The Arrangement S.S. Sahoo

Thy Will Be Done

not before he could change his will

"All my love, Brad."

XAVIER

Though the lawyer's office in Midtown was cooled by central AC, I was burning up. I undid the top button of my shirt and glanced at Angela desperately.

We had only been in the office for five minutes, but I was already losing it.

She squeezed my hand. She wasn't exactly comfortable either, sitting between Penny and me. The three of us were the only people in the room beside the lawyer, who was running his fingers over his bushy brown mustache.

Penny, too, was hardly keeping it together. Her eyes were starting to water, and she balled up a tissue in her fist. I felt myself tense at her presence, anger threatening to rise up in me.

But I tried to keep it together. I was fairly certain that Penny wasn't the gold-digging whore I'd initially thought she was. She was just a girl who wanted to be happy, and she'd found that happiness with my dad.

But seeing her there at the will reading cast a dark shadow over those thoughts.

How long did she know my father?

Not long enough to KNOW him. Not long enough to earn a spot in this room.

Now I understood why Dad wanted to wait six months. If I had been here right after I lost him, when the grief was still so fresh, I would have shouted Penny out of the room. Or worse, frankly.

This was probably just what she schemed during their time together. Get in with an old man before he croaked, but

"Welcome to the family of the late Brad Knight. I thank you for being here today."

I exhaled through my nose. For once in my life, I tried to banish my scathing thoughts.

I looked up at him. He straightened his bow tie.

"Though we meet on less than fortunate circumstances, we read the Last Will and Testament of Brad Knight to celebrate his life and all that he accomplished."

The lawyer lifted a brown leather folder from his desk and opened it. "Without further ado, I will read a letter from Brad Knight, followed by his will."

He cleared his throat. "To my family. As I write this, I anticipate a time when I will no longer be with you. I write with love and optimism in

my heart as I think of all of you: Xavier, my only son, Angela, my only daughter, and my dearest, sweetest Penny.

"Perhaps you wondered why I chose to leave six months between my passing and the distribution of my worldly assets. The logistics of death occupy the brain, and I wanted you to remember me with your heart, if only for a short

"The next few pages detail the inheritance each of you will receive. May these things help you to reach your dreams. I hope they bring you a fraction of the joy you gave me in my life.

"Now I am with my great love, Amelia, in some great beyond. Know that I am at peace. I am thankful to leave my possessions from this life in such worthy and capable hands.

My nose stung, like it always does before I cry. At that moment, I didn't care about my father's money or possessions. I just wanted *him*—the man who always knew what to say. The man who wasn't afraid to show love, or to risk it all for someone else.

In a way, my dad lived on through Angela. In her eyes, I was the man he knew I could be.

sets, my private library, my convertible Jaguar, and ten million dollars."

my father's will could possibly surprise me?

with him gone, would be no different.

Angela's breath caught beside me. Certainly my father's generosity surprised her. But not me. "For Xavier, my pride and joy, caretaker of the business I built. I thank you for your dedication to Knight Enterprises as its fearless CEO. And I leave to you

I sat up straight, clearing my throat. I felt nervous, or maybe excited, as I thought of my phone call yesterday. What in

"For Angela," the lawyer went on, "my daughter-in-law and dear friend, I leave my mother's Wedgwood china dinner

I sighed, relieved. Nothing seemed out of the ordinary. My father had taken care of me my whole life, and now, even

I was a little bit surprised about the sports cars though. How long had Dad spent yelling at me for racing on the road?

How many of my speeding tickets had he paid? The old man always did have a sense of humor

My stomach stirred. I didn't think he would leave his place to me, but to *Penny?!*

"...and I deem her my successor as chairperson of the board of Knight Enterprises

"My remaining wealth, I donate to several assorted charities in the name of my beloved Amelia Knight. "And for dear Penny, who showed me I didn't have to be alone, I leave the Central Park West penthouse

A cough exited my throat as if my body was rejecting what I just heard.

I felt like the air conditioner was pumping toxic gas into the room. I was burning up, and I could no longer breathe.

The lawyer was droning on and on, but I heard nothing.

Sure, Penny graduated from NYU with a business degree.

Sure, she was practically a genius when it came to balancing accounts.

Now.

me with it.

But was she better than *me*?

She was my old fuck buddy.

into calm waters.

"Sounds good, Angel."

'Hello?" I called into the intercom.

workout, which I approved of.

recognized the script instantly.

The page was dated 6/15/19.

Brad was a writer, all right. And he left us his diaries.

enough Chinese food to feed a frat house.

The elevator opened to the bright hall of the office.

"Just bring it to my office," I grumbled. "On the double."

things to change. But I smelled something fishy.

Penny.

"PENNY KNIGHT"

"Austin! What's with the soundtrack? Are we in a damn rainforest?"

Brad.

eagerness.

It was one of his healthier coping mechanisms.

Alone with the boxes, I found myself in a dilemma.

He needed someone to watch me in his stead.

No way in hell. And even worse ...

ANGELA

A few moments later, Marco pulled up, and Xavier all but threw himself into the backseat.

"Windows down, Marco!" Xavier shouted, leaning back his head while he hyperventilated.

"Darling!" I cried once we were shut inside the car and zooming uptown.

I couldn't find him in the hall, but there he was on the street, his shirt unbuttoned, sweating so much that his hair stuck to his forehead.

"Xavier ..." I started. He looked like he was about to explode. For all I knew, he would. I had seen him upset, but never

"Xavier," I said again, this time with my voice level. I was trying to be a lighthouse in a storm, trying to lead him back

It didn't have to be so bad, right? My husband was acting like this was the end of the world. "Maybe you won't even notice she's on the board. Or maybe she'll be helpful! I'm sure she'll follow right in Brad's footsteps..." His body was tense, and the air was charged as if he were a live wire. My words of comfort were no comfort at all.

He exhaled at my touch. With that, I felt him relax somewhat.

I was unpacking my suitcase in the bedroom when I heard the doorbell ring. I padded down the long hall of the penthouse. As hard as it had been to leave Bali, and then LA, it felt good to be *home*.

I hadn't expected that we would receive our inheritance so quickly, only a few hours after Brad's will was read, but I was excited.

When we returned to the apartment, Xavier jumped in the shower and then into his gym clothes. He was off on a long

Should I wait for Xavier to open them? Brad's will said he left them to both of us, and my fingers were tingling with

The boxes might as well have been decorated with big red bows. Brad always gave amazing gifts, and I had a feeling

... and then Xavier

As I toyed with the tape on one of the boxes, I devised a plan. I would open it enough to peek inside and I could unpack them together.

With the kitchen scissors, I cut through the tape. Then I folded back the cardboard flaps

The deliveryman carried three big cardboard boxes into the living room. I thanked him as he left.

I had no idea that Brad ever kept a journal ... but then I remembered Marlena Marlboro's words.

XAVIER

"Bethany," I called as I stood by the receptionist's desk. She was talking with a girl in a pantsuit whose nervous energy told me she was a new hire. "An Advil with my latte, please."

email." "Hmmm," I growled, never breaking my stride.

What about this email? Sure, I had been out of the office for a few weeks, and my father was gone. It was natural for

Even after he retired, the office had remained his. What would we do with it now that he was gone for real? I grew closer to the office, and then my blood ran cold. My heart stopped in my chest.

time." I heard Angela sniff beside me. I knew she was fighting back tears for my sake, for which I was thankful. If I saw her crying, I couldn't have contained myself

How many times had he taken a chance on me? How many times had I let him down? I would never do that again. I looked at my wife beside me, her eyes brimming over with love. All Dad wanted was for me to find true love as he had with my mom. He had found it for me, and he helped me save it just before it was too late ...

"...my collection of sports cars and the Manhattan garage, your mother's jewelry, three boxes of my possessions to be shared with Angela, and one billion dollars."

Penny was chairman!?

I slipped my hand from Angela's and charged for the door. Instead of waiting for the elevator, I took the stairs two at a time, down the seven stories.

All the while, I thought of the company. Sure, my father left it to me. But just like when he was alive, he couldn't trust

It only took one glance at Penny's shocked face, her thick lips puckered into an "O," to let me know I had to leave.

I raced out of the lawyer's office after Xavier.

I tried to imagine what Xavier must have been feeling. I knew this was about more than just the company. This was about his father's trust.

Marco met my eye in the rearview mirror and raised his eyebrows.

"Let's take the rest of the day off," I said, pressing his chest with my open hand. "We can settle back in and order takeout for dinner. Tomorrow is a new day

"Someone is here with boxes from Brad Knight. Shall I let him up?" the doorman replied. "Oh! Yes, please!"

this would be no different. I could only imagine what was inside.

At the top of the box sat stacks of notebooks with worn leather covers.

I closed the book and held it to my chest, feeling as if Brad were in the room with me. I found myself holding my breath, but I knew I couldn't keep reading without showing Xavier.

Through the fog of my hangover, I watched the elevator tick up the floors to my office at Knight Enterprises.

I appreciated her effort, but I knew there was only one thing that could soothe me: a shitload of whiskey.

Angela had tried to console me last night, showing me the diaries my father apparently kept for years, and ordering

Before I could stop myself, I was reaching for one. I opened it to find a dated entry handwritten in dark ink. I

The slap of my soles on the tile floor alerted the team to my presence. My employees turned to regard me. The boss was back in town.

"Hey, boss," Austin replied. "It's something new we're trying. Might help productivity. It's in the revised conduct policy

Continuing past the bullpen, I paused. It sounded like it was raining, but the sun was shining outside.

"Oh, Xavier! I'm sorry, I don't have your coffee ready. I didn't know you'd be in today."

I continued my prowl. I passed my office, and as I approached my father's, I slowed my pace.

My father's had already been replaced. And where his name was, it now read: