## The Big Reveal

## **XAVIER**

"Atta boy!" Ken cheered, clapping me on the back. Hard.

Heather showed, dragging Henry along.

was sipping virgin mojitos, wanting to know the surprise.

My father-in-law had never been totally sure about me. I knew that. But ever since my prolonged stay in Tokyo, he hadn't been so discreet with his distaste.

The fact that I was still on crutches might lead one to think that I could take it easy. But that wasn't the case today.

At this goddamn gender reveal party, Ken had come up with all kinds of tasks for me. Now I was flipping burgers at

"Remember. Mine is *medium rare*, son." Ken was standing right over my shoulder, his arms folded.

Obviously, I wasn't thrilled to host a party in the penthouse. Much less a gender reveal party. But Angela wanted it, and I wasn't in a position to deny her anything. I wanted her to be happy, after all.

But this party was even more of a shitshow than I'd anticipated. Everyone had turned up for the event. Angela's whole

family, Dustin and his fiancé, Zoe ... I assumed no one would come for me. Now that Dad was dead, Angela was the only family I had. But even Aunt

I was on the balcony, watching our guests mingling in the sitting room. They were buzzing with anticipation; everyone

And even more than the genders of the twins, our guests wanted to see our faces when we found out. Zoe had

coordinated with Angela's doctor, and my wife and I were both in the dark. Honestly, I hadn't thought much about what our babies would be. Both options seemed alright to me.

I was balancing on one foot, trying to figure out how the hell to cook on the grill Ken had lugged over from New Jersey.

"Flip 'em now, son," Ken instructed. And I obeyed.

"You could say that ..." I grumbled.

I felt my father-in-law over my shoulder. "Everything's harder on one leg, huh, X?"

in the eye. "Sometimes that's what it takes, son. We have to feel loss to know what we have."

"You'll be better soon. And then you won't take your two good legs for granted." Ken moved beside me and looked me

I stared at him, spatula in my hand, grill smoke wafting into my face. I knew what he was talking about. This wasn't just about my leg. It was about Angela.

I gulped. Sure, coming close to losing my wife made me realize just how much I needed her. But it also made me wonder if she was better off without me.

I felt a slap on my arm.

"Ack!" I cried. Did no one have any sympathy for me? I was wounded!

"Hey, cousin," Henry grinned idiotically. "Mind if I steal you for a minute?"

Being stolen by Henry wasn't exactly my idea of a good time, but it was an excuse to get away from Ken. I shrugged to my father-in-law, and he shooed me off, taking my place at his grill. Henry and I settled at the table on the balcony, watching the guests inside chatting beneath elaborate braids of blue

and pink streamers. "Congrats on the kid and all."

"Kids," I corrected.

"Huh?"

"We're having twins, Henry," I said, deadpan.

"Oh, yeah, cool," my cousin managed through a mouthful of burger. When he finished the bite, he went on. "I wanted to talk to you about the company."

I glared at him. "And why would you want to do that?"

"Because it's a shit show, cuz." Henry licked mustard off his finger. "Penny has way too much on her plate. And my

Anger flared in my chest. I'd spent many nights wondering what was going on at Knight, and actually knowing didn't make me feel better. It just pissed me off.

power is mostly symbolic, you know, but I can't even stand going to board meetings anymore."

Henry kicked me out of my company only to run it into the ground.

"Then don't go, Henry. But it's not my fucking problem anymore."

With that, I stood and left him.

I entered the apartment and watched Angela from across the room. She wore a pink dress with a bow right over her belly. She was laughing with Dustin—laughter made her so beautiful.

What I wouldn't give to cross the room and take her in my arms. But I didn't know if she was ready for that yet.

another woman.

When she pressed me about the Tokyo photos a few days ago, I laid my cards on the table. I told her my secret. Kissing

And I felt like we'd made some progress. Even this little bit had taken us nearly six weeks. The chasm between us was so deep that, at this rate, it would be

years to get back to where we were. Before everything fell apart.

As if she felt my gaze, she turned and met it. I imagined how I must have looked, sagging into my crutches, standing all alone.

She gave me a little smile.

"Everybody gather 'round!" Em called. "It's the moment you've all been waiting for! Angela, Xavier, to the piñata!"

The huge teddy bear-shaped piñata was hanging from the ceiling in the center of the room.

It looked absolutely insane.

It was another way I was being punished for staying in Tokyo.

While it would've been more suitable for an injured person to cut into a cake or blow up a balloon, I'd instead wield a

I hobbled under the piñata. Angela bounded gracefully to my side and squeezed my hand. While we'd pretended to be a happy couple a few times already today, this gesture felt genuine.

I squeezed back, relishing the contact with her. "I'll go first!" she said. Em came over and tied a blindfold around Angela's head.

Oh, right. I forgot about the blindfold. Then Em spun Angela around by the shoulders until she was disoriented.

family and friends cheered and pointed her the right way.

move the coffee table and the standing lights.

huge stick, whacking at a piñata while balancing on one leg.

Jesus Christ.

My wife raised the stick above her head and swiped down. She hit the teddy bear's arm, sending it spinning. Everyone giggled and howled with laughter. The bear danced above the empty living room. At least Zoe had thought to

Angela was clearly having a good time, though. She giggled as she lunged in the wrong direction, while all of her

I was mentally preparing myself for my turn, but Angela wasn't ready to quit yet. She sent another blow straight to the teddy's chest. It made an indent, and the crowd went wild.

I raised my eyebrows. I didn't know my wife had so much force in her. *Maybe she was pretending I was the teddy*, I thought to myself.

After Angela attacked the bear once more, Em stepped in. "Alright, Slugger!" She touched Angela's shoulder. "Let's give Xavier a chance."

The crowd cheered respectfully. Ken's eyes twinkled like he couldn't *wait* to see what would happen to me.

I attempted a smile, but it probably came out more like a grimace. Em approached me with the blindfold.

"I was thinking of giving you special treatment, 'cause you're on crutches and all," she announced, "but you're pretty

She tied the blindfold, and I was in the dark. After Em spun me, and I hopped on one foot, I was free to go after the piñata.

good on those things! I think you can handle it."

My crutches in my armpits, I held up the sticks with two hands. The crowd directed me to turn right.

I brought the stick around with a big swing. I heard the thud of a collision—perhaps the teddy's tummy—and then the

rain of objects from the piñata. Everyone was cheering and shrieking, and someone was pulling off my blindfold. When I could see again, Angela was before me. A smile lit up her face, and there were tears in her eyes.

I felt Angela's hand on my arm, pulling me. Then, when I wound up, everyone encouraged me forward.

"We're having a boy and a girl," she told me.

Blue and pink confetti filled the air, swirling around us. I leaned down and kissed her. With her lips on mine, it felt like no time had passed. Even though we hadn't kissed since I came home.

"Oh, my goodness ..." I groaned, collapsing onto the couch.

As always, when I looked at her, the rest of the room faded. It was just us.

All the times I'd held back, all the times I told myself she wasn't ready... They all faded away. Now, it was just this. Us. Together again.

been much casual contact between us.

A boy and a girl. My heart sang.

**ANGELA** 

Xavier and I had just bid goodbye to the last guests, and I was exhausted. Finally, it was just us in the penthouse.

I looked out at the room. Confetti covered the floor, and the mangled teddy bear hung from the ceiling with a hole in

I took a drink and then leaned over, resting my head on his shoulder. Since Xavier returned from Tokyo, there hadn't

I usually felt like we were separated by a chasm, one I had to cross on a rickety rope bridge. I had to be cautious. But I didn't feel that right now. My hands held my stomach, and I relaxed against my husband.

It could be as simple as that. I decided to just enjoy being close to him.

Xavier lowered himself down beside me, offering me a glass of water.

Xavier moved his hand over mine, and together we touched my swollen belly. "A boy and a girl," he whispered.

I let myself continue to melt into him. At that moment, I forgot Tokyo, sleeping in different rooms, all the things that

I felt him kiss my head.

kept us apart ... Things were different now.

"I have a doctor's appointment next week," I began. "Would you like to come?"

Though the idea of Xavier and Leo in the same room made me squirm a little bit, I shoved away the thought. I wanted Xavier there.

I knew he was being sincere. He wanted to be there, too.

"It would be an honor," he said.

Now, there was *hope*.

I looked out at the room, covered in blue and pink confetti. Maybe it would all be okay. Even if our relationship wasn't perfect. We had something perfect to look forward to. Well, two perfect things.

One girl and one boy.