

# DOMINIQUE

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## COLMAR

What makes people fall in love? Truly in love? What makes them believe they've found the one, their soulmate? And why that person and not someone else?

What draws us in and never lets us go? Is it their eyes, their smile, their voice? The way they fit into our world? Is it because our

parents like them and our friends think we'd make a great couple? Or maybe they make us laugh, have a good job, and want two kids like we do?

What if it has nothing to do with that? What if it is something else entirely?

I was fifteen the first time I asked myself this question. It was then that I had my first dream that didn't feel quite like a dream. My mother said women in our family are special. She said I should listen to my dreams, but I was young, and I didn't believe her. Or maybe I didn't understand.

I am eighty years old now. I don't pretend to have all the answers. But I've lived through enough to know people don't believe you until you show them. And they shouldn't. They should make up their own minds, listen to their own hearts, and follow their own dreams.

My story, the one I've been waiting to tell for so long, the one I never thought I would get

to share until Valerie was born – my youngest son's daughter – will not answer questions. Not even the question. But it will ask them.

Ever since Valerie turned fifteen, I have been waiting for the day she would say, 'Mamie, I had a dream.' And then I would have to tell her. To show her. When she turned sixteen, seventeen, eighteen and nothing happened, I started to worry. What if I'm not around when it happens, or I am around but too senile to remember everything? That's when I wrote it all down. That way, no matter what, she will know what happened and how it all came to be. And when the story's done, she can make up her own mind about the dreams, the connection and what her soul is trying to tell her. She might believe me, she might not, but I have to try.

A few days ago, she celebrated her twenty-first birthday. Still no word of the dreams. But there is a young man in her life, although she's reluctant to talk about him. I don't know if

today of all days I should ask, but something tells me it might be time. There's a spark in her eyes. A familiar spark. I might be wrong; it might be nothing, but it might be everything.

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'How are things with you, darling?' I ask as we get close to Reims. The plan is to drop her off to meet some friends at the university in Reims while I go to Paris. Every year, on 9 December, I go to Paris no matter what.

'Fine,' she says, too busy with her phone to look at me.

'Anything interesting happening?'

'No, not really.'

As usual. Either Valerie has a painfully dull life or a secret one.

'Ugh, perfect,' she scoffs and throws the phone in her bag. Then she picks it up again like she can't decide what to do.

‘What’s wrong?’

Silence.

‘It might help if you talk about it,’ I say.

‘It’s nothing really. Just this guy.’

‘What guy?’

I think I already know the answer.

‘Someone I met online. We’ve been chatting every day for a while now, but for the last two days, he’s been completely ignoring me. No email, no text, nothing. I’m so naïve. It’s my fault, really, for getting worked up about a man I’ve never even seen. Isn’t it stupid?’

I smile. No, no, it’s not. Not at all.

‘He’s clearly ghosting me. This is so embarrassing.’

‘What does ghosting mean?’ I ask.

‘Ghosting? It’s when someone disappears without an explanation. I’ve sent him tons of messages since Friday and nothing. Look,’ she says, shoving the phone in my face.