Tears rose to my eyes as well.

It was so Dustin.

wings.

big party tent.

exactly up for the challenge.

best friend, after all, so it was only right.

Dustin's Wedding

A not-so-traditional rendition of the wedding song played.

Today wasn't traditional at all. But it was totally beautiful.

casual yet sophisticated. Fun yet devastatingly chic.

Then all the wedding guests headed out to the vineyard.

I turned to see Jake. He wore an ice-blue suit made entirely of silk.

Peonies filled vases throughout the old barn, and the scent intoxicated me.

Eventually, I agreed. And I'd composed a little speech to honor my friend.

"Hey, mama!" Zoe shouted back to me. The crowd cheered.

"Hello," I called out. The wedding party was small enough that I didn't need a microphone.

ANGELA

From my front row seat, I saw Dustin's eyes cloud with tears. He stood at the altar watching his groom walk down the

The ceremony took place in a barn, and it would be followed by a reception in the nearby vineyard. The feeling was

Zoe sat by my side, and I squeezed her hand. She'd organized this wedding all by herself, and done an amazing job.

Xavier sat on my other side. He leaned over to kiss my cheek. Surrounded by people I loved, I felt like my heart had

When the vows were said and the two shared their first kiss as a married couple, everyone howled their approval.

The view over the Upstate New York landscape was breathtaking. The sun was setting as we found our seats under the

When Dustin asked me to be his best woman, I'd politely declined. At seven months pregnant with twins, I wasn't

Dustin assured me I wouldn't have to do any work. He just wanted me to sit at the table with him and Jake. I was his

When everyone was settled, I stood and clinked my water glass with a fork. Xavier, seated beside me, touched my

"As Dustin's best *woman*, I'd like to say a few words about the newlyweds." Dustin and Jake smiled at me as they cuddled one another. "I remember when Dustin met Jake ..." I began, and Dustin demurred, flushing bright red. "A week later, he told me he was in love." The crowd hollered, urging me on. "The first thing I asked was, 'Is it official?' "I smiled to myself, remembering that day in Dustin's coffee shop. "And Dustin responded, 'Oh, Angela. You're so traditional!' " Laughter rose from the crowd, and I giggled to myself as well. Then I gathered myself up to deliver the emotional punches. "Dustin may not be traditional, but he's a true romantic. Before he met Jake, he poured his romantic energy into his art." I glanced down at Xavier. He rolled his eyes. He'd never gotten over Dustin's explicit portrait of him, inspired by the time I caught Xavier in the shower. Not that I could blame him. "Dustin applies the same attention to detail and creativity to all of his relationships. He's thoughtful and passionate. I can never guess what he's going to say, but it always makes me laugh or smile." I leaned into Xavier's hand and looked at Dustin and Jake, the happy couple. Tears blurred my vision. "I met Dustin around the same time I met my husband, Xavier. Now, Xavier and I are happily married I didn't mention that Xavier and I had been married then, too, but it wasn't exactly *happy* "And now, Jake, Dustin has you. It makes me *so* happy that both of us have true love in our lives." A tear ran down Dustin's cheek. I knew he was thinking of how far we'd both come since back then. "Tonight, let's celebrate their love!" I cried, raising my glass of sparkling cider. "Here's to Jake and Dustin!" The crowd cheered, and I lowered myself to my seat. My speech had landed exactly as I intended. Everyone was feeling the love. But no one more than me, I thought, resting my hand on my belly. I leaned my head on Xavier's shoulder. He kissed my head while everyone around us started partying. An hour later, dinner had been served and everyone was buzzing on champagne. Everyone except Xavier and me, that is. My husband was staying sober with me in solidarity. The jazz band was wrapping up their set, about to introduce the next act. Everyone was on the edge of their seat. This was the big surprise of the party. The guests knew that a popstar would be playing, but they didn't know who. "I swear to God, it's going to be Pharrell," Dustin guessed as he straightened Jake's bowtie." "It is my pleasure to welcome to the stage ..." the bassist called out, and the crowd froze. "Billie Eilish!!!!" "Oh. My. God," Jake shouted, his eyes glued to the stage. "How the fuck did Zoe get Billie Eilish?!" Dustin stared at me, his mouth falling open. I shrugged. I wasn't about to tell him that I'd given Zoe her agent's number. Being a Knight had its advantages. The crowd went wild, everyone racing to the dance floor. Dustin and Jake were at the front of the pack. Suddenly, a figure dressed in huge clothes bounded onto the stage. The chorus of cheers nearly drowned out her opening song. Xavier pulled me closer. Together, we watched the scene unfold from our table. "Who the hell is Billie Eilish?" he asked. I giggled to myself. Xavier might've been famous, but he couldn't have cared less about who else was. Just then, I felt a tap on my shoulder. I looked up into the smiling face of a beautiful woman with dark hair and olive skin. "Hi, I'm Megan," she greeted me. "I'm an old friend of Jake's. And you already know my kids I glanced down at the two little kids smiling up at me. I recognized them immediately as the ring bearer and flower girl. "Tom and Margot, say hi to the nice couple," she urged. When the children were silent, Megan turned back to me and Xavier. "They're five. You know how it is." "Are they twins?" I asked. "They are!" she gushed. "I'm pregnant with—" "I was actually going to ask," Megan interrupted, "if you guys could watch them for a few minutes while I dance?" I glanced at Xavier, who didn't look amused. "Of course!" I said. "Go have fun." Megan gave us a relieved smile, and ran off to the dance floor. The twins stood there, staring at us. They looked like little adults in their fancy clothes. So gosh darn adorable. "Hi Margot! Hi Tom! I'm Angela," I introduced myself. They remained silent. Unsure what else to do, I thought they might be interested to know that I was having twins like them. "See my belly?" I began. "Inside are two teeny tiny babies. When they—" "Are you rich?" Margot asked Xavier. She crossed her little arms over her pink dress. "That is none of your business," Xavier responded. "And it's also impolite." I was about to scold him for being so blunt with a child when Margot stuck out her tongue at him. "Phhhhhhhh!" she spat. Xavier and I met each other's eyes. Okay. So, these kids were a handful. Reading my mind, Xavier tried again. "Hey! No more of that. You kids go play. But stay close." Margot put her tongue back in her mouth, and she and her brother ran around to the front of the table. "I didn't know you were such a stickler," I said, seeing Xavier in a new light. He kissed my temple. "You have to show kids you mean business right at the beginning," he explained, "or else they take advantage of you." I frowned. Part of me saw his point, but I also thought he was being too pessimistic. "Is that what you'll do with our kids?" I asked, taking his hand. "No!" he assured me. "Our kids will be little angels." I smiled, leaning my head against his chest. Yes, our kids would be little angels. **XAVIER** I watched as those bratty little twins chased each other around the tables. Stroking Angela's hair, I let my eyes travel down her body to her round stomach. Our kids would be nothing like that. Not rude or inconsiderate. They would be spitting images of my angelic wife. Nothing like me. Or, so I hoped. Angela's phone chirped on the table and I handed it to her. I watched as she slid open the alert. As the picture filled her screen, my stomach jumped into my throat. She looked up at me with a smile. I immediately relaxed. "The realtor?" she smirked. The headline read: Knight Enters Connecticut Home with Another Woman I nodded. She locked the phone and put it back on the table, face down. "The press is too predictable," she mused, staring out at the happy people filling the dance floor. A wave of love crashed down on me. I was so thankful that Angela didn't get caught up in the drama like the media wanted her to. "I can't wait for you to see our house," I whispered in her ear. "You're going to love the master bedroom." She smiled at me and reached up to kiss my chin. "I know I'll love it," she said. "But what will we do with the penthouse?" "We'll keep it, of course," I said. There had never been a question in my mind. "The country is great and all, but I'm a city boy at heart." Angela laughed, and I tried to focus on that beautiful sound instead of the synthesizer bleeding in from the stage. "We can go to the country for weekends," I began. "For holidays, for the summer. Hell, we could spend all our time there. I don't care, as long as I'm with you." I leaned down until my lips found my wife's. I kissed her deeply, slowly. I wanted to let her know I wasn't going anywhere. Never again. Suddenly, while I was kissing my wife, not bothering a soul, I was struck by the most painful sensation known to man. Someone had just hit me in the balls. "Ohhhhh!" I wailed, doubling over. My testicles pounded with pain, the sensation snaking up into my stomach. Angela jumped nearly a foot in the air. "What happened?!" she exclaimed. I wanted to know the same thing. I ducked my head beneath my table to see none other than little Margot grinning up "You little—!" I sputtered, grabbing for her under the table, but she managed to get away. She shrieked and laughed as she ran, her little brother chasing after her. I shook my head. "Fuckin' kid," I muttered. Megan, who must've come running when she heard my cry of agony, materialized beside me. Her face was white as a

"I'm so sorry," she apologized. "I just started dating again, and the kids keep

"Okay, baby," I said as I stood up. That was just about enough party for one night. "What do you say we hit the road?"

I didn't have anything to say to the woman.

I turned to Angela, whose mouth was stuck in a round little O.

...acting out ..."