S.S. Sahoo

The Arrangement

voice moved through my body.

Who knew having an assistant could be so useful?

And we meant to.

ever.

puffs.

Flash Frost

I leaned over the luxurious chalet's balcony railing, my breath forming and disappearing in front of me in little, frozen

**ANGELA** 

The view was blindingly beautiful.

Almost literally. The frozen valley below me glittered like a sea of diamonds in the sunlight, snow-dusted evergreens standing tall and

proud against the gentle slopes of the Swiss mountainside. Xavier had surprised me with a weekend getaway to the Swiss Alps.

I remembered pacing nervously in the apartment two days ago, wondering what I'd say to him when he got home. I'd

snuck out really early in the morning, hoping to bury myself in the Gala preparations and delay the fallout of our, uh

sexual incident.

The second he had walked through the door the apologies were spilling out from my lips, but he had silenced me with a kiss.

"Have you ever been skiing?" he'd asked as he held me to his chest. I remember closing my eyes as the rumble of his

I had gone skiing. Once.

On a school field trip when I was a kid. But I was cautiously optimistic.

Skiing was like riding a bike, right? You never forgot.

I'd spent the next day getting my ducks in a row, and what I couldn't complete I gave to Zoe to do over the weekend. Things were still a little awkward between us, but she'd accepted the extra workload without complaint, so maybe

things were getting better.

I sighed, content. I hugged my wooly Prada sweater closer to my body, filling my lungs to the brim with the fresh, frigid mountain air.

Suddenly, strong arms wound around my waist, a steaming hot mug of cocoa presented before me. I smiled and

of chocolate spilling over me. "So, what do you think of the new chalet?" Xavier asked me. *Technically*, we were here on business.

leaned back into Xavier's chest, enveloped in his warmth. I took the mug and held it close to my face, the warm scent

We were meant to examine the new facilities, and as the first guests to stay at the resort's extension, we were supposed to test the experience as a whole.

Thoroughly. "It's beautiful, Xavier. You all did a really good job with the place." The new chalet was constructed from a distinct

combination of wood and glass. The luxurious resort offered state-of-the-art facilities with a refreshing rustic, yet

sleek aesthetic. "It was mostly Penny's work," Xavier murmured from behind me. I couldn't see his face, but there was something in his voice that worried me.

Annoyance? Jealousy?

And as breathtakingly handsome as ever. I reached up on my tiptoes to peck him on the lips. I had meant for it to be a quick kiss, but his hand snaked into my hair and cradled the back of my head, trapping my face to his as he deepened the kiss.

I melted in his arms, the world around us disappearing as I lost myself in the feeling of his lips on mine.

He pulled away, my lips stinging against the cold mountain air.

He raised an eyebrow at me. I flashed him a mischievous smirk.

But I was hungry for something else

"I guess you could say that ..."

I gasped, pressing my lips against his ear.

Xavier laughed, slowly untangling our limbs.

"That's okay," I whispered.

have more time for that later."

I sighed as I followed him inside.

Well, I could look forward to brunch, at least.

At least, that's what was said in the briefing.

Frankly, it was really damn sexy.

were valid.

Darla.

"You okay?" I whispered.

Angela looked a little pale, her eyes wide.

"Angela," came Henry's terse greeting.

"Don't choke, Darla," I muttered.

I nearly choked on my toast.

Go get her, babe.

"Hey, Henry."

to know one."

If I could travel back in time, I'd punch myself in the face.

squeeze.

I squirmed in his arms, turning to look into his eyes, but when I looked at him, he looked as calm and composed as

"Have you built up an appetite, Mrs. Knight?" he asked, his voice husky. I traced aimless circles on Xavier's chest with my finger. It was true, I hadn't eaten anything since we landed early in the morning.

I let my hands wander down from his chest, sliding down his body before I reached around and gave his ass a playful

In one smooth motion, Xavier picked me up. I wrapped my legs around his torso. "We're going to be late for brunch," Xavier murmured into my neck.

I watched him walk back inside, worry gnawing at me. Was he still bothered about what happened last time? He was right, though. We weren't here just for pleasure.

**XAVIER** 

"We're still technically here on business, Angel." He winked at me, but I could feel his heart wasn't fully in it. "We'll

I was so distracted I didn't see any of it. My mind was still fixated on how assertive Angela was, the feeling of her legs wrapped around me.

Angela and I emerged into the lounge area. The natural light from the massive glass windows that overlooked the

slopes flooded into the Scandinavian-inspired room, constructed from large, wooden logs and draped with faux furs.

Henry was making a fool out of me because of my carelessness. That wouldn't happen again.

a familiar woman, tall, lithe, and runway beautiful, her piercing gaze making Angela stop for a moment.

We approached the table, and found Henry already waiting, a continental breakfast arrayed before him. He sat next to

Darla and Angela had never gotten along. And it was mainly because of me. I remembered the first time they met in

But my conversation with Penny was still fresh in my mind. Even if I couldn't be sure of her true intentions, her points

Normally I would've taken her right then and there, a brunch meeting be damned.

France, how I had stayed silent and smiled as Darla insulted my then-fake wife.

"Bonjour, Xavier." Darla leaned in for a hug, and I returned it half-heartedly.

Angela picked at her food and smiled back, though it was obviously forced.

My wife beamed at her, looking like a demon wearing the mask of a patron saint.

"For future reference — marriages last a *little* longer than one-night stands."

My wife nodded, her mouth a grim line of determination. We approached the table. The duo stood to greet us.

Seeing as that was obviously impossible, I settled for giving Angela's hand an encouraging squeeze.

We sat down, and Darla wasted no time in turning to Angela. "Ah, the wife is here as well. I'm surprised." She stabbed a strawberry with her fork, bringing the fruit to her lips. She popped it in, speaking around it. "I was sure Xavier would have tired of you by now."

"You said it yourself, Darla. I'm his wife, not some easy girl looking for a fling," Angela said. "And it takes an easy girl

My eyes snapped to my wife, and she looked every bit as calm and collected as a Knight could. I felt her fingers searching for mine underneath the table, and I could feel that she was trembling, ever so slightly.

I gave her hand another encouraging squeeze.

"Excusez-moi?" Darla said, her eyes narrowed.

"Dating," Darla hissed. "We're dating."

I laughed. Hard. I couldn't help it.

I loved every fucking second of it.

I stood up, pulling Angela with me.

"You two deserve each other."

"I'd be your biggest fan," I insisted.

"Then I would have exactly one fan."

She turned to me, her eyes shining.

slammed into my goggles, obscuring my view.

These things should have windshield wipers installed.

"Let's get to work!"

going faster.

And faster.

of me.

but also as my best friend.

"Where did you two meet? A stall in the men's washroom?"

Had Angela actually guessed correctly? Oh, this was gold.

"Well, let's get started with the meeting, shall we?" I pressed.

could practically feel the anger rising from the French model.

flushed a bright red, her beautiful eyes wide with disbelief.

I scooped her up in my arms, swinging her around in circles.

"I didn't know you had such a mouth on you," I laughed.

"Did I just do that?" she asked, looking up at me.

Eventually, our meeting came to an end, and I'd milked the moment long enough.

"Hmm ..." Angela mused, taking another bite of her toast. "What?" Darla snapped.

My beautiful, loving, sweet, innocent wife Angela was taking Darla to the cleaners. Just absolutely tearing her apart.

I watched as Darla's mouth opened and closed, her face red with fury. Even Henry was speechless, his eyes wide.

"Oh, sorry," Angela replied. She took a bite of her toast, mirroring Darla. "Are you two engaged?"

"No," Henry said, looking between the two women. "We're, uh, close friends."

Henry and I talked business, regarding the state of the resort and potential details we could tighten up before the grand opening. The entire time Henry was sweating bullets, glancing nervously at Darla, who looked like a ripe tomato.

Angela, for her part, quietly picked at her breakfast, ever so often smiling at Darla whenever their eyes would meet. I

"Well, as pleasant as this brunch was, we'd better get going." I gave them one last glance, enjoying their stunned faces.

The two of us stole away, and we barely made it out of the lounge before Angela burst into a fit of giggles. Her face was

"Neither did I," she admitted. "Have you ever thought about starting a career as an actress? Maybe a stand-up comedian?" "No way." She laughed, cringing. "I'd die of embarrassment."

I laughed, loving the easy way our banter bounced off of each other. I was so lucky to not only have Angela as my wife,

We continued down the hallway, the large floor-to-ceiling windows giving us a spectacular view of the slopes below.

**ANGELA** 

I set Angela back down on the ground, and she pressed up against the window, looking excitedly over the hills.

"Remember!" Xavier called from the top of the hill. "Make a pizza! A pizza!" The wind whipped at my face, the gentle fall of snow turning into a flurry as I sped down the hill. The snowflakes

scoffed at. It wound down the mountain in a lazy curve, flanked on each side by towering evergreens.

It looked tame enough, and I talked Xavier into letting me go down the hill alone.

*Skiing is like riding a bike, right?* I thought, feeling confident. ~You never really forget.~

I slid down what was *supposed* to be the bunny hill, but apparently, the bunny hill on the Swiss Alps was nothing to be

My confidence lasted for about ten seconds. My skis glided over the smoothly packed snow with ease, and I just kept

The wind was positively howling in my ears now, snow whipping around me furiously until I could barely see in front

I turned my feet so my toes were pointing towards one another, trying to form the pizza shape with my skis that

Only I must have messed that up somehow, because the next thing I knew, I was tumbling through the air, unsure of

I was weightless for what felt like forever before I slammed roughly into the snow. I heard a loud, sickening SNAP! as I

I crashed into the log of an evergreen, groaning as I waited for the world to stop spinning.

I blinked the stars away, only to find that I still couldn't see anything.

How fast was I going? I felt my entire body tense, my teeth rattling around in my skull.

Xavier had said would help slow me down.

which direction was up or down.

tumbled and rolled around.

of the snow beside me.

It was just a sprain.

At least it was a ski and not a bone.

glass. I squinted through my goggles, but it was no use. This was a whiteout.

I took stock of myself, remembering the loud snap I heard with dread. Thankfully, nothing seemed to be broken. The

skis had flown off of my boots, lost in the storm surging around me. I fumbled around and found half a ski sticking out

The snow was really coming down, massive winds causing the tree above me to sway and groan. I could barely see

two feet in front of me. A gale ripped through the treeline and blasted me with snow. It felt like a shower of broken

I tried to stand, but a sudden pain flared in my ankle, and a huge gust of wind knocked me back over.

Nothing life-threatening, but in the midst of this growing blizzard "Xavier!" I tried again, fear freezing the blood in my veins.

Or was that the blizzard? "Xavier!"

"Xavier?" I called, but the roar of the wind snatched my voice away. I prodded at my ankle, wincing at how tender it was.

But he didn't reply.

The blizzard swirled around me, trapping me in a frozen cage. And I was all alone.