

The Arrangement

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The Wrong Foot

ANGELA

Hips swaying. Sweat dripping. Hands grasping.

I was in the middle of a dance lesson, and I'd never been so close to another person in my life. Let alone ...Xavier.

"And turn!"

Hand clasped to my back, Xavier spun me suddenly, and I felt the air escape my lungs. I felt off balance and wobbly and clumsy, unlike every other person in the room, all of whom moved like professional dancers.

Everyone was so lithe and graceful and annoyingly good at this. Everyone except me.

Luckily, Xavier happened to be leading. Otherwise, we'd probably have been a pile on the floor by now.

"Good! Now, closer."

Kiki, our dance instructor, a gorgeous platinum blonde with a paper-thin body, wearing nothing but a very revealing leotard, put her hand to Xavier's neck.

"Even closer, Mr. Knight," she purred.

I felt the hairs on the back of my neck stand on end. An animal instinct within me sparked. A disgust so pure, a sudden hatred so intoxicating. I almost forgot myself.

Did I just say ...hatred? I didn't hate anyone or anything! What was going on?

"You move very smoothly, Mr. Knight," she said as Xavier led me in another step. "With a proper partner, who knows what you would be capable of."

God, I wanted to trip this woman and watch her fall on her skinny butt! Was this what possessiveness felt like? Did I actually, possibly, feel jealous over Xavier?

That didn't make any sense. A few days ago, I had been speaking with Em and actually discussing the possibility of ending the marriage entirely.

Now I was feeling jealous?

Maybe these were just my hormones or a side effect of feeling Xavier's hands on me, touching my body, spinning me around like a rag doll.

Like I was his to do with what he wanted.

And in some ways, I suppose I was. I was, after all, Xavier's wife, at least on paper.

"Let me lead," he said under his breath.

But he didn't sound angry, more amused than anything. I frowned, confused, and then realized that, in my anxious stupor, I'd begun to direct our movements.

"You need to be more graceful, Mrs. Knight," Kiki said with a tisk. "Try to stop overthinking and just breathe ..."

Easier said than done.

A couple brushed past us, moving in perfect tandem, and I found myself so in awe of their beautiful fluid motion that I failed to watch my feet and—

"Angela!"

WHAM! I landed flat on my butt in the middle of the dance floor. I heard a few people gasp. I swear I caught Kiki snicker before she bent down to offer help, plastering a pitying look onto her face.

"Oh, poor thing," she said insincerely.

"I got her," Xavier said, bending and giving me a hand. "Come on. It's all right."

I was surprised by his gentle tone of voice, by his lack of impatience at my obvious ineptitude when it came to dancing.

Was this the same Xavier who had been screaming at me just a few days ago? It was hard to believe.

As we both stood up, I took a breath and looked at Xavier. It was like I was seeing him for the first time. How his muscles, drenched in perspiration, bulged. How his jaw locked and his dark eyes glimmered with mischief.

He looked, and I had never described anyone this way before, sexy.

Mouth-watering.

One of a kind.

To think this gorgeous specimen was my husband ...

Angela! I chastised myself. Snap out of it. This is XAVIER you're fantasizing about.

But it seemed I wasn't the only one who had eyes for Xavier. When I looked around the room, I saw many women staring at him, practically drooling.

Kiki was the worst of them all. She took his hand.

"Here, Mrs. Knight," she said curtly. "Let me show you how it's done."

She nodded to a fellow instructor, who restarted the song, and suddenly Xavier and Kiki were twirling around the room. She couldn't keep her hands off of him.

Her hands were traveling, I noticed. From his back, further down, to his ...

Oh my God. Did she just squeeze his ass?

I felt that strange anger flare up inside me again. An urge to stomp onto the dance floor and rip him away from her consumed me, but I managed to control myself.

Remember. He's bad for you. You were just thinking about a divorce!

But as Xavier and Kiki danced, I noticed his eyes never met hers. They stayed on only me. Even as he held another woman, he was looking at me.

It made me blush as a pulsing inner heat overtook me.

Never had eyes looked at me like that before.

Especially not Xavier's ...

XAVIER

We arrived home, both sweaty and disgusting, and immediately split off to shower. Marco had driven us, and although we didn't speak, I did tell him to put on the same music we'd been dancing to in the lesson.

I noticed the corner of Angela's lip curl into a smile and cheered inside. *So she did enjoy it! I knew it!*

When the dancing lesson had first begun, and our hands had clasped, it felt like something in my mind had just clicked. All of my anger, my confusion, had, for a brief moment, just ...disappeared. ...

In its place was a pure physical attraction. My brain still wasn't making any sense, but damn, feeling Angela's body against mine did all sorts of things to me.

As I stepped into my bathroom, ready to shower, I considered how I might please myself. I was about to strip and begin when I heard a quiet exclamation.

"Mr. Knight!"

I stopped. In the shower, cleaning, was the housemaid, Lucille. *Damn it.*

"Oh, Lucille," I said, blushing, trying to cover my growing hard-on. "I didn't realize you were in here."

"Sorry, Mr. Knight. I am cleaning!"

As I could see. *Shit.* What was I going to do? I stank. I needed to get clean, stat, but the bathroom was taken.

Then a thought crossed my mind.

"Should I get out and let you ..."

"No, Lucille," I said. "There's more than one shower in this apartment."

I barged into Angela's bathroom without bothering to knock. This was my house, after all. And women were notoriously slow in the bathroom. I'd probably be able to jump in the shower before she even ...

Oh.

My.

God.

With a tiny squeal, Angela covered herself. She was half naked, shirtless, standing in the middle of the bathroom, wearing nothing but her black underwear.

And goddamn was she gorgeous.

"Xavier," she said, breathless. "What ...what are you doing in here?"

She was covering her breasts, but I could still see the faint curve of them beneath her hands and how perfectly formed they were.

For a second, I wondered if I should turn around and give her space. Maybe this was a violation of some sort, but then I thought better of it.

Why did I have to hide from my wife?

I took off my shorts and then dropped my briefs, and Angela quickly turned away, blushing.

"Sorry, honey," I said with a smirk. "My bathroom's being cleaned. And I'm in a rush to get to work. Hope you don't mind."

I stepped toward Angela and saw her eyes flick down and go wide. Like she hadn't ever seen what a real man looked like.

Until now.