplay was the odd swipe of a hand. That’s the first time I’ve ever done oral, giving **or** receiving. And it’s the first time I’ve ever been in bed with, well, I don’t know,” he faltered. “I guess the best word is equal. This is the first time I’ve been to bed with an equal. “

“Ah,” Jessie said. “Well, Crash was usually pretty dominating, so I understand that part of it. And my **other** situation, well, that’s just a little weird. It was nice to be in bed with **one** person and have **all** his attention.”

“You certainly had that,” Ryan laughed. “Especially when you came. God, what a sight.”

“Glad you liked it,” Jessie giggled. “I plan on letting you see it a lot.”

“I think I can handle that,” Ryan grinned.

SUSPICIONS (Chapter 146)

The next Friday night, Sophie and Jessie were sitting on the couch.

“Warren’s already asleep?” Jessie asked.

“Yeah,” Sophie sighed. “Rehab and school is really wearing him out, he’s so tired all the time. Plus he’s cranky and depressed. He hides it well, for our sake, but I know him too well. The poor guy’s exhausted and miserable.”

“Which means, I take it, that Sophie’s not getting any.”

“Sophie’s not getting any at **all**,” Sophie started. “And, you’ve been spending a lot of time in your own bed.”

“Yeah,” Jessie agreed, “and I think it’s going to stay that way for the foreseeable future. I hope you don’t mind, and I’m sorry, since you’re obviously horny—but I’d feel funny sleeping with you guys now.”

“What happened?” Sophie asked.

“Well, Ryan and I slept together for the first time a week ago tonight. Wasn’t the last time, either. In fact, if he were around, I wouldn’t be sitting here chatting with you.”

Sophie laughed. “Where is he?”

“Moscow.”

“Oh, yeah—Cup of Russia. I’ve kind of blanked on the whole Grand Prix schedule since we weren’t able to be in it this year. So,” she grinned, “how was it?”

“Oh my God, Sophie,” Jessie grinned. “Look, I knew I was falling for him before we went to bed. Now, afterwards? Even more so. He’s everything I could want—in a boyfriend, **and** in a lover.”

“I’m glad, Jess, really,” Sophie smiled. “I’ll admit it, I’m going to miss you, but I’m happy for you.”

“Well, the thing with Ryan is still kind of new, so I don’t want to jeopardize it—but, as for you and I, I’ll never say never. I’m not quite sure how open-minded Ryan would be—especially if it includes Warren—but he didn’t have any problem with it **before** we went to bed with one another.”

“Jess, it’s **OK**. Really. Ryan’s your important thing right now. Warren and I will always love you, no matter what, and no matter where you sleep.”

“I know.”

“Besides, you have a bigger problem, you know.”

“Yeah. Courtney.”

“Does she know?”

“I don’t believe so. I think Ryan’s trying to keep it a secret from her for as long as he can. Which, I’ll admit, makes me uncomfortable, but I understand his reasons.”

“I hope it doesn’t blow up in his face,” Sophie said.

Laurel was insecure, and she knew it. She couldn’t help it.

She **still** couldn't quite believe she had snared someone like Ryan Kelleher—and, because she didn't quite believe it, she didn't believe **in** it. Laurel was a beautiful girl, but you couldn't convince **her** of that—since she'd been invisible to guys until she met Ryan. That was because of her intimidating brains, but she didn't always quite see it that way. Ryan being her first serious boyfriend, she didn't have any experience to draw on. She kept seeing Ryan as keeping her around until he found something better.

This was especially true now that Ryan had become Georgia Tech's starting point guard, and was playing well. The girls **flocked** to him.

And Laurel didn't feel she could measure up. She didn't even think she **treated** him especially well, though she didn't do it on purpose. She was just very committed to her schoolwork—and she sometimes blew him off because of it.

On this Saturday night, he had pulled her away from the books long enough to go to a party. And she was **not** having a good time. Ryan was being bombarded. She had brought her friend Lisa, so she's have someone to talk to, but that wasn't enough. Ryan was **trying**, but, if it wasn't the guys on the team pulling him aside to talk basketball, it was the horde of girls accosting him as he tried to make his way back to Laurel.

One was particularly persistant. To make matters worse, she was everything Laurel wasn't—a bubble-headed bleach blonde with enormous tits and a waspish waist who was slobbering all over Ryan. Besides her self-percieved physical shortcomings, Laurel was well aware that she didn't slobber. She loved Ryan with all her heart, but she just wasn't the fawning type. She was too self-contained for that.

But this **bimbo** was certainly the fawning type, and, to Laurel's horror, it seemed to be working. She saw Ryan—her **boyfriend**!—put her arm around this girl and lead her off from the main party, towards a room in the back! With her here? She couldn't believe it! She knew this day was coming, but with her **sitting** there? She wanted to cry.

Lisa, her friend, saw it all. "What is he **doing**?"

"Replacing me, isn't that obvious?"

"Nothing's obvious, you can't make assumptions," Lisa said. "Go follow them."

Laurel found where they had gone, a bedroom in the back of the house. She stood outside the door and heard the girl say, "Ryan, I'm so glad we're finally alone!"

"Carrie, we're alone so we can **talk**."

"Talk? I can think of more fun things to do than talk," Carrie giggled.

"Look, Carrie. I'm flattered, really. But you **have** to stop this. I have a girlfriend."

“Laurel?” Carrie snorted. “I hear she treats you like shit.” Laurel, still listening from outside the door, blinked at that.

“Where did you hear that?” Ryan asked incredulously. “Laurel treats me like anything **but** shit.”

“It’s common knowledge around the team that she blows you off to study.”

“So? School’s important to her. I ‘blow her off’ for basketball, sometimes.”

“What does she have that I don’t?” Carrie asked.

“My heart,” Ryan said. Laurel just about melted at that. How could I have doubted him for a **second**, she thought to herself. Carrie was still babbling, but Laurel barely heard it. She **did** hear Ryan’s voice rise, just a bit, in response.

“Listen. I’ve tried to be nice, but that’s not working. First of all, Laurel’s brilliant. I’m not in her league, but I’m no dummy, and I prefer a girlfriend who I can have an intelligent conversation with. Sorry, Carrie, but that leaves **you** right out. Second of all, Laurel’s every bit as beautiful as you are—and she’s wearing a quarter of the makeup you are so **she** comes by it naturally. I’d even bet your boobs are fake.” Laurel heard Carrie hiss at **that** one! “Third of all, Laurel loves me for **me**—the **whole** me. She wouldn’t care less if I quit basketball tomorrow. Without basketball, you wouldn’t even give me the time of day. What does Laurel have that you don’t? **Everything**. Goodbye, Carrie.”

Laurel waited, out of sight, until she saw Carrie clomp out of the room. Then she ran in and launched herself at Ryan, tackling him back onto the bed in the room.

“Wha....Laurel?”

“I’m sorry, I’m so sorry!” she blurted.

“For what?”

“For spying on you,” she said. She was blubbing by now. “I followed you, I saw you bring her in here, and I thought, you know—I’m so sorry!”

“It’s OK. It probably did look suspicious,” Ryan said, cuddling her close.

“I’m so insecure. I keep waiting for you to tell me you found someone else. What you said to her, it was the most beautiful thing I’ve ever heard.”

“You’re so self confident everywhere else, maybe I just don’t realize.” He pulled her head up so he was looking in her eyes. “Laurel. I love you. You have nothing to worry about. Ever. Got me?”

“Yes,” she said.

“Face it, kiddo—you’re stuck with me.”

“If that’s stuck, I’ll take it!”

Courtney Rogers was beside herself.

She and Ryan had gone to Skate Canada and had finished second—good enough. But then they had gone to Cup of Russia. The world silver medalists, Kuznetsova and Vasilyevskiy, were there, so they figured another second would be fine.

They finished fourth. Not only the Russians defeated them, but the Brits—who they had beaten at last years’ worlds, fluke though that might have been—plus a young Canadian team that nobody had ever heard of. Heck, they barely beat the **Irish** team.

Courtney was **livid**. She blamed Ryan for the bad showing. It wasn’t as though they had made mistakes or anything—they hadn’t. They were just sluggish—and Courtney blamed Ryan because he just didn’t seem interested.

They got on the plane back from Moscow and Courtney started in on him. Usually, a good harangue worked wonders—because Ryan was a wimp. It didn’t take much to get him cowering in the corner, determined to do everything Courtney said.

Not this time. “Court, shut up,” he said the minute she started in on him.

“What?”

“You heard me. I’m in no mood for your tongue.”

“Well, you’re gonna get it anyway! You blew that competition!”

“Me? ME? The last time I checked, there were two skaters on that ice!”

“Right,” Courtney said, “and the **male** skater of that couple skated like he didn’t want to even be on the same ice surface as the female skater! And the judges noticed it! You weren’t skating with me, you were throwing me around like a sack of potatoes!”

“Maybe if you made skating with you a more pleasant experience, I wouldn’t feel that way.”

Courtney was taken aback—Ryan was **never** like this. He was a very manipulatable person. He never fought back. What was going on? Time for the heavy artillery. “Fine, Ryan, if you feel that way, maybe you **shouldn’t** be skating with me. You can be replaced, you know.”

“Really?” he snorted. “With who?”

“Well, I hear Evan Pogdar needs a partner.”

Ryan actually laughed at that. “Evan? Are you **shitting** me? Evan wouldn’t put up with your bullshit for seven seconds! And the minute your fucking **mother** said one **word** to him, he’d be out of there. Don’t give me Evan. Face it, Court—you’re stuck with me. And if you want this to work, you might want to start treating me as a human being, and not something you scraped off your shoe.”

Courtney didn’t say anything to that. She couldn’t—she was too stunned. What the **hell** had gotten into her docile, accomodating partner?

Kristin Kelleher was driving to Tom’s apartment in Acton, thinking.

She trusted Tom, she did. But there were times when it was difficult—because he **really** got along well with Allison. And they were **living** together.

Allison was outgoing, vivacious, fun. Now that her skating was in a much more comfortable position, having gotten away from Ron Aztov, the real Allison came out more and more. She was great, even Kristin liked her, a lot—but Tom was who she was with, day after day. Kris couldn’t say that this fact made her at all comfortable.

Kristin pulled into Tom’s apartment complex, and went to his apartment. She had a key, so she just let herself in. She found Tom and Allison in the kitchen.

They were cooking, standing **very** close together. In fact, Allison had her hand on Tom’s shoulder. Kristin started a bit at that. “Hello,” she said.

They spun around, but **didn’t** jump or anything like they’d been ‘caught’. “Hi, Sweetie,” Tom said happily, walking over to Kristin and giving her a big kiss.

“Hey, Kris!” Allison said. “How’s things?”

“Fine,” she said after Tom had broken the kiss. “What are you two up to?”

“Cooking,” Allison said. “I want it to be good and Tom’s a better cook than I am. Eddie’s on his way,” she giggled.

“Yup, you’re finally gonna meet the famous Eddie,” Tom told Kris.

That made Kris feel better. Eddie was Allison’s boyfriend from her hometown. When he got there, Kristin **really** felt better, because Eddie and Allison were clearly over the moon about one another.

Later, cuddling in bed, Tom said, “You OK? You seemed kind of subdued when you first got here.”

“It’s nothing. It’s silly.” She sighed. “I worry about Allison.”

“Well, that’s natural. She lives here, and we have become very good friends. You have nothing to worry about, though, you know. Allison’s not my type. I love her as a friend, but romantically? It would never happen, even if I didn’t have you. Besides, she and Eddie are a perfect match—believe me, she’s not looking.”

“I know. I said it was silly.”

“Well, not that silly, due to our sharing an apartment. But, believe me, sweetie, the only person I want is **you**.”

“Good!”

Courtney knew **something** was up. Ryan had **changed**. She needed to find out why.

Unbeknownst to Ryan, Courtney had a key to his apartment. The Friday after they got back from Russia, after trying to get a hold of him, she let herself in to his apartment.

She didn’t know what she’d find, but she didn’t expect him to be there. But, when she got in, she heard noises coming from the bedroom. She followed them—and stopped short.

There was Ryan, she could tell, stark naked, fucking the ever-loving daylights out of... someone. Courtney couldn’t immediately tell who it was. Ryan had a girlfriend? One that wasn’t **her**? What the hell was going on here?

Then Courtney saw who it was—that girl who was friends with the **Kellehers**! Jessica! What the **hell** did Ryan think he was doing?

Before she could say anything, Jess spotted her. “JESUS FUCKING CHRIST!” she screamed, throwing Ryan off of her. Ryan sputtered, looked up, and saw Courtney.

“WHAT THE FUCK ARE YOU DOING HERE?” he screamed.

“I have a key,” Courtney said.

“I didn’t give you no key!”

“I had it made, when we first got you the apartment.”

“Oh, isn’t **that** just dandy. Courtney? Get **out**. And leave the key.”

Recovering herself, Courtney said, “I will **not**. Just what the hell do you think you’re doing? **Her**? Sleeping with the enemy, isn’t **that** just dandy!”

Ryan jumped out of the bed, and stomped over to her. Jessie had covered herself up with the blanket and was hunched on the bed, but Ryan was too enraged to care—besides, Courtney had seen all of him anyway. “Enemy? What the **hell** are you talking about? Warren and Sophie aren’t the **enemy**! They’re good friends, good people. Yes, they’re competitors; and, yes, I want to beat them, but that’s **on** the ice, you idiot! As for Jess, I’m in love with her. Period. You have nothing to say about it. Now GET OUT!”

Courtney, at a loss, got out.

Ryan turned back to the bed. Jess looked at him. “You’re in love with me?” she said.

“Damn. I **did** want to say that to you a wee bit more romantically.”

“Well, take two, then,” Jessie giggled.

Ryan grinned, and climbed back into the bed. “Jessica, I love you, heart and soul.”

“I love you too,” Jess returned with a smile, snuggling into him. “So, tell me something. Did the excrement just collide with the portable cooling device?”

“Oh, in a big way,” Ryan confirmed.

“Hmph. Well, thus endeth the peace and quiet phase of our relationship.”

“Oh, really? I wasn’t sensing much quiet a couple minutes ago.”

“True,” Jess laughed. “But we were rudely interrupted.”

“I think I can pick up where I left off.”

“Well, not quite. You’ll have to work me up again—somebody kind of killed my arousal.”

“No big surprise, she did that to me when I was sleeping with her,” Ryan quipped. Jessie cracked up laughing. “Anyhow, build you back up again? I think I can do that,” he said, reaching underneath the blanket.

“Knew you could,” she purred.

AN OCEANVIEW CHRISTMAS (Chapter 147)

They all went home for Christmas, including Jess. She went home for a week—all the vacation she could get—but Warren and Sophie would be staying for a couple weeks, before flying to Cleveland for Nationals.

One thing they decided to do, with Ellen and Dan's permission, is to have a party the Saturday before Christmas. There were so many friends that they didn't get to see enough of, so they had a party.

The house was packed, all their friends eager to come and spend some time. Everyone was there. Crash even came, though Liz couldn't as she was busy practicing for Nationals. Ryan didn't come, either, so Crash and Jessie jokingly decided to be 'dates' for the day.

"So, how's Liz?" Jess asked him.

"Just wonderful. I got lucky, and I know it. I thought living together would be a strain—it's **not**. It's working out wonderfully. How about you with, what's his name, Ryan?"

"Well, that's a little bit more difficult," Jess sighed. "If it were just the two of us, things would be wonderful, but it's not."

"Ah," Crash said, "that bitch of a partner of his."

"You got it," Jess admitted. "He told her off, but she's still a bitch. I've let him handle things so far, but if she keeps up some of the shit she's pulling...."

"Full Metal Jessica's gonna make an appearance?" Crash guessed with a smile.

"Oh, she's **all** ready to peek her nasty little head out," Jess laughed.

"Good! Outside of Courtney the Bitch, how is Ryan?"

"Wonderful, actually," Jessie admitted.

"More compatible with you than I was?"

"Well, yes," Jessie laughed. "What can I say? I'm sure you'd say the same about Liz."

"I must admit...." Crash grinned.

"More low-maintenance than I am?" Jess teased.

Crash chuckled. "Liz Cushman is probably the most low-maintenance female I've ever met in my life. Sometimes she's **too** low-maintenance."

"Ah, ah, ah—be careful what you wish for," Jess teased.

“Tell me about it,” Crash chuckled ruefully. “No, not really. It’s just that sometimes she has to stop and remind herself to tell me, ‘Hey, Jay, I love you and I’m glad you’re here.’ She does it enough, though.”

Jess laughed. “Well, honestly, I’ve become a wee bit more low-maintenance than I used to be. Not completely, though.”

“How’s **he**?” Crash asked.

“Medium-maintenance. Just about right. Not clingy or oblivious, just attentive.” She sighed. “Of course, the problem is his baggage—and she doesn’t need ‘maintenance’, she needs a complete blow-up-and-rebuild.”

Crash laughed, but then got serious. “Do you think that’ll ever be an obstacle?”

“It could be,” Jess admitted. “It’s been defused for now, but, yeah—I think there might be a possibility. If she ever asks him to choose between me and his skating career.....I don’t know how that would turn out. I’d never ask him, but she might. And he’s not Sophia and Warren, who could leave it all behind—skating’s **so** important to him.”

“I hope it all works out, kiddo,” Crash told her quietly. “I want the best for you, you know that.”

“Thanks.”

Warren and Sophie had many friends, and, because of the hectic quality of their lives lately, they didn’t get to see too many of them, which is why they had the party.

Warren was thrilled to see Siobhan Bates, who he hadn’t seen in a while.

“So, how’s the knee, darling?” Siobhan asked him.

“It’s coming along. A little bit every day. So how’s the love life?”

Siobhan let out a dramatic sigh. “It is **so** frustrating. Craig and I went out for three years, for Goodness’ sake. And we get out of college in May—and he moves back to Pennsylvania! I **didn’t** see that coming. I thought we were going to stay here.”

“Do you still stay in contact with him?”

“Yes, and he’s going to come up here for New Year’s. But it’s frustrating. He decided he hated Boston, and I don’t know if I can just pack up and move to Philadelphia. I don’t know **anyone** there. I know his family is there, but he does at least have friends here. I have nobody there. Plus, I’m working, and he hasn’t found anything yet.”

“That sucks, Siobhan.”

“Yes, it does. I just don’t know what to do. Ah, well, if he doesn’t come around, I’ll just dump him and find someone else. I mean, I **am** irresistible, after all.”

Warren laughed. “There’s the Siobhan I know and love.”

“You bet your Beatle Boots, babe. He’s got chances to work this out, but they’re not unlimited. If I’m single, I’m gonna start acting it!”

Sophie, meanwhile, was renewing acquaintances with Nick Papadopoulos and Karen Laskovich. Karen was showing off her engagement ring.

“So, when’s the wedding?” Sophie asked them.

“Summer after next,” Karen said. “He just put this on me two weeks ago, and we need plenty of time to prepare.”

“It’s going to be a big one,” Nick laughed. “Me being Greek and all, I have a thousand cousins.”

“I have a funny feeling we’re going to get swamped with wedding invites in the next couple years,” Sophie giggled. “Our college friends Paul and Caitlin are next year.”

“We’re all getting to be that age,” Nick said.

“And there’s so many long-term relationships in our little circle,” Karen giggled. “Of course, some of ‘em break up. Speaking of which, how **is** Jess?”

“Fine,” Sophie told them. “She’s got a new guy. Ryan Killen, he’s a skater, too. You can ask her about him when she comes back around.”

“OK,” Nick said, bemused, “how many people in your little circle have ended up going out with skaters?”

Sophie laughed. “Well, Jess. **And** Crash, her ex, he’s dating Liz Cushman. Warren’s sister Kristin is dating Tom Bellamy. That’s it, I think. Though I’m sure there will be more opportunities!”

The day after Christmas, Warren stepped out onto the ice for the first time in over two months.

It wasn’t easy. He was still wearing a brace on his knee for stability, which cut down on his range of motion. And the pain was still rather acute. But they wanted to prove that they were, at least, **working** towards getting back on the ice. They wanted to be skating

somewhat by the time Nationals rolled around, that would make it easier for them to get a bye to Worlds.

However, it was rough going. Warren was gutting it out, but it wasn't easy.

New Year's Eve, they'd been on the ice for a week. They were still just doing it in short spurts, nothing even close to a program.

"Damn, this hurts," Warren moaned, sitting at the side of the ice.

"Maybe you two should just shut it down for the year," June, their coach, told them.

"I don't think that would be a good idea," Warren said. "Miss a whole year, the year before the Olympics? If we can at **all** be at Worlds this year, I think we have to."

"I see your point, Warren, but you don't want to mess the knee up any more," June said.

"True. Hence, the brace," he said with a smile. "That's why I'm wearing it. The pain doesn't mean I'm making it worse."

"True."

Warren hobbled his way through a couple of weeks of very shaky practices. Then they flew to Denver for Nationals. They wouldn't be competing, of course, but this was where the World Team was to be named. If they were going to get a bye, they'd have to be here. They'd probably have to show some folks from the USFSA that they were working towards being ready for Worlds.

When they got there, Curtis Ingalls asked to meet with them. They invited him up to their room.

"Look, you guys need to know this," Curtis started. "There's a concerted effort to keep you guys from getting a bye."

"Why on earth?" Sophia said.

"Oh, come on," Warren said. "I think we can guess who's behind **that**."

"There's no proof, but my hunch is that you're correct," Curtis said.

"Why would she **care**?" Sophie said. "She and Ryan are shoo-ins. They're **going** to win the National Championship, they have no real competition. So why would they care if **we** go to Worlds?"

“Because then the spotlight’s off the little princess,” Warren snorted. “It’s all about our ‘comeback’, and, even as National Champions, they’re also-rans at Worlds. We’ll get the attention.”

“Ah,” Sophie agreed.

“But this shouldn’t be a problem, anyhow, should it?” Warren asked. “We’re the only team here that’s medalled at Worlds. We’re the only team that has a **chance** to medal at Worlds. We’re three time National Champions. We’re past World Champions.”

“Yes, but, there’s precedence. Nicole Bobek,” Curtis pointed out.

“Nicole Bobek was injured because she went on a tour in the month before Nationals, and her training habits sucked,” Warren pointed out. “Plus, there was a lot of hullabaloo when she **didn’t** get the bye. Lots of people were pissed. I was one of them. And there are no Michelle Kwans in the Dance division this year to uphold the USA’s standing. It’s us or nothing. Ryan and Courtney can’t make the podium in Cup of Russia, for goodness’ sake!”

“I know,” Curtis said. “Look, guys, I know we’ve had our disagreements—but, in this, I’m on **your** side. I **will** vote for you guys getting the bye. We don’t have to name our official World team until a week before Worlds start. So, as far as I’m concerned, you guys have until then to prove you’re ready. Call it a provisional bye.”

“Which is fine by us,” Warren told him. Sophie nodded agreement. “But we’re going to get people voting against even **that**, aren’t we?”

Curtis nodded. “How can Courtney get **away** with this?” Sophie asked.

“She—and, I suspect, her mother—have been doing this all behind the scenes,” Curtis told them. “It’s only my suspicion that they are behind it, but I’d be shocked if it were anything else. It’s that they’ve planted doubts in the minds of the USFSA Board. You know, you guys will never be ready, it would be unfair to the third-place team at Nationals, knee surgeries don’t heal that quickly, et cetera. They’ve created an undercurrent of doubt, and kept their names out of it.”

“Is there anything we can do?” Warren asked.

“Can you handle a full run-through of your long program?”

“Uh, no,” Warren said. “I mean, Curtis, I’ve been back on the ice for two weeks! And I’m still in a brace.”

“It can be watered down,” Curtis told them. “I think you have to show them **something**. And if you can come **close**, and I make sure I let it be **known** that you’ve only been back on the ice for two weeks—I think we can pull this off.”

“Yeah, but, what happens if I collapse in pain halfway through it?” Warren asked. “That would be worse.”

“I know, but it’s the only way,” Curtis told them. “Unless I can prove that Courtney and her mother are behind this—I could discredit the effort that way—but I don’t think I can.”

“All right,” Warren said. “Schedule it, but for as late in the week as you can.” Curtis nodded. “And we’re going to work on the other angle. I wonder if Ryan can catch Courtney in the act?”

“Do you think that would help?” Curtis asked them. “Don’t get me wrong, I like Ryan, and I know the dynamics of that pair—but Ryan’s historically been very timid in confronting Courtney.”

“Not lately,” Sophie grinned. “Ryan has an extracurricular activity now.” Curtis just looked at them.

“Ryan’s got a girlfriend,” Warren laughed.

“Wait a minute—you mean **besides** Courtney?” Curtis asked, amazed. “Wow. I thought Courtney had him completely whipped—whoops, excuse me.”

Warren cracked up. “Don’t worry, Curtis, we don’t offend easily, you know that. I think Ryan got fed up with all that. He doesn’t love Courtney, never did, and I think he decided he had had enough of how she treats him.”

“Furthermore,” Sophie told him, “Ryan’s new girlfriend? It’s Jessie, my best friend.”

“You **are** kidding,” Curtis laughed.

“Nope,” Sophie told him. “Plus, Courtney caught them—in the act, if you know what I mean—and Ryan absolutely read her the riot act. Told her to stay out of his personal business.”

“Wow, what a change,” Curtis said, still laughing. “Good for him—and good for Jessie. But, yeah, if you can get him in on this, that might help. But you’ll probably still have to skate.”

They explained the situation to Ryan, who was incensed. And it was child’s play for him to get the goods on Courtney and her mother. He overheard a number of conversations. He decided to confront Courtney, and asked Jess, who had come to Nationals to see him, to be there. Jess gladly agreed.

Courtney’s mother was also there. “I’m telling you two flat-out,” Ryan started. “Call off the dogs. I know what you’re up to, and, if it doesn’t stop, I **will** tell the USFSA Board. I’ll stand right up and tell them who’s manipulating this, and why.”

“You fucking traitor!” Courtney screamed.

“Ryan, you seem to have lost your sense of priorities,” Mrs. Rogers said ominously.

Courtney snorted. “That’s because he’s sleeping with **this** slut!”

That was the wrong thing to say. Jess had been playing it cool, but Full Metal Jessica had been lurking for some time. “**Slut?** Me? Oh, that’s **rich**. I sleep with Ryan because I love him. You’ve been sleeping with him for **years** to **manipulate** him. And **I** am a slut?” She got right in Courtney’s face. “You know what? I bet the networks and the skating gossip rags would **love** that. Little miss morals, the upstanding Courtney Rogers, who criticizes other people for being immoral—has been sleeping with her partner since she was **thirteen**! And she’s been doing it to **blackmail** him! What would happen to your pristine little image if **that** ever got out?”

“Nobody would believe you,” Courtney said—but shakily.

“Oh, come **on**, Courtney. There are ways to get it out, you know. You should know **all** about that, considering what a devious little shit **you** are.”

“Hey! You can’t—“ Mrs. Rogers started.

Jessica wouldn’t let her go any further. “Oh look, the Mother of the Year wants to say something! Just shut your fat fucking mouth, I don’t want to hear it.” Courtney’s mother’s eyes bugged out at that. Incredulous, she just stood there with her mouth opening and closing like a fish. “You know, I wondered how Courtney became such a manipulative bitch—until I met you. The apple doesn’t fall far from the tree, does it?”

Jess turned back to Courtney. “And as for **you**.—I understand skating’s important to Ryan. I try not to get involved in that—even when you **are** trying to sabotage my best friends by devious means because you can’t beat them on the **ice**. But I stay out of that. However, if you **ever** say another derogatory word to **me** I will slap that fucking smirk off your face so hard it’ll make your head spin, and don’t think for a minute that I won’t. You have no idea who you’re dealing with. I’ve ground up and spit out people that would make you look like the picayune pissant you truly are.

“You have no fucking idea how lucky you are—because you have no appreciation for the lengths that Ryan goes to **protect** you. If he’s telling you to call off the dogs, you’d better do it—because without him there to smooth things over, you’re in deep shit. And, remember this, he will **not** protect you from **me**.”

With that, Jess turned on her heel and made to go. Courtney stared after her, completely flabbergasted. Ryan looked at Courtney, and, very quietly, said, “Call off the dogs about the Kellehers’ bye. I won’t back you on this. I mean it.” Then he turned and went in the same direction as Jess.

He quickly caught up to her—she had stopped around the corner so he could catch up. She looked sheepish—and was, in fact, about to apologize—until she saw the big grin on his face.

“Wow!” he said.

“Uhm, I think I got a little carried away,” she said.

“Yes, but it certainly was fun to watch,” he grinned. “Where did **that** come from?”

“Oh, that’s a rather prominent part of my personality, actually. I call her Full Metal Jessica. You’ve just never seen it before, because **you** don’t piss me off!”

“Believe me, after that, I will be doing my utmost to **never** piss you off.”

“Good boy. You train well,” she laughed. “Anyhow, I hope my little tirade didn’t make your life worse.”

“I couldn’t care less,” Ryan said. “After what she called you, she deserved it.”

“Thanks.”

Courtney and her mother did back off, but the damage was done. The sentiment against granting a bye to Warren and Sophia had taken on a life of its own. So, they did what they had to—they skated their long program in front of a group of USFSA judges and officials.

It took its toll. They got through it—though it was watered down—and Warren managed to not break down in pain until he got to the locker room. But the pain was intense.

It was a very strange Nationals for Warren and Sophie—the first time in 7 years they wouldn’t be participating. They watched Tom, Liz, and Brett and Andrea all repeat as National Champions. And they watched Courtney and Ryan win their first National Championship—with a weak and lackluster program that plainly indicated the growing resentment between the two. They won purely due to lack of competition.

That helped Sophie and Warren. The USFSA was faced with three dance slots for Worlds—and the top three finishers at nationals were a pair who were at odds with each other; and two pairs of complete also-rans. Even with Courtney’s manipulation, and even with the very shaky performance that Warren and Sophie had eked out—it was an easy choice for the board. Warren and Sophie were given a tentative bye to Worlds, contingent on passing a physical and an observations session right before Worlds.

They were in. Now all they had to do was hope Warren’s knee kept healing.

THE COMEBACK (Chapter 148)

After Nationals, Warren and Sophia returned to school, for their last semester of college. They had classes to worry about, and Betsy, and skating. Warren was still trying to get into shape to skate at Worlds. It wasn't an easy process, and the pain never entirely went away.

However, they believed what they had told June—that missing Worlds this year would be horrible for their career. They had to show up, at the very least.

“Besides which,” Warren told Sophie one night, “because of all the brouhaha and the suspensions, this is the one Worlds where the judging is almost guaranteed to be fair. How we gonna pass **that** up?”

Meanwhile, Jessie was having her own problems—with Ryan. He seemed to be getting more and more distant. All of a sudden, and she didn't understand it. He kept maintaining he **wasn't** upset that she had gone after Courtney. Courtney had deserved it, Ryan had told Jess, and it was Jess's honor that was being sullied, so he didn't mind at all. But Jess still felt uneasy. Finally, she asked him about it.

“Look, it's just weird. After Worlds, OK? I have to get through Worlds, and I have to do it with Courtney. After that, we'll settle all this once and for all.”

Jess wasn't all that comforted by that—because she was sure that Courtney was twisting the screws into Ryan, and hard.

A couple of weeks before Worlds, Warren and Sophie performed their free skate, in front of the observers from the USFSA, to the observers' satisfaction. They'd proved their fitness and would be allowed to go to Worlds.

What the USFSA folks didn't realize, however, is how close a thing it was. That was the **first** time Warren had been able to get through the whole free skate without collapsing in pain. And he **did** collapse in pain afterwards, in the locker room.

They got through the program a couple more times, then flew to New Jersey for Worlds. June met them there. After seeing them skate, she said, “Are you **sure** you guys want to do this?”

“Yeah,” Warren said. “We have to give it a try. The problem is, I don't think we can practice.”

“That's not going to be good,” June told them, though they already knew that. “The judges are going to expect to see you on the practice ice.”

“We know,” Warren told her, “but I don’t want us to blow our load in practice. We have to skate three straight days, two short programs and one long. I don’t know if I can do that **without** resting beforehand.”

“I see your point. I guess it’s a risk you’re going to have to take,” June said. Then she grinned. “It’s a good thing you two have timing that’s almost second nature.”

“No lie,” Sophie giggled. “Considering how little time we’ve spent on the ice since October, it’s a miracle we’re not completely tripping over one another and losing all sense of unison.”

“It’s that whole telepathy thing,” June laughed.

That night, they ate in the hotel dining room, where they were joined by Evan Pogdar.

“Come to watch?” Warren asked Evan.

“Yup. Plus I’m still the athlete’s rep on the USFSA board, so I have to be here because of that.”

“What are your plans?” Sophie asked him.

“Try to find a new partner, hopefully this summer.”

“Shawna’s OK with that?”

“Actively encouraging it, actually. She’s going to coach. When I find a partner, she’s going to be my co-coach, along with Nina.” Russian expatriate Nina Zirkovskaya had been Evan and Shawna’s long-time coach. “She’s come to terms with the end of the skating part of it, and wants me to keep going.”

Later on, Warren and Sophie were joined by the Canadian dancers, Renee Damphier and Christian Gaudler. They hadn’t competed at an ISU event in two years, but had kept their eligibility, skating in only pro-ams and shows that wouldn’t count against them with the ISU. They had decided to attempt a comeback this year, and had won Canadian Nationals.

“Back for another go, eh?” Warren teased them.

“Yeah. After watching those French bumlbers win last year—and after all the changes and suspensions—we figured we’d give it one more shot,” Renee told them. “And we’re in shape, ready to go, and we have dynamite programs. How’s the knee?”

“Getting there. We’ll see,” Warren told them.

They didn't show up for any practices, and it **was** noticed—but they didn't feel as if they had a choice. They would be skating three straight nights, and it was going to be all Warren could do to get through that.

Wednesday was the first Original Dance, the shuffle. Warren and Sophia broke out Ringo Starr's "You're Sixteen," a fun song that they had worked up a fun program to. There were two problems—they skated fairly early in the order, and they were very rusty. They managed a decent showing, and Warren's knee held up fairly well. When all was said and done, however, they had only placed fourth. Damphier and Gaudler won, with a stunningly difficult shuffle. The Brits, Brenneman and Watts, were second; and the Russians, Kuznetsova and Vasilyevskiy, were third. One thing that **did** make Warren and Sophie happy was to see that now, with the offending judges of past years weeded out, the French team was way down in eighth. Ryan and Courtney were tenth. Ryan was philosophical, but Courtney was **fuming**.

The next day, it was time for the rhumba. Sophie and Warren did a steamy interpretation of Sade's "Smooth Operator." A Rhumba was supposed to be sexy, and Sophie and Warren had an advantage. Warren tossed off the pain, and went for it. It was difficult, but they got through it—and the inherent excellence of the program showed through. They won the second OD. The Brits were second again, with the Canadians falling to third after a little stumble.

After the two Original Dances, the Canadians and the Brits were tied for first, but Sophie and Warren were within striking distance.

Sophie and Warren were in their hotel room after the second OD. The Free Dance would be the next evening. Ellen, who was there with them, was watching Betsy in her room.

"So, how's the knee?" Sophie asked.

"It's a little sore. I'll get through it OK, but it does hurt."

"Hmmm, well, it's the night before the free dance. You know what **that** means."

"Uh-huh," Warren laughed. "I think you'll have to be on top, though."

"Now when I have I ever complained about **that**?" Sophie giggled. "Besides which, that's been the case most of the time since you hurt that knee. Come here," she said, sitting on the bed. Warren joined her. She started taking off his clothes. When she got them all off, they went to work on hers. Afterwards, naked, they grabbed each other, kissing deeply. Their hands roamed all over one another as their tongues danced. After a while of this, Sophia rolled Warren onto his back. She went to straddle him.

"Don't you want my tongue first?" Warren laughed.

“Nope, Dear Heart. Not tonight. I’m too horny.” She lifted up and lowered herself onto him. “Oh, man,” she groaned.

She started moving up and down on him. “Is that OK? On your knee, I mean.”

“No problem,” Warren told her. She picked up the pace. It wasn’t long before they both went.

“That, for us, was a quickie,” Warren joked, cuddling Sophie in his arms afterwards.

“Sometimes a quickie is nice. Don’t want to tire us out and all, but we needed our good luck fuck.”

“As long as all that luck goes right to my knee,” Warren laughed.

Warren and Sophie drew last to skate of the final group in the free dance. “I was hoping for that,” Warren said. “I want to ice down my knee after warm-ups.”

The Irish couple, in fifth place, went first. They were definitely getting better. Next were the Brits, Brenneman and Watts, who were very good. The young Russians, Kuznetsova and Vasilyevskiy, were decent—but they weren’t as good as the Brits, and, without a stacked judging panel, they weren’t going to beat them.

Then the Canadians, Damphier and Gaudler, came out and put a big huge exclamation point on their return to eligible competition. They were, simply, marvelous. Fast, complex, intricate—and their presentation ability, always their weak point, had been improved by two years of skating in show tours. They were fantastic, and got deserving marks.

Warren and Sophie saw it all. “That is gonna be tough to beat,” Sophie said.

“Quite honestly, I’m more worried about staying on my feet for four and a half minutes,” Warren said.

“That bad?”

“We’ll see. It bothered me yesterday, and that program was two minutes shorter.”

They stepped out onto the ice. Renee and Christian, always gracious competitors, wished them good luck as they left the ice. Warren and Sophie took their starting position.

The announcer announced their names, and said that they were “skating to the music of Bruce Springsteen,” which got a resounding cheer. Of course it did, they were in New Jersey. Warren and Sophie both loved Springsteen—but worlds being in Jersey was an added incentive to skate to him this year.

The opening guitar riff to Ramrod rang out, and they were off.

It started out fine. They did the opening sequence with no problem. After the first verse, their cut of Ramrod skipped to the sax solo, to which they had choreographed their serpentine step sequence. It was fast and intricate, in closed position, and they performed it with aplomb. The rest of Ramrod was fine.

It was after that that the wheels started to come off, just a little bit. The transition in music from Ramrod to Give The Girl A Kiss was marked with a spin and a lift. That visibly took something out of Warren, especially the lift.

The next part was fine, but when they got to the chorus, when the music (and the steps) sped up, Warren was pushing it. They did it, but it was obvious that Warren was in pain.

Where it showed was during the side-by-side step sequence. Their unison was off, because Warren was clearly laboring. The number ended with a series of circular ‘skip’ steps, pulling into a spin, and then a kiss (on the words “Give the girl a great big kiss,” of course). Sophia noticed that she was carrying that whole skip step-spin sequence. She knew it for sure when Warren practically collapsed in her arms at the end.

“Oh shit,” he hissed.

“Bad?”

“Fuck, yeah. It hurts like hell.”

They did their bows, and they got off the ice, Warren visibly limping.

“Damn, that was heroic,” June told them when they got off the ice.

“How was it?” Sophie asked her.

“I think you guys had the World Championship in the bag until the side-by-side. That was sloppy. It doesn’t matter, though—just getting through that program as well as you did was a miracle.”

“I am in so much pain I can’t tell you,” Warren said.

The marks came up. Mostly 5.7’s for technical merit, with the odd 5.8—low for them, especially for a program designed to be a technical one. The presentation marks were similar.

They didn’t win—but they finished second. A silver medal.

“You should be thrilled with that, you really should,” June told them. “You shouldn’t have even been out here skating. That really was heroic.”

“We’ll take it,” Warren said. “We got back on the podium, we didn’t miss a whole year, we’re well set-up for the Olympic year. As long as I heal.”

“You will,” June said.

“I think we’re going to be off the ice for a couple months anyway, what with graduation and all,” Sophia said. “Not completely, but we’re not even going to think about next year until after we graduate. And we’re not doing the tour.”

When they got back to the locker rooms, Warren was met by Ryan Killen. “Nice skating. That was gutsy.”

“Thanks,” Warren told him. “How’s Courtney.”

“Livid. She thought this was our year to move up, instead we moved down.” They had finished tenth. “Of course, this is all **my** fault.”

“You need a new partner,” Warren told him.

Ryan snorted. “Easier said than done, especially considering Evan’s going to be looking for a new partner. I’ll be second choice. Nope, I think I just have to work things out with Courtney.”

“Suit yourself, but I think you’re nuts. She’s never going to come around—and moreso as long as you’re with Jess.”

“Tell me about it,” Ryan sighed.

That night, they watched Andrea and Brett rebound from last year’s disaster to win their second World Championship.

Saturday afternoon, the men took the ice, and Tom won his second straight silver medal. Saturday night was the turn of the ladies, and Liz won her umpteenth World Championship. The big surprise was Allison Bowman, who won an upset bronze medal skating her Warren and Sophia-choreographed programs. She was thrilled beyond belief.

Sunday was the exhibitions. Warren and Sophia almost begged out, but the day of rest enabled Warren to feel a bit better. They weren’t going to do two, which they were entitled to, but they did one. It was a thing they had worked up to the song You Dance, by Eastmountainsouth. It was a gorgeous program skated to a beautiful song—and it was technically fairly simple, which Warren was glad of. They skated it perfectly, and got a standing ovation for their troubles.

Sunday night, they were headed back to Wisconsin, and the end of their college careers.

