



CHRYS ROMEO

AVALANCHE

2012



AVALANCHE
by Chrys Romeo

Copyright Chrys Romeo 2012

Cover by Chrys Romeo

My biggest flaw is that I fall in love. I do. And when I do, I lose my head over it. I do it completely, absolutely blindly to any outcomes, irreversibly and hopelessly. I love too much, when I fall for someone. It might be considered a quality actually, but when you think about it, it's just got me into a lot of trouble, lots of times. Besides, you're not supposed to be in love when you're an aspiring top ski champion training to become a member of the mountain rescue service. You're not supposed to think about her eyes and her smile and an explanation to why she's making your head spin while you're going down the slope in full speed. You're not supposed to see her image reflected in the snow. It's a danger to focus on anything but the direction ahead. The point is, I focus on anything about her, anything but not the direction. I just go with the flow, daydreaming about the impossible. Why impossible? Because I am aware she is less interested in me than the stiff snow itself that covers the mountain. I could hit a tree anytime for it and she couldn't care less. And what makes it worse: she's been in the opposite team. I'm really not supposed to like her. There is no reason for me to think about her. There is no chance whatsoever we'll ever be together. And yet, against such implacable odds, I'm in love with her so much now, that I can't think of anything else and I don't know what to do with my life when she's not around.

That's insane, right? I know. But that's how it is.

Yes. I miss her when she's absent. I keep thinking of her smile, the tone of her voice resounding in my ears, her clear sharp eyes staring me down, the way she lets her hair flow like golden wheat ruffled by the summer heat or the way she gathers it in an athletic ponytail, leaving no question, no doubt... the slender way she moves, the way her steel glance catches me from behind the ski goggles, the way she buckles up her belt, the way she touches her frozen earrings, making sure she didn't lose them in the snow... her determination to be perfect at the game, her subtle winning smile, knowing she's just going to conquer the slope and there isn't going to be anything standing in her way. The slope just lights up when she is there, it becomes a field of gold in a summer sunset and she is almost glowing, making the snow sparkle. I wish I could paint the beauty of those unforgettable moments, the fractions of seconds when I get a glimpse of her in that other realm of sunlight flowing to make me dizzy. I stand and watch her in that morning sunrise frost, which I don't feel anymore, I stand there and let her start down the slope ahead of me, bewildered at my own storm of emotion at the mere sight of her, I stand there amazed and speechless, while the entire mountain seems to sink under my feet and I am surprised I can still find the resources to say good morning when she passes me by. In a word, I love everything about her, even the things that hurt me most: her casual indifference, her cold attitude, her distant independence and detachment from any hint of commitment to anything. I would think

of myself masochistic for having fallen for her, when she's the one that seemed to hate me the most from the opposite team, ever since we first met. I didn't agree with her, I didn't like her, I didn't tolerate her and she seemed equally annoyed by me, or even more so. She couldn't stand the sight of me. My presence irritated her on the slope. She slammed the ski poles in silent protest against me being there one meter away. And I did everything I could to get away from her: I turned my back to her, I avoided being the one next to her at the starting line, I took different tracks on purpose... we were the perfect enemies. Sometimes I would return the passive aggressive language to her and slam down the ski equipment, to show my own anger at her hostility. And yet right now, I could eat from the palm of her hand, or go throw myself off the competition, just to make her happy and help her win. But she doesn't know she has got that power. Who knows what would happen if she finally realized that. I would be lost for good.

So how did I go from complete disapproval to absolute attraction? Well, maybe it's true there's a thin line between love and hate, as well as the magnetic truth that opposites are drawn to each other and need what the other side brings, as soon as they wake up to understand that. How did I cross that invisible line and actually began to let myself be completely charmed by her, when she didn't even attempt it, or actually wanted the opposite? Sometimes I think it would've been much easier to continue disliking her. I wouldn't have suffered so much from feeling attracted to her and having to keep my

distance. Sometimes I think that I'm so addicted to her because she's such a challenge to me. She's like a flow of adrenaline, a rushing heat that goes to my head. She's unpredictable, inaccessible and hard to please. She's tough and drastic. She's also hot and dynamic. She's rapidly deciding, quickly acting, fast ending it. And constantly attentive, watching like a sleepless spy under cover. She could cut you into pieces if you got in her way, in a flash of a second, without even blinking, without remorse either. She's that sharp, though sometimes I ask myself if it's right, for the idea of mountain rescue, for someone to be so harsh just as she slides down the slope, fearlessly, in full speed, spreading a wave of snow from her ski dance, elegantly and ironically fitted in that ski costume that lets you know she's a girl of her own fashion and she knows what she's doing. I just started to notice more, when they placed us in the same team. I started to know her better. I started to like her sense of humor, her sense of justice, her determination and the fact that she always seemed to have an opinion about situations. I started to overlook my disagreement and give in to being interested. I got caught in a series of attractive this and that about her, little things that became important and got my attention. I started to admire her outfits too, though I would never have paid attention to that before. Actually, I started to notice how well it suited her personality and the attraction began to sink in unknowingly. I found myself turning my head to watch her. I found myself listening to what she was saying. I started to realize something had changed in the way I felt about her.

But let's start with the beginning. This season began like any other season, we were preparing for the competition and training to become better rescuers. We were on opposite sides, until we learned the news that a bigger ski club bought our two little clubs and the company merged into one, we became affiliated branches. Then we were compelled to meet each other more often: at breakfast, at trainings, at meetings, in the hallway, eventually we got to share the mountain cabin at the foot of the ski slope. I and her and the rest of the joined teams. The thing is, we got used to spending more and more time together and bumped into each other more often, though we both seemed to be slightly annoyed by it and kept avoiding each other's company. We silently agreed that we disagreed. Until the cabin burned down.

It was a peaceful winter day at the cabin in the mountain where we were training for the championship season, at the mountain rescue department. Most of our teammates were up the mountains. There were just three or four of us left in the cabin, according to our training schedule. I was there. And she was there too. We were casually having breakfast in the morning light, I was having coffee at the table and she was getting busy with making some tea, her back turned to me, of course. She liked those tall mugs of tea and took her time preparing it. I was trying not to look at her t-shirt, sipping my coffee and watching instead the glowing snow outside. Then someone burst the door open.

“Quickly, get out! The cabin's on fire!”

We looked at the person in bewilderment. The person ran out, to alert others too, as the fire alarm was ringing in the hall. I was calm, not really believing it. I placed the cup of coffee on the table. Yet she reacted differently. She dropped the bag of tea and started to gather her things in a hurry.

“Shouldn’t we take out the equipment?” I asked her, as she walked around with her ski jacket hanging on her arm.

She slid a quick neutral glance at me.

“The papers”, she said. “We must get the papers”.

We looked at each other with no other choice than to cooperate. And, to my surprise, she was very reasonable, at that moment. She seemed to leave aside whatever she might have had against me, focusing instead on solving the immediate situation.

“Where are the papers?” I asked her.

The club’s contracts and files were of utmost importance, which I hadn’t thought of. But she had. I admired her for it, in that freezing second.

“The papers are upstairs, in the office”, she answered simply.

“I’ll get them”, I said, still remaining calm.

“I’ll go with you”, she informed me, kind of stiff.

“No, you better get out. I’ll find them”.

“You can’t get them alone, they’re too many”, she replied very sure of herself, though I sensed a trace of fear and hurry in her voice. “We’ll get them together”.

I realized she was afraid, and despite that fear, she was determined to do what she considered her duty, stepping over the threat of the smoke that was starting to enter the room. I understood there was no way to make her change her mind, so we went upstairs together, jumping over the things scattered around, as if we were climbing a mountain slope. People had left in a panic, making a mess of whatever got in their way. Yet I saw no panic in her attitude, or she was hiding it well enough. Everything in the cabin was made of wood and likely to catch fire instantly. The flames were spreading fast. I wondered if that thought made her tremble slightly. I opened the door to the office and a whirl of smoke enveloped us.

“It’s too late”, I said.

“No, it’s not. Let’s get the papers”, she said with absolute determination and went inside, to my surprise.

I followed her in and she started taking the files off the shelves in a hurry, piling them up in her arms, as I watched her, stunned and speechless. Another second. Then I hurried to help her. We emptied the desk drawers and the shelves, gathering the documents, as the room was filling with smoke. I seemed to automatically let her take charge of the decisions.

“Let’s go now”, she said.

“Have we taken everything?”

“Yes”.

We went down the stairs, then finally out of the burning building, placing the files safely on the fence in front of the cabin. Then I went

in again, to get the ski equipment too. She didn't try to stop me, nor did she ask what I was doing. After that, I returned next to her and we just stood there, near an advertising board that said "Snow Paradise", watching the flames emerging from the roof, clouds of grey and black smoke rising in the clear winter sky like an atomic umbrella. The fire extended rapidly to the entire roof, going down the walls. Smoke was coming out of the windows, endlessly. In ten minutes, no one would have been left alive inside. Fortunately, there was nobody in, we had been the last persons to get out. When the fire department arrived, sirens, frenzy and tons of water pouring on the cabin, the chief of the club came up to ask us what had happened. I let her explain.

"We got the documents and the equipment safely and we went out. It happened fast."

"It's good that you got the files safely. We'll have to relocate the team now".

And relocated we were.

Yet I think that was the moment when I discovered that I could cooperate with her so smoothly, so naturally and efficiently. And when I started to admire her.

The next thing we knew, we were relocated in a bigger cabin, a bit more distant from the training slope, with shared showers and opposite rooms. It turned out we were neighbors, me and her. In the days that followed, I seemed to just open the door to my room at the exact time when she was going in, or returned when she was coming down the hall from the opposite direction. I was intrigued by these

moments of passing each other by; I didn't know what was going on in my own mind; it went on a stand by zone every time she was around. My thoughts seemed to shut down, which meant I didn't know what to do, what to say or how to react, because I no longer knew what to expect from her or from myself; things were changing visibly between us. I suspected she complained about me to her girl friends, about having to inconveniently stay in the room opposite mine and see me so often or be bothered by my presence in the hall, even more so when one evening, returning from training and forgetting to switch on the lights in the hall, I mistook the left wall for the right and I tried the door to her room. I thought the keys were wrong. While I was fumbling in my pockets, searching for other possibly matching keys, she opened the door and found me standing there, in the dark. I froze instantly, realizing I was in front of her room. She turned on the lights and crossed her arms. I blinked, blinded by her sight and the sudden neon light bulbs in the hall. She was wearing a soft creamy bathrobe and had a towel wrapped around her head. The smell of shampoo and hot water made me forget my words. She was just looking at me with that clear sharp steel glance, halfway accusingly, halfway still waiting for an explanation. I felt an avalanche run me down, engulfing me in breathless snow.

“I thought this was my door”, I said shrugging and I turned around quickly, finding my keys in the last second, before she replied severely:

“Obviously, it's not”.

I was so sure she would get deeply mad at me for it. The next morning, as we took the ski lift to the top of the mountain, I got a glimpse of her steel eyes, pinning me down in the morning frost, just for a second, and I had the confirmation that she was angry at me. I tried to hide away from her and mingled with teammates, choosing the distant corner, next to the window, where I just stood, watching in oblivion, through the frozen window, the tip of the fir trees, the pines and the cliffs under the moving rope lift. I could still hear her talk, on the other side of the crammed, crowded lift, and I couldn't help listening, though I was sure she hated me with the same determination she wanted to win.

“You wouldn't believe it, people don't know their way anymore!” I heard her say and I knew it was an allusion to me, I expected she could have had said worse about me.

I tried to ignore her comments. We were on the same team at the moment, we were no longer official competitors, rivalry should have dissolved, yet she seemed to find it hard to forget we had been in opposite teams. She seemed eager to tear me to pieces, to beat me down the slope, to show me the extent of her perfect abilities to win against me and get some revenge for having been annoyed by me time and time again. To just be done with it.

As we got to the starting line, I was aware we would meet on the slope, but I was determined to stay out of her way. We were told to go in groups of five. I looked at her again. I could see nothing through her ski goggles, just light reflected from the sunrise. She stood there at

the starting line, ready and eager to get going. She had an early start; instead, I waited for half a second, then followed her down. At first, I was just following her smoothly, making slight turns in the valley, as the mountain view changed and shifted by. I was keeping an eye on her silhouette that went on shining ahead, like a silver comet on the immaculate bright snow. I began to increasingly catch up with her, until we were almost shoulder to shoulder; but then, I hadn't noticed the other skier that came from the side, flying off in a shortcut, over a crest and directly into my elbow. I was knocked down in a fraction of a second, lost balance, rolled over and hit my head on cold ice. I blacked out, as the mountain zoomed around, upside down and when I opened my eyes, waking up, the first thing I saw was her face, against the sky, leaning above me. I was still on the slope, the snow was resting cold under my back, the sun was above, lighting her figure like a halo as she glanced at me in a frown. I wasn't expecting anything from her, but I was surprised she had stopped her race to see what happened to me. Actually, she had done a lot more: she had phoned the team on top and the medical crew at the finishing line. For the first seconds, I just stared at her, unable to move. She was frowning above me, but when she saw me coming around, her eyes took a neutral shade. I soon realized it was not me she was upset about.

I tried to get up.

“Be careful”, she said. “You could have a broken bone”.

She retreated to let me adjust my knees and check if I could move. As she stood up, I looked at her, feeling still slightly dizzy and having

a headache, but something more intense than the sunlight was stinging my eyes.

“I think I’m O.K.”, I said, looking up at her.

Then I noticed we were alone on the slope. I didn’t dare ask her why she had stopped next to me.

“It’s not fair”, she said in a sudden revolted tone, looking away, at the crests of the mountains in the distance. “It’s not right to send a skier off track like that. You didn’t even get a warning. It’s just not fair!”

I was so surprised at her unexpected concern for me and the injustice of the situation. Then, we heard the sound of the helicopter coming from behind the cliffs.

“I don’t think that’s necessary”, I said and she took out her phone.

“I’ll call and tell them you’re fine. Are you sure you can make it down the slope?”

“Sure. I’ll make it.”

We went down together, slowly, and as they greeted us at the finish line and the medical crew took me for tests, I was already longing for her presence to last more than those few hours. It was the beginning of my addiction to her. Yet I seemed unaware that I had already crossed the line from disagreement to love. And maybe she had too.

*

“So, you’ve got the hots for the Snow Queen”.

My buddies were already teasing me. They had noticed I had become more and more attentive to her, even though we still didn’t talk or interact too much.

“Snow. Not Snow Queen. Just Snow.”

I forgot to mention her name: Snow. Which was very appropriate for her personality.

“Yeah, we know... Tough one. Haven’t you picked wrong this time...”

They were amused by it and just as aware as I felt, that it seemed an impossible story. She was that inaccessible. She was freezing cold. However, in the last weeks I had begun to see her differently.

Her girl friends, instead, were hostile towards me. They were annoyed that I was interested in her presence, they were scrutinizing and upset, ready to stand between us, sending me glances of irritated disapproval. As much as I tried to hide my feelings for her, as much as I tried to give her space and not bother her in any way, people around us still noticed something was going on and they resented it. It was unpleasant to realize she might have been complaining about me to them, even though there was no actual reason for it. Or maybe they thought it was their responsibility to keep us apart, for the good of the team – how that could have served the good of the team, it still puzzled me. Maybe she realized people would be against us and she

behaved as indifferently as she could towards me. Or maybe that was exactly what she felt: nothing but annoyance. However, I liked to let myself believe there was more to it.

I knew I was not supposed to be in love when I went up the mountain, but I couldn't prevent it anymore. And the thought of her having a spark of interest for me, of liking me at least half as much as I liked her, seemed irresistible. It made me dreamy and often melancholic.

As distracted as I was by her, I ended up tying knots to the ropes the wrong way.

“If you do that again I'll disqualify you”, the trainer told me and I found myself caught between the dooming possibility of being disqualified and her indifferent attitude that was sending me nowhere fast.

But when I looked up at her, as I was trying to make sense of the tangled ropes, I noticed something more than cold disregard. She was worried. She was afraid, underneath her indifferent expression. She hadn't said a word, she was standing still, not even blinking, but I could feel her tense attention, watching the situation.

“Fix it immediately. Are you going to fix it, or not?” the trainer seemed to become mercilessly impatient.

I looked at her once more: I was so sure now that she was holding her breath, apparently trying to seem uninterested and detached, yet at a deeper level anxiously waiting for a verdict concerning me, waiting for me to get out of that trouble. I just felt her hoping and praying I

would get it right, as I tried to disentangle the ropes. I felt her indirect attention like a wave of heat above me, something she could not prevent, her heart beating at the same pace with mine, deeply worried; she was sinking in fear more than me, at that moment – and she wasn't even in trouble, it was I who was doomed. There was no reason for her sudden concern, unless she cared about me. I felt so happy for a moment, that I didn't care anymore what would happen to me. Fortunately, I fixed the ropes and tied the right knots the next moment. I saw her become obviously glad about it, as if a burden had been lifted off her mind. Her brow seemed to light up. She arranged the folded equipment with ease.

“You have an exam tomorrow”, the coach told us. “You have a huge responsibility. If you make it on the team you will become certified mountain rescuers.”

I looked at her. She was avoiding my glance.

“Do you know what time it starts?” I asked her in a whisper.

She sent me a quick serious look. I could sense nothing behind her shaded eyes.

“I'm not allowed to tell you”, she whispered back.

“Why not?”

“Don't ask me”.

“Come on - what time?”

She averted her eyes and lowered her voice.

“I don't even know for sure, probably eight o'clock. Of course, we have to be ready an hour before”, she said reluctantly.

Thank You for previewing this eBook

You can read the full version of this eBook in different formats:

- HTML (Free /Available to everyone)
- PDF / TXT (Available to V.I.P. members. Free Standard members can access up to 5 PDF/TXT eBooks per month each month)
- Epub & Mobipocket (Exclusive to V.I.P. members)

To download this full book, simply select the format you desire below

