

Uncoupling

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MONTAGE: INT. FIGURE SKATING RINK - NIGHT

A crowd of people mill around in the lobby, other people line up in the queues, ushers guide people to their sections.

Inside the rink, kids and adults alike fill in the stands, carrying popcorn, pretzels, stuffed animals, and posters as they talk excitedly.

On the ice, pairs of skaters warm-up and run through pieces of their routines as their coaches watch.

INT. FIGURE SKATING RINK - KISS AND CRY - BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

Backstage, LEILA COTTRELL (17, stubborn, a bit of a control freak) and JORDAN HALL (18, caring, deeply competitive) run through a lift in their routine. Jordan brings Leila down to the ground softly and they smile at each other.

COACH WILLA TAM (39, charismatic, she has a hidden edge) watches them as she chats with another coach. She points at Jordan and the other coach nods, smiling.

INT. FIGURE SKATING RINK - LOCKER ROOM - NIGHT

In the large gym locker room, Leila sits in front of her locker with her eyes closed, doing a guided meditation. Young women talk in groups, fix their make up, and warm-up with stretches all around her.

Leila sits stock-still, her back straight and her arms resting on her knees in yoga position. Her sock-clad feet tap against the floor, the only sign that nervous energy is flowing through her body.

AUTOMATED VOICE (V.O.)

And exhale. You can gently open your eyes in your own time and take a moment to notice how you feel.

Leila breathes out and opens her eyes. She shakes her arms out and stands up, though she is noticeably a bit shaky.

LEILA

(under her breath)

We got this.

Pulling her headphones out of her ears, she rolls them up around her hand. Turning to her locker, she opens it, and tosses them in.

Leila goes to close her locker then pauses, looking at a few pictures taped on the inside of the door. Leila's family at the hospital with her mom, they look sad but they clearly love each other a lot. Leila and her little sisters on their first day of school. A picture of Omar Apollo with hearts drawn around his head.

Leila's eyes eventually settle on an old picture of a Young Leila and a Young Jordan holding medals at a competition. They're both beaming at the camera.

Leila kisses her fingers and presses them against the photo. She allows herself one last moment of sentimentality before SLAMMING the locker shut.

INT. FIGURE SKATING RINK - KISS AND CRY - NIGHT

Leila enters the waiting area, spotting Jordan with Coach Willa standing apart from the milling crowd of reporters, competitors, and coaches. He stands with his arms crossed looking uncomfortable.

Jordan looks around, his eyes landing on Leila standing against the wall. He smiles and waves her over. Willa rolls her eyes and steps back, allowing them to have their moment.

JORDAN

There you are!

(under his breath)

Willa's been grilling me!

LEILA

She's always on us about something.

What was it this time?

JORDAN

Some dumb shit about our behavior off ice.

Jordan loops Leila's arm through his, steadying her, as he intertwines their fingers. He smiles down at her.

JORDAN (cont'd)

Feeling good?

Leila looks down at their clasped hands. She takes a deep breath.

LEILA

Yeah I'm good now, promise.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

Next to perform their program, Leila
Cottrell and Jordan Davis.

JORDAN

Shit, that was quick. We'll talk
later yeah?

LEILA

Yeah sure. You ready?

JORDAN

Always.

INT. FIGURE SKATING RINK - NIGHT

Leila and Jordan lean against each other in a posed position as the music begins. Jordan picks up, Leila in a dramatic move before placing her back down on the ice. They skate across the ice, propelling themselves to a series of jumps perfectly in sync with the music and each other.

As they finish the sequence, Leila skates toward Jordan and catches his hand. The pair grin at each other, their hands clasping as Jordan lifts Leila and throws her into the air before catching her. The crowd claps politely.

Jordan leads Leila into a transitional skate, facing each other with each and holding hands. She nods after a moment, and he spins her around, grabbing her into a lift over his head.

Leila looks out at the audience, its blurry and impossibly bright at the edges of the ice. As Jordan brings her down, she smiles at him and he smiles back with a nod.

As the couple transitions into another series of jumps, Leila notices Jordan looking towards the judges box. He looks back at her and points his left hand up, mouthing "take it up".

Leila squints her eyes before leading him into a side-by-side jump. They throw themselves into a triple toe-loop. Leila lands with a flourish to the delight of the audience.

Jordan doesn't quite stick the landing, shaking his head in disappointment. He takes Leila's hand as they come back together but won't look at her, clearly still upset.

They attempt another throw but Jordan's hand slips. Leila just barely catches herself from falling, her hand slapping painfully against the ice. The crowd gasps.

JORDAN

I'm so sorry.

Meeting Jordan's eyes, Leila smiles weakly. She stands up and cradles her hand to her side, before continuing the routine.

They skate beside each but their movements are no longer in sync. Try as they might, their bodies seem to have lost whatever connection had been guiding them before. Leila slides to a stop as the music ends.

Jordan reaches for her hand but flinches back remembering her injury. Leila smiles wryly and skates around him to offer him her other hand. They bow together.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

Leila Cottrell and Jordan Davis!

They smile and wave politely to the crowd before skating off the ice.

FLASHBACK: INT. HOMETOWN SKATING RINK - DAY

INT. FIGURE SKATING RINK - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Leila steps out into the hallway, her sprained hand wrapped tightly in a bandage.

Jordan offers her his arm, his hands full carrying her bag and his own. Leila takes it gratefully, leaning into him.

JORDAN

So, what's the verdict?

LEILA

It's just a sprain. I should be fully healed in a few weeks, maybe a month.

(beat)

We probably won't make Qualifying.
I'm really sorry.

JORDAN

Oh, so you'll be back in time for Qualifying.

LEILA

I don't think we're going to make
Qualifying.

JORDAN

Nah, we'll be okay.

LEILA

Will we be?

They look at each other for a long moment. Jordan's smile
drops and he looks down, shrugging.

Leila sighs, laying her head on Jordan's shoulder.