The Arrangement S.S. Sahoo

Whiskey Breath

ANGELA

frown in the black reflection of the screen. Xavier wasn't picking up.

The elevator doors opened. I walked into the living room and collapsed on the couch. I stared at my phone, seeing my

I'd sent him a text. Hopefully he'd see that at least.

I looked out the windows at the city below. Manhattan was as hustling and bustling as ever, even at night.

Where are you, Xavier?

I curled up into a ball, hugging my knees to my chest.

I'd been pregnant for two months.

I got the news just as I'd arrived home from the clinic. The results had come back positive.

I was going to have a baby.

like me or their father?

I half laughed, half sobbed into my knees.

My heart swelled with love, filled to the brim—so much so that I was sure it would spill over and explode into the room around me.

Their father...

I was so excited to meet my child. Who would they take after? Would they be a boy or a girl? Would they look more

I read my text over again, four little words loaded with so much meaning. Sure, it sounded a little dramatic and cliché, but we *did* need to talk!

Xavier needed to know about my pregnancy. I *had* to tell him.

for breakfast, what did YOU have? printed across the front.

Just like that, my happiness was punctured.

But how could I when he wasn't even sober most of the time? How could I when we barely spoke, when he refused to even try sometimes?

CUTE BABY CLOTHES

I scrolled through the images, smiling. I saw an adorable baby dinosaur onesie, complete with soft spikes running down the back. A cute pink dress with a ribbon tied around the waist melted my heart, and I laughed out loud when I saw a onesie with the words *I had boobs*

My search eventually took me to cribs, and I fell in love with one colored a soft beige, designed to look like the pumpkin carriage from Cinderella.

Xavier was back.

I heard something crash onto the floor, and I raced toward the elevator, my heart in my throat.

"Xavier!"

"Xavier?" I called, panicked.

I found him collapsed in a heap.

shaking my head.

I have to tell him.

"Hey, Angel," he groaned. His breath reeked of alcohol.

He shrugged. I stroked his cheek, brushing his hair away from his eyes.

"You didn't answer your phone," I whispered, forcing a smile.

I cradled his head in my lap, my heart breaking.

"Why are you spinning?" he asked.

"How much have you had to drink?"

He looked away, avoiding my eyes. "Sorry."

I felt him stiffen underneath me. He rolled away from me, bracing himself against the wall so he could get up. I went

"What?"

"Aren't you mad at me?" he grumbled.

"Why would I be disgusted with you?" I asked, confused.

"You should be disgusted with me."

"No!" I cried. "I wanted to tell you—"

I sat on the edge of the bed, tears in my eyes.

What could I say that would get through to him?

"Did that wake you up?" I asked, my voice shaky.

they rested on my ass. He gave it a vicious squeeze.

I moaned into the kiss, my hands fumbling to undo the buttons of his shirt.

He threw the undergarment away and leaned forward to suck on my breasts.

Xavier glared right back.

moving from his chest to mine.

"Take me," I gasped.

"Angela," he groaned.

Lust dripped down my leg, my mind lost in his scent.

"Angela?" I heard Xavier's voice through the door.

Hard.

"I knew it," he muttered darkly. "I'm a goddamn fucking bum. I'm—"

Frustration welled up inside of me. I dragged my lips down to his neck and bit down.

when he was already carrying so much?

to help him, but he shuddered away from my touch, struggling to get on his own two feet.

His face scrunched up in pain as he stumbled past me, heading toward our bedroom. "Xavier?"

"I'm a failure," he groaned, his face buried in a pillow. "A hack. I was kicked out of my own company, and now all I do

"Xavier," my voice shook. "You're not a failure, and you're not useless. I married you because you're an amazing person, as CEO of Knight Enterprises, or not."

He didn't need the extra stress of a pregnancy right now. How cruel would I have been to put this on his shoulders

"What if I don't?" he demanded. He looked up at me, and there was so much pain in his eyes that the tears brimming in mine spilled over. "What if this is who I am now?" I didn't know what to say. Clearly, I wasn't getting through to him. He didn't believe in himself. I could see that he truly

I kissed him, tasting the whiskey on his lips. If I couldn't tell him how much I loved him, I could at least *show* him.

Xavier cried out in pain, and reached up to cup my face. He gently pushed me away from him, and I glared at him with tears in my eyes.

His teeth bit into my nipple, and I screamed, pain mixing with pleasure. He ran his tongue over my nipple to soothe the fire. I reached down to stroke him, his hardness straining through the fabric of his pants. I felt him groan, the vibrations

I was going to be sick. I scrambled for the bathroom, locking the door behind me.

I sat on the floor outside the bathroom door, listening as my wife hurled her guts out.

"...It must've been something I ate," she said, her voice small. "Do you need anything?"

I got out of bed and padded over to the kitchen, grabbing a beer from the fridge. I could still hear Angela throwing up

XAVIER

Still, my pride was bruised. It didn't help that she refused to let me help her, either. I rolled over, anger and confusion creeping back into me, slipping in between the sheets. With a groan, I pulled the covers over my head.

"No," she said. "Just ...go to bed. I'll handle this."

Steve yo x. big day tomorrow.

I allowed myself to wallow a few more moments before dragging myself away from the cushions and toward my laptop. I didn't want to sink into a pit of despair. It was probably bad for the baby. I turned on my MacBook, and all of my work tabs flashed up on my screen. Marlena Marlboro had asked Zoe and I to organize her gala in Tokyo. I switched away from the window, not wanting to focus on work right now. I stared at the empty tab for a while before an idea hit me. I pulled up Pinterest, my hands flying across the keyboard.

My imagination took over. We could use the other bedroom in the apartment for the baby. We'd repaint it. Maybe have a really beautiful mural on the wall, something with stars, or animals, or, or— The elevator chimed, and the doors slid open.

Before I realized what I was doing, my fingers closed all of the baby-related tabs on my browser. I frowned at myself,

I ran to him, trying to flip him over so I could see his face. He rolled over with a groan, his bloodshot eyes fluttering open.

I leaned down to kiss him on the forehead. "As long as you're safe," I murmured into his skin.

He ignored me, wobbling on his feet. I hovered around him, fussing over whether I should help him keep his balance. I got the feeling he didn't want me to touch him. The feeling hurt. Xavier ripped open our bedroom door, crashing onto the bed.

is sit around and drink and hide my stupid face from the world. That's what you wanted to talk about, right?"

"Don't lie to me, Angela. I'm a fuck-up. You defending me from myself just makes me feel more pathetic."

I sat closer to him, placing a hand on his arm. He didn't shrug it off.

"You're just going through a tough time right now, but you'll get better. I know you will."

believed that he was useless; that he was disgusting, not worthy of my love or affection. I racked my brain.

He stared at me, and when I couldn't reply, I saw him nod to himself as if his worst fears were confirmed.

tightly as I could against his, willing myself to fill the empty holes inside of him. Xavier was unresponsive beneath me, his lips indifferent to mine. I took his hands and placed them on my waist, grinding my hips into him. His lifeless hands fell down to the mattress.

I deepened the kiss, running my hands frantically over his body. I pushed him onto his back, and pressed my body as

He sat up and ripped his shirt open, and I ran my hands down his chest and along his abs, greedily drinking in the sight of him. His rough hands trailed up my thighs, hitching up my dress. I raised my arms so he could pull it off.

We stared at each other, and for a moment I thought that I'd messed up. That this was all for nothing.

Then he pulled me down and kissed me, his touch as desperate as mine. I felt his hands roam along my curves until

His powerful arms wrapped around me, pinning my arms to my sides as he skillfully unlatched my bra with one hand.

The boozy stink on his breath was overpowering. Suddenly I was nauseous, my brain spinning in my skull.

My stomach, and it began to rush up my throat. I covered my mouth, frantically pushing Xavier off of me.

Xavier pushed me onto my back, angling himself in between my legs as he tore off his pants. His cock sprang free of

I thrust my hips upwards to grind into him, sliding my wetness along his length. His cock pulsed with need against me.

his boxers. I licked my hands and reached down to stroke it, feeling his manhood hot and heavy in my grasp.

Silence. "Angela?"

"Are you okay?" I called, concerned.

"Don't come in!" I yelled.

Then I threw up.

I'd collapsed onto the bed when I heard my phone buzz in a pile of my discarded clothes.

Steve u ready? I hurled the phone like it was on fire. I wrapped my arm over my eyes, moaning into the darkness.

"I can help ..." I jiggled the door handle. "No!" she cried, sounding a little hysterical. "I'm fine." I got up and walked back to the bedroom, crawling under the sheets. Her words stung a little. A woman threw up after being intimate with you, I thought to myself. ~That's a first.~ Logically, I knew that *I* probably wasn't the reason Angela threw up. I could use a drink.

Fuck. Just what I needed.

in the bathroom.

What the fuck is it now?