My life with him
Volume 1

Discover the illustrated life of Delphine Arduini, diagnosed at 16
My name is Delphine.

I'm 39, married with one child.

I have a family that I love...

My friends are always there for me...

And my passions take me on my travels so I get to see the world.

I'm happy.

And I love running. It's my way of escaping, and it gives me a sense of freedom.

Because since he's been around, it's been hard to see the world without numbers, measurements, and a list of restrictions and rules to follow.
This is how I see the world.

20 g of carbohydrates

45 g of carbohydrates

33 g

... despite the omnipresence of numbers in my life.

I am a Type 1** diabetic.

I live with it... with "him".

And, over time, we've come to get along fairly well, he and I...

Blood sugar****: 77 mg/dL

Glucose gel***: 17 g of carbohydrates

Insulin***: 80% of 0.65 u/h

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* We find carbohydrates in our diet. Some have a very fast assimilation, others take longer. This assimilation time will be modified by the other components of the meal, the fats slow the absorption of the carbohydrates.

** Type 1 diabetes occurs primarily early in life and is due to the total destruction of pancreatic islet alpha cells that make insulin. We are talking about autoimmune disease. Diabetes is a genetic disease and we do not know the triggering factor.

*** when you need to get your blood sugar back up.

**** Insulin is the key allowing the glucose (= sugar) that is consumed (carbohydrates foods) to pass from the blood to the cells.

***** Blood sugar is the level of sugar (glucose) in the blood.
It all began when I was 16 and a half years old.

I've always been a good student. The type that follows rules and instructions to the letter.

With this too, I went through all the stages. Don't get into such a state just because you lost.

And you should eat more! Your shoulder blades are starting to stick out.

I never stop eating!

One symptom after another.

Gosh! Where are you putting it all???

A new one everyday.

That's weird, I can't see what's written here!

You seem to be so tired lately.

Exactly how much water are you going to drink today?
Having to duck out of a film as good as *Forest Gump* to go and pee. OK, so, something's up...

So with that, and the accumulation of all the other symptoms, my parents really began to worry.
A&E at the local hospital.

Blood sugar: 3.8 mg/dL.

That was my first capillary blood glucose*. My first blood sugar check. I can still remember it.

Everything was unclear to me and my parents... We didn’t understand much about it...

Just that it was complicated.

I was given my first glucose infusion for several hours to see the effect...

Clear as day... my blood sugar went up to 8 mg/dL.

And then the diagnosis came in.

... Type 1 diabetes.

*Blood glucose control done by your fingertip to measure blood glucose levels
And that’s when he came into my life.

My diabetes...

He was still a stranger at the time. It took a while before we got to know one another.

It was November 14th, 1994, World Diabetes Day.

Ironic, don’t you think?

The Earth shifted beneath us.

All three of us were together, but lost in confusion and the unknown.

The only thing that we felt was a new stage in our lives begin.
The first night on the adolescent ward was tough for me.

I was lost and worried.

I thought about my parents, my little sister, who all seemed overwhelmed.

I was obedient and did what I was told. I learned all the new words that were going to be part of my day-to-day life: insulin, blood sugar, carbohydrates, ketones*...

What? Aren't you anorexic?
No. I'm diabetic.

Oh! You're lucky that's all it is.

Hey! Welcome to the club!

I quickly realised that she was right. It's just diabetes...

There was a reason for my symptoms: the destruction of my pancreas. And there was one way to treat it: insulin.

You know, Delphine, if you get to know your body, you'll be your own doctor!

The guru has spoken.

* Ketone is a chemical substances made by the body when it does not have enough insulin in the blood.
We had to quickly adapt to this new life.

Have you checked your blood sugar?

Arrgh!! Where is the sugar written on here?

I wanted everything to carry on as normal. School, tennis, dance.

Support from my friends and family helped me keep my head above water.

Is your blood sugar okay?

Yes, it's fine.

I did keep a lot of things to myself though. I didn't want to bother other people with it all.

What's the point in constantly repeating 'I'm having a hyper*', 'I'm having a hypo**'.

The most important thing for me was to move forward with my new travel buddy.

To make him understand that it was not up to him to tell me what I can and can't do.

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* For people with diabetes, hyperglycemia is when the blood sugar level is above 180 g/l. Symptoms are to be thirsty, tired, dry mouth, edgy, a little skin-deep.

** Hypoglycemia is when the sugar level is lower than 0.75 g/l. That's why it's essential to always have sugar with us. The symptoms of hypo: sweating, trembling, cottony state, huge hunger, difficulty expressing oneself, thinking, pallor...
Except when I'm having a low blood sugar*...

When that happens, rigour and willpower are concepts that my brain can't understand.

With one goal in mind...

SUGAR!!!

Look at all the cheese on that pizza!

This is where your sister stashes those yummy chocolate cakes!

Eat me!

Your record is four tubs. You can do better!

But very quickly, the brain kicks in again.

Ok. You have to deal with this now...

And, once again you're back to working out the overflow of carbohydrates ingested and preparing countermeasures.

* A low blood sugar is an important hypoglycemia, for example in the middle of the night.
Little by little, I increased the difficulty of the challenges I would set myself.

I met Christophe while studying in Canada.

At first, I was the girlfriend who had diabetes.

Yes, we'll be at the restaurant in about twenty minutes...

Sorry...hypo...

And just after that we left to explore the world. A dream that became a plan, and then a reality!

A trip that already requires a lot of organisation. But that's nothing compared to the logistics involved for a diabetic: storing and stocking up on insulin, food in the various countries, time zones...

And then, we got married.

I shared my adventures of a diabetic globe-trotter on my blog World Diabetes Tour.

Many diabetics followed our journey online and I met up with type 1 diabetics in the countries we visited.
However, the biggest and best challenge in my life was my pregnancy.

Nine months of intense happiness, 100,000% focused on my diabetes so as to avoid any complications for my baby.

A full-time job: checking my blood sugar 10 times a day, a walk after each meal and regular adjustments of insulin doses.

But I also received precious help thanks to the French Women’s Diabetes Association.

So that everything went smoothly, for me but also for him, I had to redouble my efforts and thoroughness.

I had to have the smoothest glycaemic curve possible, 24 hours a day.

As with all diabetic mothers who haven’t given birth naturally after 38 weeks, my labour was induced.

There was a lot more monitoring during the final stages which were very emotional...

I turned up to the maternity ward with a big smile.
But I got there!

Nine months dedicated to him.

Nine months of trying to do everything to prevent my diabetes affecting him.

My Eliott.

My greatest success!
This is one of those moments you laugh about once it’s over.

I’m diabetic.

Trying desperately to open this dreaded plastic packaging to get some juice whilst telling myself ‘I must fall forwards’ if I faint in front of everyone.

Did I tell you about my neighbour’s cousin? She is seriously diabetic. It’s bad. Just like my butcher’s sister-in-law. They had to amputate her foot.

You see, that’s why you shouldn’t eat too much junk food.

It’s hard to imagine that a few months later I’d be climbing a mountain.
In 2012, I was invited to talk about a few projects that I was able to do whilst living with diabetes...

My round-the-world trip, the race, the treks, Elliott...

In response to Mr Sanofi’s last question, I realised I was talking about one of my future projects.

I’d like to put even more type 1 diabetics in touch...

To have a sporting and human experience.

What type of challenge?

To inspire one another. Learn together. To show that diabetes isn’t an obstacle to realise our dreams, even the wildest ones...

So, I spoke about the craziest of them all.

Well... like climbing Kilimanjaro, the roof of Africa!

They said yes.

Then ensued nine months of intense work to pull off this adventure.
Despite the support from Sanofi’s teams, we almost failed, more than once. But everyone hung on in there, and when the time came, we were ready.

There were about twelve type 1 diabetics from eight different countries in the group. We began our ascent on the very first day.

A travelling pharmacy.

After going through a lush and dense forest, we found ourselves amongst huge rocks before going through and above the clouds.

It was far from easy.

The days were intense, but the team spirit really helped us to keep going, with joy and fits of laughter.

We learned about ourselves and one another.

And we knew we were surrounded by people who were ready to respond at the first signs of weakness.
We spent the last night at the base camp at an altitude of 4700 m.

The atmosphere began to get heavy. The stories of success and failure from other groups made us wonder: ‘Are we going to make it?’

‘Are we ALL going to make it?’

Midnight.

We had hardly slept. Too much stress.

A short night full of sounds: glucose monitors beeping, sleeping bags rustling, tents opening and closing...

It was almost -20°C. We helped each other. We sang in every language.

The dark night surrounded us, with just a few headlamps showing us the way.

Out of 14 of us, only two had to give up, at 5550 m.

But not due to their diabetes. Just classic altitude sickness. For us, they succeeded.
Because in the end, we all did it.

Together!!!

Because it made us stronger!

Our diabetes didn't stop us from realising our dream.
The following year we did a five-day trek through the Peruvian jungle to get to Machu Picchu.

Then Crete with teenagers from eleven different countries.

Iceland, with more than 100 kilometres travelled in five days.

The United States.

A five-day trek with a 4300 m summit to boot, with a group of 14 people living with diabetes.

Each time I saw the pride in those that beat that internal voice. That voice that says ‘you don’t have to keep going, you know, you’re sick’.

I really believe in the positive energy that can be harnessed when there is solidarity.
With diabetes, the challenge isn't climbing a mountain. Sometimes, it's just getting through the day.

Like when you have a low blood sugar in the middle of a meeting.

There are days when you really wish you could get rid of it because it's tiring being switched on all the time: blood sugar, carbohydrates, insulin...

The key is knowing yourself and how your body works. To free yourself from the constraints of this clingy diabetes.

So, yes, living with diabetes is difficult. You have 'highs' and 'lows'. Some we understand and accept. And others we don't.

256 mg/dL? But why? I did everything that I would normally do!

But it's given me the will to fight to live MY life. Thanks to him I appreciate each moment even more.

Mom, you're having a hypo!

Have my fruit purée.

And treatment is continuously improving.

Like insulin that you don't have to take every eight hours.

Your son is calling you.

You get your lie-ins back!

It's your turn!
Blood sugar monitors are smaller, move practical, so are insulin pumps and pens.
Continuous glucose monitors are now accessible to everyone.
And artificial pancreas systems are being developed!
I want one as soon as they come out!

And diabetes is a big family.
We can meet up to exchange and share with our peers, with people who have the same concerns, the same victories.

Because, aside from what science can give us, there is something that we, diabetics, can offer to those who find out they have it.

LA BOUCLE DU DIABÈTE
So that they have a better future.

We can... we must show them that life doesn't end there.
And that they're not alone.

'True happiness does not depend on any being, any external object. It depends only on us.'
Dalai-Lama