

DEATH OF A SNOWFLAKE

Written by

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LINA, a shy and introverted ice dancer, stands on the ice alongside a line of other ICE DANCERS. They face their pretentious, controlling perfectionist, COACH STEVENS. LINA stands at the far end, her posture tense as COACH STEVENS paces up and down the line like a drill sergeant. The women, dressed in sleek black spandex ice dancing attire, watch him with a mix of apprehension and focus.

COACH STEVENS

Competitions are tomorrow. Your routine must be flawless if you have any hope of making it to the finals. From the way you dance, to the way you look, to the way you breathe—everything. This is not just about representing this company, but about yourselves. You've all worked hard enough to get here, but failure is still very much an option.

He stops mid-stride, his gaze zeroing in on LINA. Her shy demeanor catches his attention. He strides over, noticing a single stray strand of hair sticking out of her otherwise immaculate bun. Reaching out, he gently tucks it back in place.

COACH STEVENS (CONT'D)

It's not just about failing. It's about how you fail... and why.

LINA's face flushes with anxiety. She hastily adjusts her bun, her hands trembling as though she has committed a grave mistake.

COACH STEVENS (CONT'D)

(toward LINA, coldly)

See me after.

He steps back, resuming his march along the line. Each step deliberate, he creates a wide gap between himself and the dancers, ensuring all eyes are on him when he stops in the center of the rink.

COACH STEVENS (CONT'D)

Everything has to be—no, everything must be absolute perfection.

He scans the line, his gaze heavy with a mix of frustration and stress. After a long pause, he exhales sharply, his breath fogging in the cold air.

COACH STEVENS (CONT'D)
That's all for today. Drink plenty
of water, stretch, and rest.

With that, COACH STEVENS exits the ice. The ICE DANCERS break formation, chattering quietly as they leave the rink. LINA lingers behind, dragging her feet and avoiding eye contact, lost in her own world.

2

INT. ICE RINK - LOCKER ROOM - NIGHT

2

LINA sits on a bench, across from her locker, carefully loosening the laces of her ice skates. The other ICE DANCERS chatter and gossip as they change and leave, their voices fading in the background. LINA's focus is entirely on the task at hand—undoing the skates with meticulous precision.

A moment later, AVA, her eccentric and protective best friend, bursts into the scene. She plops down next to LINA on the bench, giving her a reassuring smile.

AVA
(playfully)
Oh, Lina...

LINA glances up at AVA, her nervous eyes betraying her uncertainty.

LINA
(hesitant)
Am I in trouble?

Without a word, AVA wraps her arm around LINA, pulling her in for a tight, comforting hug.

AVA
(softly)
Don't worry. You're fine.

LINA looks unconvinced, her doubt lingering.

LINA
(unsure)
I just want to be...

Before LINA can finish, AVA gets up and expertly cracks the combination lock on LINA's locker, as though it were second nature.

AVA
(interrupting gently)
You shouldn't push yourself so
hard. You're doing great.

AVA grabs LINA's ice skate bag and hands it to her with a mischievous grin.

AVA (CONT'D)
You also really need to change your code. Those are some serious skates, you know.

LINA cannot help but smile, her tension easing just a bit.

LINA
(grateful)
Thanks, Ava.

AVA nudges her gently, her smile warm and teasing.

AVA
Look, just get dressed, see what Coach wants, and then we'll hang out and watch our cheesy soaps. Sound good?

LINA's face softens into a heartfelt smile as she nods.

AVA (CONT'D)
(playfully, standing up)
Alright, bestie. I'll be out front. Don't take too long.

AVA walks out of the locker room, leaving LINA alone.

LINA takes a deep breath, sets the bag down, and opens it. She pulls out a sweatshirt and sweatpants, slipping them over her ice dancing attire, the familiar fabric offering her a sense of comfort. She places her ice skates neatly in the bag, her movements slow, as if savoring the brief moment of solitude.

3

INT. COACH STEVENS' OFFICE - NIGHT

3

COACH STEVENS sits at his desk, scribbling harshly on a clipboard. The sharp sound of his pen fills the otherwise-silent room.

Suddenly, a soft KNOCK at the door.

OWEN
(distracted, not looking up)
Yes?

LINA gently opens the door, stepping inside. COACH STEVENS does not acknowledge her, continuing to write.

COACH STEVENS
(without looking up)
Have a seat.

LINA enters hesitantly, sitting down in one of the two chairs across from his desk. She clutches her ice skate bag tightly in her lap, her posture stiff with nerves.

The room is thick with silence as she waits, trying to muster the courage to speak.

COACH STEVENS (CONT'D)
(still writing)
Do you know why you're here?

LINA hesitates, her voice small.

LINA
(quietly)
Because of my hair.

COACH STEVENS' pen continues to scratch across the paper.

COACH STEVENS
Try again. Why are you here?

LINA bites her lip, her gaze dropping nervously.

LINA
(stammering)
Well, my mother. She's been
struggling...

COACH STEVENS looks up briefly, his expression unreadable.

COACH STEVENS
Yes?

LINA
(softly)
I want to help.

There is a long pause. COACH STEVENS does not respond immediately, his eyes fixed on her.

COACH STEVENS
(coldly)
I see. How exactly do you plan on
achieving that--through skating?

LINA flinches, unsure of how to respond. She shifts in her seat, clearly uncomfortable.

LINA
(quietly, unsure)
I... I don't know.

COACH STEVENS watches her for a moment, then leans back in his chair, his eyes never leaving her.

COACH STEVENS
You're a talented dancer, but you
lack confidence.

LINA's gaze drops to the floor, the weight of his words sinking in. She twirls her fingers nervously around the strap of her ice skate bag.

COACH STEVENS (CONT'D)
(with a hint of cruelty)
If it's just the prize money you
want, there are other ways that can
help.

LINA's head snaps up, her eyes widening, a spark of confusion and hope flickering within them.

LINA
(tentatively)
I don't understand.

COACH STEVENS sets down his pen. Finally, he looks up from the clipboard, his gaze locking with hers.

COACH STEVENS
Your technique is flawed. How do
you intend to achieve such goals
when you don't seem to have the
passion—that fire in you?

He stands slowly from behind the desk and paces toward her, his movements deliberate, controlled.

COACH STEVENS (CONT'D)
I've helped many of your peers
with... various matters. All you
have to do is let me help you.

As he approaches, his hand reaches out and rests, almost too casually, on LINA's shoulder. His fingers slowly trail down her back, inching toward her waist.

LINA freezes, her eyes wide with discomfort. Her breath catches, her body tense.

COACH STEVENS (CONT'D)
 (low, almost whispering)
 Let me help you...

LINA's face turns pale. She jumps out of her seat, her ice skate bag slipping from her hands, barely catching it before it hits the floor.

Her face flushed with panic, she storms out of the room, nearly slamming the door behind her. The sound of her hurried footsteps echoes in the hallway.

Inside the office, COACH STEVENS watches her go, his expression unreadable. He remains unmoved, unfazed by her reaction, as he calmly picks up his pen and resumes writing.

4

INT. AVA'S CAR - CITY STREETS - NIGHT

4

AVA drives through the vibrant streets, the car humming softly as chill, relaxing music plays in the background, perfectly complementing the lively atmosphere outside. LINA sits in the passenger seat, gazing out the window at the flickering city lights. Her tense, introverted demeanor begins to soften, the music and the changing scenery offering her a rare moment of peace.

For a brief moment, LINA relaxes, her shoulders dropping as the rhythms of the city and the soothing tunes provide a temporary escape from the weight of her worries.

But as they continue, the bustling cityscape fades away. The streets become rougher, the buildings worn and weathered. The once vibrant surroundings give way to neglected, beat-up apartment complexes and cracked roads. LINA's expression shifts as the energy around them changes, the calm she felt earlier slipping away, replaced by a quiet melancholy.

They pull up in front of one of the dilapidated buildings—three stories high, held together just enough to remain standing, but barely up to code. The faded exterior speaks of years of neglect.

AVA parks the car, and for a moment, the engine hums softly as the two sit in silence.

LINA
 (hesitantly, her voice
 soft)
 Um, Ava?

AVA pauses with her hand on the door handle, looking over at LINA. The hesitation on LINA's face is clear, and her eyes are full of unspoken words—apology, uncertainty.

AVA
(lightly, sensing her
discomfort)
I get it. You're tired.

LINA's gaze shifts, filled with sincerity and a quiet apology.

LINA
(softly, almost
apologetic)
Sorry.

AVA
(changing the subject,
trying to lighten the
mood)
Oh, yeah. What did Coach want?

LINA hesitates, the weight of the earlier conversation still hanging on her.

LINA
(quietly, avoiding eye
contact)
Nothing.

AVA watches her for a beat, sensing something more but not pushing. She offers a knowing smile, one of both concern and understanding.

AVA
(nodding)
Okay, well... I'll see you
tomorrow.

They exchange a small, comforting smile, a moment of unspoken friendship.

LINA unbuckles her seatbelt, clutching her ice skate bag as she exits the car. As she walks toward the apartment, AVA watches her closely, her gaze filled with concern and care. LINA walks slowly, her steps heavy, her shoulders hunched as she disappears inside the building.

AVA sits for a moment longer, her hand hovering over the steering wheel. She puts her seatbelt back on and starts the car, casting one last, uncertain glance toward LINA's building. Then, with a sigh, she drives off into the night, the glow of the city lights fading in the rearview mirror.

5

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

5

LINA walks into the dimly lit hallway of the apartment building, the worn, poorly maintained walls echoing with every step. She begins to climb the first flight of stairs to the second floor, her footsteps slow, each one heavy with the weight of the day.

As she reaches the top step, she has not noticed BENJAMIN standing in the hallway, waiting for her. He spots her just before she does him.

BENJAMIN
(cheerfully, calling out)
Hey, Lina!

LINA startles, clutching her ice skate bag tighter to her chest. She freezes for a moment, then looks up to see BENJAMIN. A soft, subtle smile tugs at her lips as she registers his presence.

BENJAMIN, realizing he startled her, takes a gentle step forward, offering his hand to help her with the last step.

BENJAMIN (CONT'D)
(a little awkward, but
kind)
Here.

LINA hesitates just a moment before taking his hand, using it for balance as she steps onto the second floor.

BENJAMIN (CONT'D)
(with a hopeful smile)
How was practice?

LINA
(shrugging slightly, but
softly)
It was good.

BENJAMIN
(eagerly, with a knowing
smile)
That's good. I heard about
tomorrow. You're going to do your
thing, right?

LINA hesitates, her uncertainty palpable. She gives a slight shake of her head, unsure.

LINA
(softly)
I don't know...

BENJAMIN steps a little closer, his expression full of encouragement.

BENJAMIN
(insistent, but gentle)
You better. I just know you're
good. I always see you carrying
those skates around.

LINA glances down at her skates, her fingers grazing the bag with affection, her touch tender.

LINA
(with a quiet fondness)
My mom got me these.

BENJAMIN
(smiling warmly)
Oh, nice. How's your mom, by the
way?

LINA looks up at him, her eyes betraying a deep sadness, as if the weight of her circumstances is too much to carry in this moment.

LINA
(quietly, almost detached)
Good.

BENJAMIN, sensing the change in her demeanor, softens his approach. His tone is gentle as he speaks.

BENJAMIN
(nodding, understanding)
Good. Well, okay. I just wanted to
say hi. I know you're probably
tired, so...

LINA offers him another faint, grateful smile, her gaze softening. There is an unspoken connection in the quiet moment between them.

BENJAMIN (CONT'D)
(with a small, sincere
smile)
Alright. Goodnight, Lina.

LINA
(gently, with warmth)
Goodnight.

They share one last quiet smile before LINA begins to walk up the second flight of stairs to the third floor. BENJAMIN watches her go, his gaze lingering, lost in thought.

There is a tenderness in his expression, a quiet longing. He is in love, but the feeling is unspoken, hanging in the air as he stands alone in the hallway, still holding onto the brief moment they shared.

6

INT. LINA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

6

The sound of the CLICK echoes as LINA unlocks the door. The door creaks open into a dim, cluttered apartment. The light from the hallway filters into the darkness before LINA steps inside and closes the door. For a moment, the room is enveloped in shadow, but then LINA flicks on a nearby light switch, illuminating the space with a soft, muted glow.

LINA begins to remove her shoes, carefully setting her ice skate bag by the door. The door suddenly unlocks again with a CLICK, and LINA'S MOTHER enters, dressed in her diner server's uniform—a clear sign of her long, exhausting shift. She shuts the door behind her with a relieved sigh, her tired expression softening into a warm smile when she sees her daughter.

LINA'S MOTHER
(gently, with affection)
Hey, baby.

LINA swiftly moves toward her mother, hugging her tightly. Her arms wrap around her mother's waist, and for a moment, both women stand in quiet comfort, holding each other.

LINA'S MOTHER hugs her back, her arms soft but strong, holding LINA in a gentle embrace.

For a moment, LINA begins to weep silently, tears slipping down her face as her emotions spill over.

LINA'S MOTHER (CONT'D)
(concerned, softly)
What's wrong?

LINA pulls back slightly, her face tear-streaked, and barely manages to get the words out.

LINA
(whispering through her
tears)
I can't go back.

LINA'S MOTHER's brows furrow deeply. She gently pushes LINA back to look at her face.

LINA'S MOTHER
 (gently, her voice
 trembling)
 What? What happened?

LINA pulls back slightly, her face tear-streaked, and barely manages to get the words out.

LINA
 (whispering through her
 tears)
 I can't go back.

LINA'S MOTHER's brows furrow deeply. She gently pushes LINA back to look at her face.

LINA cries harder, her breaths shaky and uneven.

LINA (CONT'D)
 (desperately)
 I can't.

LINA'S MOTHER wraps her arms tightly around her again, holding her close as though shielding her from the world.

LINA'S MOTHER
 (softly, comfortingly)
 Okay. You won't. It's okay.

7

INT. LINA'S APARTMENT - LINA'S ROOM - DAY

7

AVA and BENJAMIN stand by LINA's bed. LINA lies on her side, fully wrapped in her covers, facing away from them. The room is dim, with the blinds tightly closed, allowing only a sliver of light to filter in, casting long shadows across the space.

AVA
 (softly, but concerned)
 Come on, Lina. Your mom's worried,
 we're all worried about you. What's
 wrong?

BENJAMIN
 (gentle, with concern)
 Lina?

A long moment of silence. No response. Then, slowly, LINA turns over, sitting up in bed. Her eyes are hollow, filled with sadness, the weight of her struggles evident in every line of her face. It is as if the world has settled heavy on her shoulders.

AVA glances at BENJAMIN, her concern turning to impatience. She gestures toward the door, shoos him away.

AVA
(insistent, with a playful
yet firm nudge)
Girl talk! Go wait outside.

BENJAMIN hesitates for a moment, then steps back slightly, still unsure but clearly respecting her request.

BENJAMIN
(lightly protesting)
But, wait—!

AVA does not give him a chance to finish. With a swift motion, she pushes him past the doorframe, her hand on his chest. BENJAMIN stumbles slightly, surprised but laughing at her forceful but caring push.

AVA
(firmly, with a smirk)
Go on.

With a last, apologetic look at LINA, BENJAMIN steps back, and AVA slams the door shut in his face, the thud echoing in the room.

8

INT. LINA'S APARTMENT - DAY

8

LINA'S MOTHER sits on the couch in the living room, her face etched with concern and worry. She gazes down at her hands, her mind clearly preoccupied.

BENJAMIN walks into the room, his steps heavy with uncertainty. He takes a seat next to her, letting out a deep, frustrated sigh, his worry written all over his face.

LINA'S MOTHER
(impatient, her voice
trembling slightly)
Well?!

BENJAMIN
(shaking his head,
frustrated)
I don't know...

Before either can say more, AVA storms into the living room, her face a mask of rage and concern.

AVA
(bursting out, her voice
sharp with anger)
It was that fucking coach! He tried
to make a move on her!

BENJAMIN stands abruptly, his face going pale with shock,
while LINA'S MOTHER's expression is a mixture of confusion
and dread.

BENJAMIN
(desperate, almost
panicked)
What do we do?

AVA
(with conviction, her
voice thick with worry)
I don't know, but she can't go back
there.

BENJAMIN
(nervously)
What about competitions?

LINA'S MOTHER, still sitting, processes the gravity of the
situation. She looks down, her voice barely above a whisper,
as she murmurs to herself.

LINA'S MOTHER
(softly, guilt-ridden)
I signed her up for those classes.
It's all my fault.

AVA
(sharply, her voice full
of conviction)
What? No, it's not!

AVA rushes to sit beside LINA'S MOTHER, wrapping an arm
around her, offering comfort and strength. LINA'S MOTHER
leans into the hug, tears welling in her eyes.

AVA (CONT'D)
(gently, her voice
soothing)
Don't say that.

LINA'S MOTHER
(choking on emotion, her
voice cracking)
This was her dream. Now what?

AVA
 (determined, with a firm
 resolve)
 We'll find a way.

LINA'S MOTHER pulls AVA closer, embracing her tightly, her body shaking with quiet sobs. AVA holds her, the weight of the situation settling in.

AVA (CONT'D)
 (to BENJAMIN, her voice
 firm)
 Ben, I need you to go to the registration area. Sign Lina up for the solo competitions. She should already qualify. Take her mom with you. We're going to make this happen.

BENJAMIN straightens up, his posture becoming more serious, a fire of determination igniting in his eyes.

BENJAMIN
 (nodding, with resolve)
 Okay. What about you?

AVA
 (with a determined glance
 toward LINA'S MOTHER,
 resolute)
 I'm going to the police station with Lina.

9

INT. POLICE STATION - DAY

9

AVA gently guides the downtrodden LINA, her hand resting lightly on her back for comfort. LINA's steps are heavy, and her face carries the weight of the world. They make their way toward the front desk where the dedicated, no-nonsense DETECTIVE WELLS is talking on the phone. She stands casually, leaning against the desk, her posture relaxed but alert.

DETECTIVE WELLS
 (into the phone, wrapping
 up the conversation)
 Alright, thanks. I got to go.

As the call ends, she hangs up and immediately turns her attention to the two women approaching. Her gaze shifts to LINA, and she notices her distress, concern flickering in her eyes.

DETECTIVE WELLS (CONT'D)
 (warmly, trying to offer
 some comfort)
 Hi there, ladies. I'm Detective
 Wells. What brings you here today?

AVA
 (firm but gentle, stepping
 in)
 She'd like to make a report.

DETECTIVE WELLS
 (nodding, understanding
 the gravity in AVA's
 tone)
 Okay, follow me.

DETECTIVE WELLS motions for them to follow, her expression softening as she leads them through the station. The sterile, quiet atmosphere of the station contrasts with the tension surrounding them. As they walk, LINA's eyes remain downcast, her mind clearly elsewhere, while AVA stays close, her eyes protective.

DETECTIVE WELLS guides them to a private interview room, the door clicking open with a small creak.

10

INT. ARENA - REGISTRATION AREA - DAY

10

LINA'S MOTHER and BENJAMIN approach the registration table. The atmosphere is quiet, save for the sound of frantic scribbling from a REGISTRATION CLERK—an uptight and overworked woman who is deeply absorbed in her paperwork. The desk is a cluttered chaos of neatly stacked sheets, each brimming with a mountain of details, creating a feeling of overwhelming disorganization.

BENJAMIN
 (tentatively)
 Hi, we'd like to—

The REGISTRATION CLERK cuts him off abruptly with a sharp HUSH, causing him to freeze for a moment.

BENJAMIN (CONT'D)
 (slightly stunned)
 Excuse me—

She cuts him off again, this time with an even sharper HUSH.

Noticing this, LINA'S MOTHER steps forward, her tone shifting from polite to firm as she takes charge.

LINA'S MOTHER
(gently but assertively)
Hello, miss. My daughter is
scheduled to compete—

REGISTRATION CLERK
(interrupting, without
looking up)
Name.

LINA'S MOTHER
Lina Giles.

The REGISTRATION CLERK pauses, as if she instinctively knows where everything is on the desk. She grabs the list of performers with ease, her hands moving swiftly, all while continuing to write.

REGISTRATION CLERK
(without missing a beat)
I have her down here to be
competing with her company.

LINA'S MOTHER
(calmly but with
determination)
Well, actually... She'd like to
perform solo.

The REGISTRATION CLERK stops mid-motion. For the first time, she gives them her full attention, her eyes narrowing slightly as she assesses the situation.

REGISTRATION CLERK
(directly to LINA'S
MOTHER, raising an
eyebrow)
Are you her manager?

LINA'S MOTHER
(with quiet confidence)
Yes, and her mother.

The REGISTRATION CLERK considers this for a beat, her gaze flicking to the papers in front of her. Then, with a slight shift in demeanor, she responds.

REGISTRATION CLERK
She definitely qualifies, but
semifinals are today. Will she be
ready?

LINA'S MOTHER
(a confident smirk curling
on her lips)
Absolutely.

11 INT. POLICE STATION - INTERVIEW ROOM - DAY

11

LINA sits at the table, her face frozen in shock. Next to her, AVA is visibly disturbed, her expression twisted in disbelief. On the opposite side of the table, DETECTIVE WELLS sits with a stern, neutral expression.

DETECTIVE WELLS
He was found early this morning.

AVA
(voice rising)
What?! How?!

DETECTIVE WELLS
I was hoping Lina might be able to
help.

Confused and still reeling, LINA fights through the shock, shaking her head in disbelief.

AVA
(stands, voice sharp)
What is this?!

DETECTIVE WELLS
For all we know, Lina here was the
last one to see him alive.

AVA
(angrily)
Look at her! Your fucking crazy!

AVA turns toward LINA, whose face remains innocent and shocked, processing the situation.

AVA (CONT'D)
(softening, taking LINA's
arm)
Come on, we're leaving.

Gently but firmly, AVA pulls LINA from her seat and wraps an arm around her, guiding her out of the room. LINA, still in a daze, moves as if on autopilot.

AVA (CONT'D)
(whispering)
It's okay. Let's just go.

As the two leave, DETECTIVE WELLS remains unfazed, staring after them with quiet resolve.

DETECTIVE WELLS
(calling after them)
I'll be in touch.

12

INT. LINA'S APARTMENT - DAY

12

The chaos of the moment fills the air as LINA'S MOTHER unlocks the door with a CLICK. AVA quickly guides LINA, who seems distant, lost in her thoughts and moving on autopilot, toward her room. BENJAMIN stands by, ready to help.

AVA
(hustling)
Grab her skates!

BENJAMIN
(nodding)
Got it!

BENJAMIN wastes no time collecting LINA's ice skate bag from the floor by the door.

Meanwhile, LINA'S MOTHER rushes to the kitchen, swiftly pulling a brown paper bag from the counter. She tears it open with a quick flick of her wrist, tossing a granola bar inside. Then, she moves to the fridge, grabbing a banana, a cup of yogurt, and LINA's personalized sports thermos. Everything but the thermos goes into the bag, which she then snaps shut.

LINA'S MOTHER
(calling out)
Ready?

AVA gently walks LINA back toward the front door, holding a small sports bag.

Everyone hurries out, and as they leave, LINA'S MOTHER shuts the door behind them, turning the once chaotic apartment back into its usual quiet calm.

13

INT. ARENA - ICE RINK - DAY

13

LINA stands alone on the ice, her posture strong and confident, her black spandex attire sharply contrasting against the pristine white ice. The arena is still, the silence heavy—so intense that a pin drop would feel deafening.

Her eyes focus on the three JUDGES seated outside the rink, their gazes penetrating, as though they could see into her very soul.

The audience is hushed, the anticipation palpable.

JUDGE 1
(voice clear and cold)
You may begin.

LINA takes a steadying breath, centering herself. With a calm, composed exhale, she shifts into her first position, every muscle taut with determination.

14

EXT. ARENA - DAY

14

LINA leans over a bush near the arena, her body wracked with nausea as she vomits, narrowly missing her ice dancing attire. Her face is ghostly pale, her eyes dark and sunken.

DETECTIVE WELLS approaches, her expression a mix of curiosity and determination.

DETECTIVE WELLS
(softly)
Hey, Lina. You okay?

LINA struggles to compose herself, her attempts to steady her breathing falling short.

DETECTIVE WELLS (CONT'D)
(with a reassuring tone)
You did great out there.

She pats her gently on the back, not realizing the added pressure triggers another wave of nausea from LINA. She coughs, barely able to catch her breath.

DETECTIVE WELLS (CONT'D)
(encouraging)
There you go. That's it.

Her light patting transforms into a more soothing, comforting rub as she watches her with concern, trying to offer some solace in the moment.

15

INT. ARENA - LOBBY - DAY

15

LINA stumbles into the arena lobby, her movements slow and weary. Her exhaustion is evident, every step seeming to take a little more effort. As she enters, a wave of excitement greets her.

A group of ex-fellow ICE DANCERS, still in their ice dancing attire, surrounds her. Among them is AVA, who stands confidently at the center, orchestrating the crowd's energy.

AVA
(grinning, with
excitement)
There she is!

The crowd erupts into cheers, and they crowd around LINA, offering pats on the back, congratulations, and words of encouragement. LINA's MOTHER and BENJAMIN stand nearby, smiling warmly, sharing in the uplifting atmosphere.

But LINA, utterly drained, stands there motionless, her face blank, the weight of the day heavy on her shoulders. Her eyes wander through the crowd, but they blur, a sea of unfamiliar faces that feel distant, disconnected. She is physically present but mentally far away, her energy spent.

LINA's breath is shallow, and for a fleeting moment, she closes her eyes, trying to block out the overwhelming noise and attention.

AVA (CONT'D)
(noticing LINA's distant
look, concerned but
playful)
Hey, give it up for Lina!

But LINA's only response is a faint, exhausted smile. She lets out a slow breath, lost in the moment, her body still aching for rest.

16

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

16

LINA sits at the table surrounded by her former ice dancing teammates. Laughter and conversation flow freely as AVA cheerfully chats among them, her energy infectious. The table is littered with plates of fine cuisine, the atmosphere light and euphoric.

In front of LINA, however, sits only an empty space. There are no plates, no food, no napkins, just a hollow absence amidst the lively gathering.

Noticing LINA's awkward stillness, AVA breaks away from the conversation, leaning in with a playful nudge, bumping shoulders with her. AVA pushes her plate slightly toward LINA, placing it between them and sliding over some napkins and utensils.

AVA
You hungry?

LINA shakes her head, signaling that she is not.

LINA
I don't have enough money to—

AVA
(interrupting)
Oh, come on! Don't worry about it.
This is a celebration. We're
celebrating you!

LINA glances around the table, seeing her ex-teammates engrossed in their own conversations, no one acknowledging her. Amidst the chatter, a sense of isolation settles over her as cocaine is quietly passed around. She turns back to AVA, who is watching her closely, a mixture of care and concern in her eyes.

LINA
Excuse me.

Without another word, LINA stands and leaves the table. The chatter continues, but as she walks away, the others do not even seem to notice her departure. The space she once occupied is filled with the same casual disregard. AVA watches her go, staring down at her plate, lost in thought, deep in contemplation.

17

INT. LINA'S APARTMENT - BATHROOM - NIGHT

17

LINA stands motionless in the shower, completely drained, letting the hot water cascade over her as it mixes with the steam filling the room. She stares blankly ahead, her body fatigued and her mind miles away.

Her ankles, bruised and battered, are visible as the water flows over them. With every drop, the bruises seem to melt away, like makeup being washed off. But as the water runs down the drain, it shifts to a deep red, like blood.

LINA pauses, her breath catching in her throat. She watches in frozen horror as the water takes on this strange, ominous hue.

Terrified, she quickly rubs her eyes, trying to shake the image from her mind. When she opens them again, the water is clear once more, as if nothing had happened. She exhales shakily, still unsure if what she saw was real—or just in her head.

18

INT. LINA'S APARTMENT - LINA'S ROOM - NIGHT

18

LINA lies on her neatly made bed, curled on her side, her eyes fixed on the wall. The room is silent, save for the faint sounds of the city outside, muffled by the thin walls of the apartment. She remains motionless, lost in thought, her blank expression betraying the turmoil within.

Time seems to stretch on as she stares, the weight of the silence pressing in. Eventually, without a word, she sits up. Her movements are slow and deliberate, as if each motion takes more effort than the last.

The quiet is thick, almost suffocating, as LINA stands from the bed and walks toward the window. The night outside is dark, the city lights casting faint shadows through the cracks in the blinds.

After a long pause, she drags herself toward the dresser. Her steps are slow, each one heavy with exhaustion. She pulls out a simple lounge outfit and begins to dress, the effort exhausting her more with every motion.

It feels like an eternity before she finishes—each movement painstaking, like fighting against her own body.

On the dresser, a mirror catches her eye. She stares at her reflection, almost as if seeing herself for the first time. Her fingers absently play with her hair, trying to coax it into something that feels right, something that reflects the beauty she can barely recognize.

19

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

19

LINA walks down the hallway to the second floor and stops in front of BENJAMIN's apartment door. She knocks, her hand lingering a moment as she listens.

Inside, she hears the faint sounds of a struggle. Her curiosity piqued, she knocks again, a little louder.

The door creaks open slightly, revealing BENJAMIN shirtless, his upper body inadvertently visible. His face betrays his guilt as he looks at her, clearly caught off guard.

BENJAMIN
(half-opening the door)
Hey, Lina. What's up?

LINA eyes him carefully, her gaze laced with quiet suspicion. Her lips part, but she does not immediately speak.

LINA

I just—

Before she can finish, a woman's giggle echoes from inside the apartment, unmistakable and loud. BENJAMIN's face tightens, and he quickly raises his voice to drown out the sound.

BENJAMIN

(trying to cover)

Hey, now's not a good time.

LINA

(softly)

Oh, okay.

BENJAMIN steps back, preparing to close the door, but in the brief opening, LINA catches a glimpse of AVA—standing in the background, clad in lingerie. The shock on LINA's face is immediate.

Her expression crumbles. Without a word, LINA turns and rushes down the hall, tears welling in her eyes.

BENJAMIN

(desperately calling out)

Lina, wait!

But LINA does not stop. She sprints down the stairs, leaving a trail of tears behind her as she bursts through the front door and into the night.

BENJAMIN stands frozen for a moment, guilt gnawing at him, before he slowly closes the door, retreating back into the apartment.

20

INT. BENJAMIN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

20

BENJAMIN leans against the front door, his shoulders slumped, his face a storm of shame and self-loathing.

AVA approaches him with a slow, deliberate grace, her presence both comforting and alluring. She gently cups his face in her hands, her touch soft and grounding.

AVA

(softly)

It's okay. I'm here.

BENJAMIN hesitates, his eyes darting away from hers, but her voice draws him back. As he finally musters the courage to meet her gaze, something begins to shift.

AVA's features subtly, then unmistakably, morph into those of LINA.

BENJAMIN freezes, stunned. His shame is momentarily eclipsed by an intense wave of longing. Unable to resist, he pulls the LINA IMPOSTER into a passionate kiss.

She responds, deepening the embrace, her movements intoxicatingly seductive. Her hands wander over him, her lips trailing kisses down his neck, to his chest, and then lower still.

For a fleeting moment, BENJAMIN is lost, drowning in a haze of desire and ecstasy.

But as he looks down into her eyes, the illusion cracks. The LINA IMPOSTER stares back, her gaze unnervingly intense.

BENJAMIN snaps back to reality, his chest heaving as the weight of realization crashes over him. His breath quickens, sharp and uneven, as he recoils from her touch.

With a desperate urgency, he pushes her away, his trembling hands betraying his inner turmoil. His face twists into a mask of horror, disgust, and self-loathing, the emotions warring for dominance as he staggers back.

21

EXT. PARK - NIGHT

21

LINA sits on a park bench, her face streaked with tears. The soft glow from the nearby streetlight casts a warm halo around her, isolating her in a circle of light, while the surrounding darkness looms just outside her reach.

From the shadows, DETECTIVE WELLS steps into the light. She approaches slowly, her voice gentle but steady.

DETECTIVE WELLS
(softly)
A little late to be out here all
alone, huh?

She sits down next to LINA, offering her quiet company.

DETECTIVE WELLS (CONT'D)
I figured you could use someone to
talk to.

LINA, still trembling, wipes her tears away, her breathing steadying as she regains her composure.

LINA
(sincerely)
Thank you.

DETECTIVE WELLS
(chuckles softly)
For what? I'm just doing my job.

They sit together in silence for a moment, the only sound the soft rustling of leaves in the cool night breeze. It is a brief, peaceful pause in the chaos of their lives.

22

INT. ARENA - ICE RINK - DAY

22

LINA stands poised on the ice, her skates cutting through the silence as she faces the panel of JUDGES. Her breath comes in heavy gasps, her chest rising and falling as she struggles to regain composure. The sound of her breaths fills the air, the only sound breaking the tense stillness of the arena. The JUDGES exchange quiet whispers, their eyes scanning her every move.

LINA stands still, her focus locked on them, trying to steady her racing heart. The tension in the air is palpable.

After a brief moment of deliberation, the JUDGES turn their attention back to her. One by one, they lift their scorecards, revealing the bold number "10" on each.

JUDGE 1
(softly, but with
approval)
Very well done.

LINA's breath catches in her throat. For a moment, the world around her seems to pause. Relief washes over her, and the weight of the world lifts from her shoulders. She allows herself a small smile, finally catching her breath and soaking in the validation.

23

INT. ARENA - LOCKER ROOM - DAY

23

LINA, still in her ice dancing attire, sits on the bench, carefully taking off her ice skates. A faint, contented smile lingers on her face, as if the weight of the competition has finally lifted.

Just as she removes her second skate, AVA enters, wearing her own ice dancing attire. She heads straight to a nearby locker without acknowledging LINA, grabs her skates, and quickly begins to put them on, clearly in a rush to leave.

LINA, still in a relatively good mood, watches her for a moment, before calling out with a sense of genuine encouragement.

LINA
Hey, good luck, Ava.

AVA halts, freezing at the words. She turns to face LINA, her eyes flashing with anger.

AVA
Good luck?! What the fuck do you mean, "good luck"?

LINA's expression shifts to confusion, her smile fading into a look of disbelief. Her once cheerful demeanor begins to slip into sadness.

LINA
What? I didn't mean—

AVA
(anger rising)
You know what I could've done with all that money? This is all your fault!

LINA flinches as if struck by the harshness of the words. Her eyes well with tears, a sharp pain piercing her heart at the unexpected betrayal.

AVA (CONT'D)
(sarcastically)
Are you going to start crying now? Like, when I fucked your dear little Ben? You should've seen your face. Fuck you!

With that, AVA storms out, leaving LINA behind, completely shattered. The door slams behind her, and the sound of LINA's soft sobs fills the locker room. Her tears fall freely, her body shaking as she lets the grief overwhelm her.

Her sniffles echo in the emptiness of the room.

AVA strides down the hallway in her ice dancing attire, her ice skates clicking on the floor with every cautious step. She moves with meticulous precision, her gaze fixed ahead, ensuring that she does not lose her balance.

Suddenly, her footing falters, and with a sickening crack, she crashes to the ground in an awkward, painful sprawl. Her scream echoes through the hallway, sharp and filled with agony, causing a rush of people to scramble toward her.

Among the gathering crowd—fellow ICE DANCERS, the three JUDGES, ORGANIZERS, and ARENA STAFF—stands LINA, still dressed in her ice dancing gear but wearing simple black gym shoes. Her face is a storm of rage, her eyes burning with anger, her fists clenched tightly at her sides.

25

INT. ARENA - ICE RINK - DAY

25

LINA stands at the center of the ice, her figure glowing in her ice dancing attire, though wearing gym shoes instead of skates. In her hands, she holds a stunning bouquet of roses, their vibrant colors standing in contrast to the cold, stark white of the rink.

Her smile is radiant, a mask of calm and happiness as if the world around her has faded into nothingness. The roar of the crowd fills the air, their cheers echoing through the arena as they chant her name.

LINA's eyes gleam with a quiet, determined joy, every inch of her poised and serene despite the weight of the world behind her. She holds the roses up to the crowd, savoring the moment, letting herself bask in the fleeting joy, as if this is the only thing that matters.

26

INT. HOSPITAL - PRIVATE ROOM - DAY

26

AVA lies in a hospital bed, a brace on her sprained ankle. Her ice dancing attire clings to her, drenched in sweat. Her face is twisted in distress as she tosses and turns, trapped in a restless dream. Suddenly, she wakes with a loud, panicked gasp, her chest heaving as she struggles to catch her breath.

DETECTIVE WELLS sits in a chair by the bed, calm and observing. She watches AVA closely, unmoved by the outburst.

DETECTIVE WELLS
How are you feeling?

AVA blinks, startled by her presence. She quickly composes herself, masking her confusion with defiance.

AVA
What do you want?

DETECTIVE WELLS leans back slightly, a faint smirk tugging at the corner of her lips.

DETECTIVE WELLS
Just a few questions.

AVA
Ask someone else.

DETECTIVE WELLS tilts her head, clicking her tongue in disapproval.

DETECTIVE WELLS
Tsk, tsk, tsk.

She leans forward, her gaze sharp and unrelenting.

DETECTIVE WELLS (CONT'D)
What's your connection to Benjamin Crane?

AVA's expression hardens. She remains silent, her jaw tightening.

DETECTIVE WELLS (CONT'D)
(leaning in closer)
He was found this morning. Evidence suggests he died sometime last night.

The words hang in the air like a noose. AVA does not flinch, but the tension in her face deepens.

DETECTIVE WELLS (CONT'D)
So, I'll ask again... where were you?

Silence. Detective Wells waits, letting the question linger. AVA's composure cracks as guilt and rage flicker across her face.

Suddenly, she explodes, thrashing wildly against the bed. Only then does she realize—she is handcuffed.

AVA's panic boils over into a blood-curdling scream, raw and piercing. The sound fills the small room, echoing her realization: she has been caught.

LINA sits cross-legged on the floor in the middle of her living room, surrounded by partially packed boxes.

Clothes, decor, and personal items are scattered around her, evidence of an impending move. She carefully sorts through the clutter, placing items into their respective boxes.

Her hands pause when she picks up a familiar bag—her ice skate bag. She hesitates, unzipping it just enough to peek inside. The polished blades catch the light, reflecting a bright gleam onto her face. For a split second, a faint trace of what appears to be blood is visible on one of the blades.

A sharp KNOCK at the door breaks her trance.

Startled, LINA quickly zips the bag shut and places it in a nearby box. Rising to her feet, she moves to the door and opens it, revealing DETECTIVE WELLS. She stands with a practiced smile, exuding a false sense of warmth.

DETECTIVE WELLS

Hey, Lina.

LINA

Oh, hi.

LINA opens the door wider, silently inviting her inside. DETECTIVE WELLS steps in, her gaze briefly sweeping over the packed boxes and disarray.

The two navigate through the clutter, clearing a path to the couch. They sit down, DETECTIVE WELLS brushing aside a stray item to make room.

DETECTIVE WELLS

Congratulations on your win.

A small smile breaks through LINA's otherwise stoic demeanor, pride flickering across her face.

LINA

Thank you.

DETECTIVE WELLS

So, you and your mom are moving?

LINA

Yes. Today, actually.

DETECTIVE WELLS

That's good.

Her expression softens, a subtle weight settling over her features. She hesitates, as if steeling herself for what is to come.

DETECTIVE WELLS (CONT'D)
Look, Lina... I need to tell you
something. It's about your friend,
Benjamin.

LINA turns to the detective, her face unreadable.

LINA
He's dead.

DETECTIVE WELLS freezes, taken back by the unexpected
response. She stares at LINA, her composure faltering.

DETECTIVE WELLS
You know?

LINA averts her gaze, her shoulders sinking as a faint shadow
of sorrow crosses her face. The room falls into an uneasy
silence, the two women momentarily lost in their own
reflections.

After what feels like an eternity, LINA speaks again, her
voice calm but tinged with emotion.

LINA
Growing up, I never had much. I
never met my father—it was just my
mom and me. And that was okay. She
worked herself to exhaustion, just
to make sure I had what I needed.
(beat)
When I told her I was interested in
ice dancing, not thinking it would
lead anywhere, she saved every
penny to buy me the best pair of
skates she could afford, which led
to some pretty tough times.
(softly)
From there, I spent
hours—days—practicing. What started
as a little dream became my
passion... my reason to live. It
felt like the very reason why I
exist—my only reason to exist. All
I ever wanted was...

She pauses, her voice trembling slightly.

LINA (CONT'D)
All I ever wanted to be was
perfect.

THE END