

**The Arrangement**  
S.S. Sahoo

## Languages of Love

**Didi**

What the hell is going on?!

**Didi**

[attachment: 1.png]

**Angela**

I know, it looks bad.

**Angela**

I've got everything under control though.

**Didi**

[attachment: 2.png]

**Didi**

[attachment: 3.png]

**Didi**

[attachment: 4.png]

**Didi**

That doesn't look under control

**Didi**

I can't have the auction anywhere near bad press like this

**Angela**

How about we meet this afternoon?

**Angela**

I can show you my plan of action.

**Didi**

Okay, come by my office at 1pm

### Angela

I dropped the phone onto the bed beside me and groaned.

My phone had been lighting up all morning with news alerts.

If they weren't terrible enough, my family was also texting me, asking me if what they'd seen in the news was true.

*Are you and Xavier doing okay?*

*Is that bastard cheating on you?*

*Why don't you come home for a bit Sweet Pea?*

*HOLY DRAMA! Come see me at the cafe :)*

Now, on top of it all, my job might be jeopardized. I hadn't even thought about the fact that Didi might find the pictures. That she could decide to pull me from the event.

I reached my hand out to the other side of the bed, Xavier's side, the empty side.

He'd left early this morning, before dawn, no doubt to try to get ahead of this PR nightmare.

I'd tried to talk to him last night about everything that had happened, but he didn't want to hear it. He'd been too full of spark, of fire, to think clearly.

That would be a conversation for tonight when things were hopefully calmer.

Having put off the day long enough, I threw back the blankets and climbed out of bed. I only had an hour left until I had to meet Didi.

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"Angie." Didi greeted without looking up as I appeared in the open doorway of her office. "Please, come in. Shut the door behind you."

The Animas headquarters was an unassuming repurposed factory in Tribeca.

A receptionist had led me through the open, airy space to a small office on the second floor.

"Thanks," I replied, pulling the metal door closed.

I took a seat in the chair on the opposite side of the desk from Didi.

After the desk, a coat rack, and a houseplant in the corner of the room, there was space for little else.

I examined her cluttered desk. Documents and file folders of all different kinds scattered and piled on the surface.

I pointed to a framed picture of a fiery-haired little girl on the far corner of the desk. "Who is this?"

"My daughter," Didi said, putting down the file she'd been reading.

It took a moment longer than it should have to reply. "She's beautiful."

Here in this office, Didi was not the steely-voiced businesswoman I had grown accustomed to. She was softer somehow, more human.

"So, the auction," Did prompted. "It's only a few weeks away now."

I nodded. "Yes, nearly everything is set. The donations, flowers, catering—"

"Yes, yes," Didi said. "I've read all your emails. Everything looks splendid."

"Then what did you want to discuss?"

"The news this morning," Didi said.

I looked down into my lap. "Yes, I know it looks bad, but Xavier's PR team is on it. The whole thing will be forgotten long before the auction."

Didi leaned back in her chair. "I know how this works. I'm in marketing after all. Plus, I've made headlines myself once or twice."

"Then what did you want to meet about?" I frowned.

"You." Didi smiled, dropping forward to rest her elbows on her desk. "I just wanted to know if you were okay. I know it can be a lot...all this. Especially if you don't grow up with it."

I felt the first sign of tears prickle in my eyes and an overwhelming desire to hug the woman across from me.

She could have been screaming at me about the bad PR. She could have fired me. Instead, she wanted to know if I was okay.

"There has been a lot going on lately," I found myself admitting.

It may not have been appropriate to open up to a client like this, but it felt so good to talk to someone who wasn't involved in the situation. To someone who wasn't biased toward Xavier or me.

Didi nodded. "Have you spoken to Xavier about any of it?"

"I try but ...but things have been a little strange between us lately."

"Strange how?" Didi frowned.

I hesitated for a second, wondering if it was a good idea to get into all of this. Didi had been a good friend though. She'd hired me for the auction and defended me to Darla. She cared.

I took a deep breath in. "We didn't know each other very well before we got married, and I think that's catching up with us now. It's been difficult to communicate about things. Every time we talk, we seem to misunderstand each other. I just want to feel like we're on the same page."

"I'm going to tell you something my mother taught me," Didi said, her no-nonsense voice returning. "She used to say that love is spoken in a number of different languages. Some people through touch, others through words, some with gifts.

"Sometimes relationships fall apart, even when two people love each other very much, simply because they don't understand how to express how they feel so that their partner understands them."

A coquettish expression filled her face. "If Xavier is anything like I remember him to be, he's a very physical person. I'd bet he needs physical displays to feel loved."

I blushed. "Physical displays?"

Didi shrugged. "Sure. Cuddling, kissing, sex."

She laughed, her eyes on my cheeks. "If the color of your face is anything to go by, I'd say you have a different love language."

I nodded, blushing harder.

Didi sighed. "If you want to communicate well, learn how to speak the same language. Or, at the very least, to speak two."

I let her words settle over me.

Thought about how Xavier seemed to need sexual stimulation more than he needed air to breathe.

Words were almost never enough to calm him down, but physical touch could change his mood in a snap.

Maybe there was something to this.

Maybe I hadn't been telling Xavier that I loved him in the right way.

Maybe that was why it felt like we'd been constantly on the verge of a fight for the past few weeks.

My heart ached at that thought. Xavier was upset, hurt, and I hadn't been there for him in the way he needed me to be.

That would all change tonight.

I would be there for him.

I would show him how I felt in a way he understood.

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It was well into the evening when I arrived home.

After my meeting with Didi, I'd met up with Em and Dustin at the cafe to dispel all the rumors they'd read online.

I'd also learned that Em and Lucas had found a fertility clinic they wanted to go to and that Dustin was nearly finished with his piece for the auction.

But he was being secretive about it and wouldn't give me any hints as to what the piece was about.

"Hello, Lucille," I called as I stepped into the penthouse.

Our maid was at the kitchen sink, washing potatoes. "Good evening. Mrs. Knight. Mr. Knight is in his office."

"Great, thanks," I told her, heading down the hall. I dropped my bag in our bedroom and then headed for the end of the hall, for Xavier's home office.

We needed to talk about last night, and there seemed like no better time than the present.

Dinner would be ready soon, and if we didn't talk now, it would mean another meal eaten in silence.

I knocked lightly on the office door then pushed it open when a grunt replied.

Xavier was seated at the glass-top desk, his computer open in front of him. His eyes flickered up to me, and he pointed at his ear, at the wireless earphones nestled there. He was on a call.

"I don't care how much it costs," Xavier barked to the person on the line. "I want the video removed from their website. Give them the same deal as *Bustle*."

I crossed the room and spun my wedding ring around and around my finger as I waited at Xavier's side.

Then Didi's words came back to me.

If I wanted the best chance of this conversation going well, I needed to talk to Xavier in a way he understood.

Taking a deep breath, I threw my leg over Xavier's, straddling his lap and separating him from his computer.

He didn't yell or push me off. Instead, one of his eyebrows rose, his hand coming to rest on my leg. "Y-yes, that will be fine. Tell me as soon as it's done."

With his free hand, Xavier pulled the earbuds out and tossed them onto the desk behind me.

His eyes ran up me, lips quirking into a small smile. "What did I do to deserve this surprise?"

"We need to talk," I said before I lost the courage. Before he could distract me with his lips or fingers.

Xavier let out a long breath. "We do."

"Last night—" I began, plucking at one of his shirt buttons.

"I know. I—" He stopped, pressing his lips into a thin line.

I flattened my palms against his chest and then let them slide up and around his neck. "It's okay. I was surprised too. It's a lot to take in."

"He's never been with anyone but my mother," Xavier admitted, holding my eyes steady. "And Penny is *nothing* like my mother."

"I know it's hard," I said gently. "Your dad has done everything for you though, Xavier. And for better or for worse, he's the reason that we are together."

Xavier leaned forward, resting his forehead on my shoulder and wrapping his arms around me. "Why does it have to be her?"

I knotted my fingers in his hair. "They both looked happy. I think we owe it to both of them to at least try to be happy for them."

"She's Jacques's ex-girlfriend," he said softly. "How are you okay with this?"

I let out a breath. "You don't get to choose who you love, Xavier. Besides, she broke up with him, right? I'm sure that must've taken a lot of courage ...especially after what you told me about them."

Xavier had told me about how Penny had stayed with Jacques for a long time, despite his abuse.

My heart ached for her.

I could definitely relate to caring for someone who hurt you.

I smiled at Xavier.

Especially when you could see the good inside of them, clawing to come out ...

He watched me quietly, and I wondered what was going through his mind.

"Penny's been through a lot of heartache, Xavier. She's just trying to be happy ...and everyone deserves that."

Xavier hummed in response. It wasn't exactly an agreement, but he wasn't yelling or breaking things either.

"I want to apologize," he said, pulling back. His dark eyes held mine. "For what I said about you last night as well. For ignoring you."

I smiled. "I think you've learned your lesson."

Xavier groaned, letting his head fall back against the office chair. "You've no idea how much of a headache today was. Normally Dad handles all this PR bullshit, but he wouldn't take my calls."

"Serves you right," I joked and then instantly regretted it, as Xavier's expression darkened.

"What was that?" he asked, leaning forward to bite my shoulder playfully. "Did Angela Knight just say something mean?"

I laughed, trying to push out of his hold, only to have Xavier tighten his arms around me.

"I don't think so," he growled, his bites turning into kisses.

"Xavier!" I cried as his fingertips moved to my ribs.

Then my phone buzzed from my pack pocket.

Xavier raised his eyebrow provocatively but stopped his assault, letting me pull out my phone.

**Em**

I need you to take me to the hospital

**Angela**

What's wrong?

**Em**

It's Lucas

**Em**

He's been in a car accident

**Angela**

I'm omw