

## Some Fatherly Advice

### XAVIER

The world zoomed by in a blur outside of the car, my thoughts spinning around in my head just as fast.

Last night had been awkward, to say the least.

After my shower, I found Angela waiting for me in bed. She was looking at me with those wide, innocent eyes of hers, an apology already on her lips.

I just shook my head and gave her a half-hearted smile, turning away from her as I settled in for the night. I really didn't want to talk about it. After having such a shitty day at work, the last thing I wanted to do was get into a difficult conversation with my wife.

*My wife that may or may not want to start a family with me.*

When I woke up the next morning, Angela was already gone, off to plan more of her Gala event.

On one hand, I was proud of her for being so productive, so independent and work-focused. I remember pegging her as a gold digger when I first met her, and she was proving to be anything but that.

She'd go out and get hers.

On the other hand, I felt like I was an afterthought, her job her main priority.

I laughed once, a short, bitter sound.

This is probably how Angela felt when we had first started seeing each other.

*Irony's a bitch.*

I knew I wouldn't be able to concentrate properly at work with this eating away at me, so I had canceled all of my meetings and appointments today. I knew Penny would be upset, and Henry would be having a field day at the office without me, but I'd just be a bother if I went there.

So here I was, on the way to New Jersey.

I didn't like running from my problems. I'd done enough of that, filled my life with booze and women. It was time to man up and face things head-on.

And if that meant going to meet with my father-in-law, then to hell with it, I'd swallow my pride and do it.

My grip tightened on one of my father's diaries.

I might be ready to hear some advice from Ken, but I wasn't sure I was strong enough to be able to read what was inside these pages.

Not yet.

I wasn't sure if I'd ever be.

Still, for some reason, I couldn't chuck the little book back into the storage box. I ran my hands over the smooth leather binding, taking comfort in it like a baby clutching at his favorite blanket.

I looked out at the world racing past me through the window.

*When did I become so weak?*

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"Come on in, Ace." Ken held the door open for me as I walked up onto the front porch. He looked healthier every time I saw him.

In a way, it was all thanks to Ken that I'd been able to meet Angela. If it wasn't for his failing health at the time, my father never would've made the arrangement that changed my life.

Was I an asshole for being thankful that he was so sick?

Maybe.

He was all better now, though, so I pushed the thought out of my mind.

I sat at the small kitchen table while he rummaged around in the fridge, pulling out two cans of beer. He slid one across the table at me. I didn't really care for these cheap brands. Tasted like watered-down pennies.

Nevertheless, I cracked it open and took a sip, following Ken's lead.

We sat in silence for a while, the only sound the ticking of a clock that hung on the kitchen wall.

"Where's everyone else?" I wondered, delaying.

"Danny's at the restaurant, as usual. Em and Lucas are visiting Em's parents with Bella."

"Ah."

I took another sip of the piss water.

"What're you here for, Ace?" Ken asked. Never one to mince words, this one. I liked that about him. He was a breath of fresh air from the cloying business partners, always scheming and planning how they could use you for their own gain.

"It's about Angela," I began.

"Sure as hell wouldn't be about anything else, now would it? Angela's about the only thing we have in common."

"Can't argue with that," I admitted.

"Go on then," he said, taking a big swig of beer.

"Angela and I have been trying to start a family."

He coughed, sputtering as he choked on some of his beer. I waited for him to get his pipes in order.

"Well, you two are married after all," he said. "It's about time. I was starting to get worried."

"Especially after one of my father's final wishes was to have a grandkid, I wanted to have a child as soon as possible. We're more than financially stable, after all. I'm sure you wouldn't be opposed to having another grandchild running around either."

Ken nodded, wiping at the table with a paper towel.

"The thing is, I'm not sure we're on the same page anymore. Angela's been kind of distant. She's been so focused on her job that it's like starting a family is a distant priority."

He watched me speak, the beer in his hands forgotten.

"It's gotten to the point that I'm not even sure if she wants kids anymore," I admitted.

We drifted off into silence once again, and I began to wonder if coming here was just a waste of time. I was about to get up to leave when Ken spoke up.

"She was here yesterday, you know. To have lunch with us. She was trying to hide it, but I could tell she felt uneasy. There was something bugging her. She seemed out of touch with us, but more importantly, she seemed out of touch with herself."

When Ken spoke, it was usually veiled with humor and sarcasm. Hearing him speak so earnestly had me listening intently, hanging on his every word.

"She's changing, Xavier. I think she's adjusting to being Mrs. Knight, and she's trying to find herself in between all the glamour and glitz. Did you know she offered to buy Em and Lucas a house?" He laughed, shaking his head. "The old Angela would've thought that was just as ridiculous as the rest of us did."

"It really wouldn't be a problem," I said.

"There you go, too." Ken downed the rest of his beer. "You know, when I first met you, I didn't like you," he said suddenly.

I laughed. "Not many men do."

"And women?" He raised an eyebrow.

"Does that matter?" I countered.

"Damn billionaires," he muttered. "My point is, I gave you guys my blessing because I saw how much you cared for Angela. How supportive and understanding you'd be, even if you weren't filthy stinking rich."

Ken crushed the aluminum can and tossed it into a nearby blue bin.

"That's what she needs now. Your support and understanding. And your patience, Ace. She'll find herself. She just needs you to be there for her."

I sighed.

It wasn't exactly groundbreaking advice, but somehow hearing it come from Ken's mouth made it ring true.

"Patience isn't exactly my strong suit, Ken. But I'll wait for her. She's worth it."

"Damn right, she is."

I held up the can of beer towards him, downing it all in one go.

"You aren't driving, are you?" Ken asked.

"Please," I said, getting up and walking to the front door.

He followed me out to the front porch, seeing Marco and the beamer parked in his driveway.

"Damn billionaires," he muttered again.

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"We're going to be stuck here for a while, Xavier," Marco said from the driver's seat. There seemed to be some kind of commotion up ahead, so traffic was reduced to a gridlock.

I rolled down the window and stuck my head out, glaring down at the river of red brake lights before me. A cyclist zoomed by me, narrowly missing my head as he sped away, profanities spilling from his mouth.

I sat back down in a huff, the window closing me off from the outside world.

My gaze was drawn to the inconspicuous diary that rested on the other end of the car seat. I thought back to the conversation I had with Ken, and I wondered if Dad had some hidden gems of wisdom nestled within those pages.

*Ah, fuck it.*

I grabbed at the diary, and with a deep breath, flipped open to a random page.

### BRAD

*06/23/1982, Manhattan*

*Amelia's annoyed with me. Again.*

*My wife was beautiful, the light of my life. But I'd be a liar if I said she didn't give me a bad headache from time to time.*

*I can't exactly help it. This time, at least. I know I'd promised her that come summer I'd have more time to spend with her, but the business demands attention. Knight Enterprises is finally beginning to steamroll ahead in earnest.*

*Oil was easy. Any fool could dig a hole and get lucky. Resorts and hotels—now that's a challenge. Finding the best locales, hustling out competitors for the perfect price, creating a space that would lure patrons in from all over the world—now that's a thrill.*

*Still, none of it is worth it if Amelia isn't on board. She'd been iffy about being with a tycoon like me to begin with. I'd promised her that she was my priority, above and beyond any project I could sink my teeth into.*

*But summer's when the vacation industry really kicks off.*

*That means more work for me, obviously.*

*Right?*

*07/13/1982, Manhattan*

*Brad, you genius. She loved it like you knew she would.*

*The surprise tickets to Bali worked like a charm. Amelia squealed like an excited child. She's probably running through the house, packing like a woman possessed.*

*The company will be able to survive for two weeks without you.*

*It's a strange feeling, isn't it?*

*You haven't taken a vacation in years. But maybe this is exactly what you need.*

*Sometimes you have to take a step back and remember why you're working so hard. What you're working so hard for.*

*It's for her.*

*It always will be for her.*

*Besides, you'll get to see Amelia in a swimsuit for fourteen days straight.*

*The company can wait.*

### XAVIER

I closed the diary, a rare smile on my lips.

It felt strange, reading his words. It felt like a step back in time, like a private peek into my father's mind.

A snapshot of Mom's and Dad's love.

I guess that's exactly what a diary is, isn't it?

It was weird how similar I was to my dad when he was a young gun, prowling the business world. Kind of scary, and just a little bit hilarious.

I laughed, closing the little book.

I'd gotten an idea.

*Thanks, Dad.*

Our new resort was in the Swiss Alps, wasn't it? The extension was about to be finished, and we'd need some executives to go and see the finished project, of course.

*I hope Angela likes skiing.*