

**The Arrangement**  
S.S. Sahoo

## Lonely Discovery

### ANGELA

My eyes opened slowly, one at a time, and immediately I felt a searing pain on my leg. My right one. My hand moved toward the pain, and it felt something wet. It had to be blood.

*Focus*, I instructed myself.

*Where are you?*

It was all a blur. I had boarded the jet with Xavier. He went into the bedroom with the stewardess, and I was in the chair ... And then we dropped ... And the wing was on fire ...

I realized my head, lying flat, was looking straight at the sky.

I wasn't inside anything anymore. I turned my head to the side, then the other side, and my surroundings became pretty clear.

The jet was right beside me, but I was on a beach.

"Hello?" I called out, still in the same position. I was on my back, scared to move for fear of worsening the damage. I'd seen the doctor shows on TV.

I knew that shock had a way of masking the pain you felt.

My leg throbbled, as if to say, *you can feel me, can't you?*

I pushed myself up, onto my elbows, and really looked around. I didn't see anybody near me. Actually, I didn't see anybody at all. What I did see was the plane, monstrous in size up close, and I realized how lucky I'd been.

If I had fallen five feet closer, I would've been buried under it. But somehow I had fallen from the sky with only a hurt leg to show for it.

I finally peered down at my leg, biting my lip. I wasn't great with blood, but I knew I was going to have to take care of it myself.

Especially if I was alone out here.

I was always the one at home to take care of Lucas or Danny when they were sick or when they needed to be rushed to the ER from a sports injury.

I'd seen them get enough stitches to know the drill. And as I looked at the gash on my thigh, I could see it looked a whole lot like a wound that needed stitches.

I managed to pull myself out of my own body and attend to the cut like it belonged to somebody else. I took my long-sleeved T-shirt off and wrapped it around my thigh, trying to stem the bleeding. I'd find something to stitch myself up with later.

I decided to try to stand. There were four other people on the flight, and they all had to be somewhere. I started limping, a step at a time, around the plane.

I was scared about what I was going to find. I prayed that there were no bodies, but then I revised my prayer to say no dead bodies. I wanted all the live bodies I could get.

"Is anyone here?" I called out again, my voice a sharp contrast against the silence of the island. It was haunting, being here and not seeing a soul. I kept walking around the jet, finding nothing and no one.

My cell phone was gone, and I had no source of food or water. I thought about what I knew: that a person could go three days without water and thirty days without food before they succumbed to dehydration or malnutrition.

You'll be out of here before then, I assured myself. Xavier Knight is missing. They'll come.

"Xavier?" I screamed, missing him for the first time in my life. I started back into the island, where the trees were.

I was walking through the trees, weaving in and out of them, when I reached the end, finding more sand and water on the other side. I fell into the sand, feeling its heat warm me up from the coolness of the ocean breeze.

I looked around me. It was the opposite of New York City's rush of people and traffic, tall buildings, and endless stream of activity.

*How the heck did I end up here?*

Just a short while ago I was a normal girl, trying to eke out a living in New York.

And now ...

Now I was a billionaire's wife in name only, stranded on a deserted island. I was hurt, scared, and completely alone.

I looked up at the bright blue sky and watched a lonely cloud drift lazily by.

*If only I could float on the breeze and be free* ...

A gentle breeze drifted over me, and I felt a sudden calm settle in my chest.

Maybe it was better this way.

Out here, I didn't have to worry about anything anymore.

No more nosy paparazzi or news networks trying to dig into my private life or make up lies about me.

No more snobby looks or abuse from the rich elite that I never would have gotten along with.

No more abusive husbands that hated my guts.

No more selling my soul for hospital bills I could never afford.

*No more lying to myself* ...

I closed my eyes, and I felt myself drifting away along with the tide ...

"Angela ..."

My eyes snapped open, and I sat up so fast my head spun.

*That voice* ...

I looked around, hope swelling in my chest.

And there he was. We locked gazes, his eyes bluer than the ocean depths before me.

"Xavier," I gasped. Maybe we would make it off of this island after all.

But then Xavier collapsed.

I scrambled up, ignoring the pain in my leg. I stumbled toward where he lay facedown in the sand.

Before I could stop myself, my hands were on him, rolling him over to face me.

His back was touching the sand now, and his face was ashen. He had a massive bump on his forehead and a lesion next to it. His eyes were closed, and his lips dry as the desert.

"Xavier," I whispered. He looked dead. I tried to feel for a pulse on his neck, but my hands were shaking so much that I couldn't find one.

So I put my cheek right up to his mouth and waited to feel a breath. I waited for what felt like an eternity, holding my own breath so I wouldn't miss a thing.

Nothing.

I took a deep breath and tried feeling for a pulse again. I willed my hands to stop shaking.

*Please, please, please* ...

But I couldn't feel a thing. Not a single pulse.

Tears sprang up in my eyes.

Xavier was gone ...