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TEASER



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"You should head inside. You will get cold again," Berne whispered.

I couldn't let go of her hand, I couldn't let go of her. "Thank you for taking me home tonight." I felt over the calluses on her palm. "Seeing them, catching up . . . it was perfect."

"Oui, it was."

Her eyes glimmered in the moonlight with unshed tears. In my foolish intention to wipe them away, my thumb traced over her smooth skin.

"Why do you always make me want to sing?"

She nuzzled into my palm and kissed it. "Because around me, you let the truth free, *non*?"

I brushed her hair out of her eyes and stepped forward. "And what is that truth?" For some reason, my heart had squashed all logic and was driving me onward.

Berne leaned her forehead to mine. "That you are more than what you appear. That you are another woman inside that shell."

She brushed her lips over mine.

Hovered.

Waiting. Waiting for me to answer.

Electricity rippled up and down my arms as I looked up into soft, gentle, patient eyes. Her eyes.

Uh oh.

"Why can only you see that?"

I wrapped my arms around her shoulders and sank into a kiss. Every pore thudded with the contact, with the relief, with the elation. Her mouth swept circles around my every sense. Her kiss seemed to reach through the mist I had found myself wandering in, pulsing like a light up ahead. Blindly, I followed, my lips desperately searching. Thirsty, parched emotions flooded with the building moment.

I had to breathe. I didn't want to let go. I needed to breathe.

We broke away. Breathly, ragged kisses, wanting, searching for more. Warmth, soft strong shoulders, her hair glossy and thick between my fingers. I placed my forehead to hers. It felt so real, so needed that I whimpered. I needed her so much.

"Bonne nuit, Pepe."

I pulled her back to me at the sound of her name for me, managing to whisper words between kisses. *"Dors Bien, Bebe."*

Her response was to pull me closer. She dragged me under once more. Her hands running up and down my back, soothing the aches from the work. Soothing the ache in my heart.

"I must go now." She pulled me back and held me at arms' length as her chest rose and fell. "You must be bright for

your mother."

She made no attempt to leave. I made no attempt to let her go. Our kisses had confirmed everything to us both. How could we pull this off when just kissing her felt so good?

"I hate mornings."

A movement upstairs finally drew us apart. A sultry smile touched her lips. "You did not hate them so much with me."

Mean, mean and sly. "That's because waking up with you was a reason to greet every day with joy."

Berne's eyes darkened. She moved forward but the sound of Rebecca calling out stopped her.

"*Bonne nuit.*" She shot it at me as though she hated having to say it at all.

She spun on her heels and strode away. I stood helplessly watching. Unsure that she would ever be that close again. I took in every moment, the rugged rocky roadway under her feet, the way she moved, the way her hair bounced along behind her. I leaned against the wall, wishing I had the courage to follow but knowing that, for her sake, I couldn't.

It had to stop. I had to let go, somehow.

How did you let go of the love of your life?