

To Denis

July 26, 2018

As always, I don't really know how to start such texts. It's been a week you left, and it's been a week I haven't worked up the courage to accept it nor write about it.

I haven't been a fan of you for long, maybe a year and a half, as I started getting interested in figure skating thanks to yuri on ice. The first time I watched you skate (I believe it was your 2016-17 SP on Romeo and Juliet), it was one of the first times I was totally blown away by a skating performance, and where my mind couldn't manage to compare it to anything I've seen. My girlfriend and I would always try to come up with ways to describe your skating - raw, refined, powerful, sensitive, graceful, but it never encompassed everything we felt seeing you performing.

The first and only time I saw you skate was during my first competition live, at the Internationaux de France at Grenoble last year. We were hesitating to try and go, but when we saw your name in the assignments we didn't hesitate a minute, and I don't regret it. I never had the occasion to tell you how much I admired you, as it was my first competition, I didn't really know how it worked nor where I could cross paths with skaters. I'm not sure I would've dared either, even if you seemed to be the sweetest with your fans. I will never forget your SP, as I saw you kneeling just in front of us during your program and had my breath taken away. The only reason I didn't cry is because I was too nervous for you and your health.

I will never forget your FS either, one of the most beautiful I've seen. Actually, we agreed with my girlfriend that, for our first competition live, we wouldn't watch the programs of the skaters we were going to see at Grenoble before the event. You see, SOS d'un Terrien en Détresse is a special song; absolutely everyone in France knows it, whether we like French music or not, and most people find it beautiful, regardless of musical taste and generation. So there's also many French who have a story to tell linked to that song. I don't, but my girlfriend grew up with the musical the song comes from, and I couldn't ever describe all the emotions her eyes showed when she realised what song you were skating on. Regardless of our history with the music, you always made us live your programs and feel them in such a raw manner that was unique to you, and I will be forever grateful to have been able to witness and feel this during that competition. And that competition made me fall in love with your skating more, and with the sport in general.

I had already started following you more intently during last summer, also as I was worried about your injury, and I may have become more intent after Grenoble, jokingly stating that I felt like a mum worrying for his son constantly, and becoming a bit protective in a non obsessive way I hope.

My biggest regret is that I wasn't able to go to your amazing ice show this year. I really wanted to, I almost took the decision impulsively, and I would've surely acted on it if I hadn't had a wedding to attend to. It seemed as magnificent as I imagined. I apologize though as I still wasn't able to watch it entirely, but I definitely will, when watching you on the ice will hurt less.

What you did for me wasn't limited to figure skating however. I discovered your country that I only knew by name, and took a real interest and fondness for it and its culture, as I struggled to find books about it in a language I could read, browsing all the first and second hand bookstores I could find. I still want to learn more about it, when it won't hurt as much.

Around 6 years ago, I tried starting to learn russian, but as japanese studies took most of my time, I could just learn the alphabet during summer holidays before dropping it. You motivated me to start all over again this year, as I diligently tried to learn more everyday. I didn't advance much, but I promise I'll get on it again when it'll hurt less.

You are the second person dear to me that I lost recently, after my friend last october. Both hit me hard. I admired you both, and was inspired everyday by you both. You see, you two seemed to see life in a similar way : striving to live life at its fullest, being curious about everything, trying so many different things, even if it's scary, you never gave up regardless of challenges and struggles. Being kind and open, as well as hard worker. I admired you, Denis, and my friend Auriane for similar reasons, and I will still keep you both in my heart and as I will continue being inspired by how you were.

For now it's hard, and it still hurts, but I will start functioning again, and I will do my best to live by your and Auriane's philosophy of life, even if the path may be long and full of obstacles. It's the least I can do to honour your memory.

I love you Denis, and sometimes I feel frustrated and outraged, even angry about what happened, but I like to think that you wouldn't want that. I miss you but I will always be grateful for everything you gave to me. I hope you'll shine now as brightly as your smile illuminated my days.