

Dreams

ANGELA

Angela

Angela
I need to talk to you.

Angela
ASAP.

Em
🙄

Em
Is something wrong angle?

Angela
Can't explain over text.

Em
Okay

Em
Can you meet at my place?

Angela

Angela
Be there in 15.

"And then he put his ...um ...into my ..."

Em was staring at me, confused, after I'd decompressed a bit from the dream and gone over to her place the next morning. She'd never been a prude. So my difficulty with talking about the subject always confounded her.

"Just spit it out, Angle," she said. "It was just a dream. Did you have sex?"

"NO!" I shouted.

She raised her eyebrows, surprised. I even surprised myself. Why was I reacting in such an over-the-top manner to this?

"I mean ...no," I said more quietly. "I don't think so. We were about to, and then I woke up."

"It sounds pretty ...confusing."

Em returned to packing the dishwasher, looking preoccupied, a hint of annoyance in her tone that made me frown.

"Did I say something, Em?"

"It's just ...I mean, Angle, come on. Do you even know what you want?"

"What do you mean?"

"Look," she said, turning with a plate in her hand. "I'm just getting sick of listening to you go back and forth. One second you hate him. The next you're obsessed with him. As your friend, I'm supposed to tell you when something's unhealthy. I think this qualifies."

My cheeks flushed with color. I suddenly felt confused and outraged, an emotion I wasn't accustomed to.

"You don't know anything about us," I said, trying and failing to keep my voice from wavering.

"Now there's an 'us'? A week ago, you were talking about getting a divorce."

"You're right, okay! I am confused! I'm sorry!"

I turned away, folding my arms. I couldn't believe my own friend wasn't willing to be there for me right now when I needed her most.

She sighed and lowered the plate, taking a seat beside me.

"Hey, I didn't mean to judge, Angle," she said. "I'm sorry."

"I just don't get why you're reacting like this. I get that Xavier and I are in a weird place, but why can't you try and be more understanding?"

Then I looked at her and realized there were tears in her eyes. Was I the one missing something? Was -!- the one not being understanding?

"Em, what is it?"

"I've been wanting to talk to you about it for a while, but I don't know how. Because he's your brother, and I can tell it weirds you out that we're together and ..."

Lucas. This was all about Lucas. Of course!

"What's going on, Em?" I asked, grabbing her hand. "You can tell me anything. I'm sorry I've been so selfish lately."

She shook her head. "I get it. If it was my brother, it'd be hard for me too. It's just ..."

"What?"

"Lately, Lucas has been so distant. I don't know what I did. For weeks, everything was amazing between us. The best it's ever been. Now? I don't know anymore, Angle."

Em sniffled a bit, and I reached for a tissue, handing it to her.

I wish I'd known about this earlier so I could've talked to Lucas. I suddenly felt like such a bad friend. I'd been so wrapped up in my and Xavier's world I hadn't stopped to think about anyone else.

But I knew that Lucas was serious about Em. I'd seen the way he looked at her. Before Em, girls were just distractions for him.

It was something Danny and I used to joke about. Even though we were siblings, Lucas and I couldn't have come out more different.

"Angela, the virtuous little dove. And Lucas ...the man-whore," Danny would say, ducking as I tried to hit him.

It was true, though, about Lucas, anyway. He'd never treated any girl the way he treated Em. I knew she was special. I knew it even when we were kids and Lucas acted shy around her during our playdates.

"Em," I said, smiling. "Lucas is probably just being an idiot. You don't have to worry. He'll come around."

"But what if he doesn't? What if I did something wrong and it's all falling apart? I just wish he'd talk to me, Angle."

I nodded, a plan beginning to form in my brain. Then I stood up with a start. Em frowned, surprised.

"Stand up, Em."

"Why?"

"Just do it, okay?"

Em followed my orders, standing up, still dabbing her eyes.

"Give me your hands."

"What for?"

"Will you just do it already?"

Em sighed and left the tissue on the table, offering her hands. I took them and looked into her eyes.

"Listen to me, Em," I said calmly. "I know my brother. And I know the way he feels about you. Let me talk to him and set things right, okay?"

"Angle, I can't. I don't want him thinking that I need to go behind his back to—"

"Em," I said insistently. "Please. Lucas deserves a chance to explain himself, but he's not the best when it comes to expressing his feelings. Let me do what I should have been doing weeks ago. Let me be there for you."

Em sighed and smiled. "Okay, Angle. If you insist."

I pulled her into a hug. Then she laughed. "I think Xavier is starting to rub off on you. I don't remember you ever being this demanding."

We both laughed.

She was right. I did feel different, but Xavier I would have to deal with later.

Right now there was only one person I needed to focus on, and that was my brother.

Angela
Lucas. 🙄

Angela
What is your problem?

Lucas
huh?

Lucas
what are you talking about?

Angela
I'M TALKING ABOUT EM.

Lucas
oh

Lucas
its kinda complicated, sis

Angela
🙄

Angela
Why won't you talk to her?

Angela
Why are you being so distant?

Lucas
wait

Lucas
what?

Lucas
is that what she thinks?

Angela
YES, Lucas.

Lucas
shit

Lucas
thats not what i meant to do

Angela
What did you mean to do?

Lucas
angie

Lucas
i think i need your help

Angela
With what???

Angela
What did you do?

Lucas
its not what I did

Lucas
its what im about to do

Angela
🙄

Angela
You're not making any sense, Lucas

Lucas
angie ...

Lucas
i need u to help me pick out a ring

Angela
A RING???

Lucas
im going to propose to Em

It'd been a day since he told me the news, and I'd decided to spend the night in Heller to help him get everything ready. Now, I was on my way back to Xavier's penthouse, but all I could think about were Lucas and Em.

It'd been weird getting used to the two of them as a couple. But now that I knew they were serious, and not just serious with *fake wedding material*, it felt like all the weirdness had been worth it.

My best friend was about to become my sister-in-law. Of course, I had given Lucas an earful on how to properly communicate so that he could make things right with Em first.

But then we'd had the best time shopping for the ring. I knew exactly what my friend would like. As a florist, she had a specific obsession with all things earthy and remake.

Instead of going to the typical jewelers store, I took Lucas to a place famous for its conflict-free diamonds and remake jewelry. There were stunning antique pieces that women had worn for hundreds of years before they'd been reshaped into something modern and stunning.

That kind of history was something I knew Em would appreciate. When Lucas tapped my shoulder and said, "What do you think about this one?" I felt my breathing hitch.

It was the most beautiful ring I'd ever seen.

A delicate interlocking silver band with a rose-like ruby at its center, circled by minuscule diamonds. It looked like something out of a dream.

Like something made for Em.

My eyes glistened with tears as I smiled at my brother. "It's perfect, Lucas. She's going to love it."

After he had bought it and we'd discussed the way he was going to drop the question, I'd hurried home, feeling a blend of joy and envy.

I'd never get to have a moment like Em was about to experience, the moment where the love of your life kneels on one knee and asks you to spend your life with him.

No, my memories were of a life-or-death deal I'd been forced to make with my husband's father.

Yes, Xavier had been sweeter lately, but I still wasn't convinced that he'd fully changed. I also knew we'd never be able to rewind the clock so we could have a proper wedding day.

Then again ...maybe I was underestimating Xavier. Maybe a real wedding, a real love between us, was still in the cards.

After seeing this miracle unfold between Em and Lucas, anything felt possible.

I felt positively giddy as I made my way home.

I felt like I was about to burst with positivity and excitement for the future.

I got into the elevator, waiting patiently as it took me to the top floor. With a ding, the doors opened, and I entered my room, only to stop, frozen.

Standing across from me was another woman, her cheeks wet with tears. She looked adorable and beautiful and better than me in every way.

And behind her was Xavier.

It looked like I'd just caught my cheating husband in the act. Again.

And everything inside me, all those optimistic thoughts and tingles of excitement, disappeared as quickly as they came.