Pillow Talk

ANGELA

I was dreading dinner. The idea of having to sit beside Xavier and pretend I loved him after watching him beat the pulp out of someone was beyond weird.

But after Aunt Heather and Brad had both assured me that Xavier was simply overreacting, that Henry would be all right, and that I wouldn't want to miss food this ridiculously good, I shrugged and gave up.

Just make it through the weekend, I told myself. Then make it through another week of dance classes. Then make it through the Silver Jubilee. For Brad. And that's it.

Then you're done.

Somehow I knew this was wishful thinking, that my arrangement with Xavier would extend longer. There would

always be something next. Some event. Some family gathering. Some reason to keep the charade going.

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I didn't know how much more anger and intensity my heart could take.

twenty or so that were here, I saw Xavier was already sitting, waiting for me.

But for tonight at least, for Brad, I would continue to play the role of Xavier's loving wife, even if I was scared of him.

When we entered the dining room, a beautiful room that looked like it could seat one hundred people, not just the

He wore a tux and looked like he had shaved for once—no stubble. He cleaned up nicely, I had to admit, though his knuckles, split and already bruising, betrayed the truth.

I sat beside him and kept my eyes glued to my empty plate. As long as I didn't have to interact with him too much, it'd be all right.

"Hey," he said, but I didn't look up. "About today, I just wanted to say ..."

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"I...I didn't mean to scare you, Angela. My cousin, he can get under my skin and ..."

He wasn't going to apologize. He had probably never had to his whole adult life. He was a Knight, after all. But this was about as close as it came, and the fact that he was trying moved me somehow.

His expression, as pained and frustrated as it was, showed that he cared enough to try.

"It's okay, Xavier," I said, and I really meant it. "I don't know the whole story anyway. Who am I to judge?"

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The way he looked at me then was strange. Almost as if he were feeling real devotion toward me. Almost as if might kiss me.

...he

incredible meal. I had never seen so many courses in my life!

Even Henry, nose bandaged, was sitting there in a tux, bringing a forkful of food to his mouth and eating in glowering

A group of waiters entered the room, and everyone took their seats, ready to dig into what appeared to be an

At one point, Xavier turned to me, whispering, "Have you noticed?"

"What?" I asked, confused. "How good the food is? Your dad wasn't kidding."

"No, silly," he said. "That everyone is watching us."

I took a glance around the room. It was true. Although they did a pretty good job hiding it, using small talk and their

"They want to see if we're affectionate. If we're, you know, a loving couple."

It must've just been in my head, right?

food as covers, everyone kept glancing at us.

worst moments of my life.

"Dinner is served!"

silence.

"Why are they doing that?" I asked, blushing, suddenly self-conscious.

Even asking it made me cringe. The only time I had ever kissed Xavier was at our wedding, and that was one of the

"Oh," I said, reminded of what Xavier had asked me in the car. "Do we have to, um, kiss or something?"

"No, that'd be too showy. Too obvious," he said, and I breathed a sigh of relief.

"Then what do we do?"

Xavier considered one of the silver platters, which held a perfectly broiled halibut with kale and pesto, and his eyes lit

up.

"You mean ..."

"The fish, sure," I said, smiling a little bit. It was one of our only good memories. "What about it?"

He nodded sweetly. It was one of the most adorable gestures I'd ever seen any man make. A "go ahead" look, a "please, please me" look, a look I didn't think Xavier Knight, of all people, could possibly ever give me.

hadn't stopped to consider it before.

Angela's face went red as a tomato.

her chin.

back."

"You mean like ...spooning?"

"Yeah, like that."

the topic in my head.

"Uh ...okay."

"Xavier ...I'm not ...sleeping in that bed with you."

sneak into two rooms without someone noticing.

"You remember feeding me on the island?"

I served the fish to my plate and then gently took my fork and pierced it. It fell apart upon contact, exactly as fish

should. Then, carefully, I raised the fork and brought it to Xavier's lips.

He closed his mouth around it and shut his eyes, smiling. Like it was the best-tasting fish he'd ever had.

"How is it?" I asked, giggling a bit. It was funny seeing him so smitten with a fish.

"Good. Not as good as the one you caught. But really good."

When we went upstairs to our room after dinner, it hit me that Angela and I were going to have to share one bed. I

Now, of course, it seemed obvious. If we were staying in a home filled with my relatives, there was no way we could

I felt like I could keep staring into them forever.

When he opened his eyes and looked at me, they were dark and endless and full of mystery.

XAVIER

But it wasn't something we'd discussed, and I felt bad springing it upon her.

Sort of.

I had to admit that another more devilish part of me was going to enjoy seeing the shock on that little girl's oh-so-innocent face.

"Wait ..." Angela said when we stepped inside. "I only see one bed. Do I sleep somewhere else or"

"I'm afraid not," I admitted, slowly beginning to unbutton my tux.

"You don't have much of a choice, Angela. Don't worry. I'll behave. Keep my hands to myself. I promise."

A promise, I admitted, that might be difficult. A flash of what she'd look like, partially undressed on her way to the

shower, hit me like a tidal wave.

Behave, I scolded myself. You owe her that much.

Angela's mouth opened and closed. She could hardly process what was about to happen, and I didn't blame her.

We'd never shared a bed before. So this was a big step. Even if we were technically husband and wife.

I turned away, giving her privacy to change, resisting the urge to turn my head and catch a glimpse of her.

I laughed a little bit. She looked like a little girl, so wide-eyed and scared and innocent.

I was only in my boxers now, the outline of my cock on clear display, but I didn't care. It was only natural. And, anyway, Angela had seen more of me already. When I finally turned around, she was already in bed, the covers up to

She nodded and blushed, eyes flicking down to my boxers and then away.

"It's all right to look," I said with a wink as I plopped down beside her, covering myself with a blanket.

There was a wall of fabric separating us—I could tell Angela was wearing a nightgown anyway, so it wasn't like she

"Here," I said, grabbing a blanket to make a barrier between us. "A buffer. So you feel even more comfortable, okay?"

was naked underneath—but still, the girl was stiff as a board.

"I don't mean to make you uncomfortable, but do you mind if I, uh, turn on my side?" I asked. "I can't sleep on my

Angela turned, and I did too. There still was plenty of space between us, but I could feel the heat radiating from her body, warming me, making me feel even more attracted to her.

I so wanted to press up closer ...to feel that shapely ass against my cock ...to hear her little voice moan.

Okay, if I didn't stop thinking like that, and fast, my hard-on was likely to tear through these sheets. I needed to change

What wasn't sexy?
What didn't turn me on?

She turned slowly to face me, constantly looking away. Our faces were so close I could feel her breath against my chin.

Angela frowned, trying to put together what I was asking. Then it clicked, and her expression changed. She snorted—actually snorted!

"Dustin, he's ..."

shared.

relax.

actually snorted!

Then she was laughing, and I was even more confused. No one had ever laughed in my face.

But she couldn't control herself. I felt a little flame of anger burning inside my chest. Was I this mockable to her? Was he that much better a man than me?

Then she finished her sentence, and it all made sense.

"How did I not ..." I began. "Wow."

And now I was laughing too. We were both laughing, and it was one of the best, most rapturous moments we'd ever

I rolled onto my back and face-palmed, feeling like the biggest idiot in the world.

"He's gay, Xavier," she said, continuing to laugh.

"Goodnight, Xavier," she said quietly.

myself growing again.

Then his face flashed through my mind, and I knew just the topic.

"Dustin ..." I said. "So is he like ...someone you've ..."

"What?" I asked, feeling frustrated for some reason. "What's so funny?"

"Can I, uh, ask you something, Angela?" I said.

The sense of relief I felt, knowing that Dustin wasn't my competition, was enormous. I still wasn't sure why I cared so much.

But as we turned the lights out and both of us breathed, our bodies only inches apart, I felt Angela slowly begin to

"Goodnight, Angela," I responded.

If one of us didn't fall asleep first, Angela was about to feel exactly what Xavier Knight was made of I drifted into an easy sleep with the smell of her hair in my nose.

She may not have noticed it, but her hand, splayed between us, was only centimeters from my bottom half. I felt