Baby Talk

Bianca charged ahead of the group and claimed the only solo spot—a busted up, puke green arm chair with tears in the cushion, and a spring hanging out of the side. Chris came in and sat on a blue sofa, artfully dodging a stain of a rather dubious color. Angelica examined both couches and chose the leather one, thinking that she had heard that leather was self-cleaning. Devon sat down next to his best friend, and Angelica moved a little to the side to give him more room. Ella went to sit down in the last spot next to Chris, who stopped her before she could. He pointed at the stain, and then put down a whole layer of napkins that she could sit on.

Chris rubbed his hands together. “See? Told you guys we’d be able to find a pub.”

Angelica wrinkled her nose. “I guess this is technically a pub.”

“This is a definite downgrade from the other places,” Devon began before leaning in closer. “But that just means we’ll get better service,” he whispered.

“So, we’re staying here then?” Bianca asked.

Devon put his feet up on the table and leaned back. “I don’t see why not.”

Angelica slowly began to sit back in her chair.

Chris looked around with a faint smile. “I kinda like it.” He turned to his couchmate. “What do you think, Ella?” She affected a smile and nodded silently, wrapping her arms around her stomach. “So then it’s decided. What does everybody want to drink?”

“I’ll take whatever cider is the lowest alcohol by volume,” said Angelica.

“The white wine that you have the hardest time pronouncing,” Bianca said, winking at him.

“I’ll have some more water, if you don’t mind,” replied Ella.

“What’s wrong, El, you’re not drinking?” Angelica asked with a frown on her face. “That’s not like you.”

“It’s nothing” Ella replied. “I just can’t drink for a while.” Her hands went to her stomach, but she caught herself and started rubbing her legs instead. “It’s no big deal, really,” she insisted.

Angelica’s mouth widened, but she played it off by turning it into a yawn.

“Sure thing. And a Guinness for you, Dev?” Chris shot a finger gun Devon’s way.

Devon dodged it before firing back. “You know me, mate.”

“And you know I can’t carry five drinks by myself.”

Devon rolled his eyes as theatrically as possible and went off with Chris to go get their drinks. Ella and Bianca pulled out their phones. Angelica began rifling through the old magazines that the pub’s patrons had left behind, settling on a copy of *Cosmopolitan* that had Emma Stone on the cover. After closing and reopening Facebook for the second time, Bianca began searching through the magazines until she found one that caught her eye.

“Mother claims angel came down and blessed her baby,” Bianca read aloud. “When he woke up, he was speaking in tongues. Give me a break.”

“Be careful, Bi. I was raised Catholic, remember? When I pointed out how disgusting it was for someone to leave a used condom in the park, my mom tried to convince me it was a balloon filled with dijon mustard.”

Bianca laughed. “And every sleepover you had to wake up extra early so you would be ready for church when your mom picked you up.”

“God, I miss those,” Ella chimed in. “We had quite a squad back then. Us three, of course, plus Daniella, Paula, and Kate. Whatever happened to them?”

“Well, I know Kate went to Stanford,” Angelica answered.

“Of course,” said Bianca. “And Paula went to an Ivy, too right?”

“I think so,” answered Angelica. “Was it Penn?”

“It was Brown. And what happened to Daniella? She ever get her EMT license?” asked Ella.

“Nope,” answered Bianca. “She got a kid.”

“Oh.” Ella looked down. “Well, is she still trying to become a doctor?”

“Can’t,” answered Bianca. “She got a kid.”

Ella frowned. “I guess I never really thought that somebody from our school would need to put their life on hold for a kid”

“Her kid’s pretty cute though,” remarked Angelica. She pulled out her phone and then reached over the table to show Ella some pictures.

Ella smiled. “They look so happy. Both of them.”

Bianca snorted. “Bet she would be happier if she was a doctor.”

Angelica rolled her eyes. “You know, Bianca, not everyone has to get an abortion. I thought you believed in a women’s right to choose.”

“I know *I* do,” Bianca snapped back.

“Guys are we really doing this again?” Ella asked.

The two launched into their usual arguments, with a couple of new statistics and angles that Ella noticed. She listened more intently than she had before as Angelica used metaphors from Bianca’s life to try to force her to utter a hypocritical statement, while Bianca constructed new characters and hypothetical situations to evoke sympathy. The two expertly dodged the traps of the other, but Ella found herself repeatedly falling for the tricks of the two debaters.

Angelica asked Bianca if she was still a grill master. Bianca nodded.

“And do you throw out a burger just because it’s burned?” Angelica asked.

“Now, you know me. I don’t like to waste food,” Bianca answered.

“See? Just because the burger isn’t perfect, doesn’t mean you throw it out. Even if the pregnancy isn’t under the best of circumstances, it doesn’t give you the right to just throw it away. You can’t kill people just because they inconvenience you. Just because things don’t look perfect, doesn’t mean that a couple can’t raise a good child. It just means it might take a little more work.”

“Fair enough,” Bianca answered. “But you have to admit that there are some burgers that are far too charred for any sane human to eat.”

“You’ve met my mom. She *likes* her food to be burnt. There are people out there that will eat burned burgers, and there are people out there willing to raise a child even if it’s an inconvenience.”

Ella found herself nodding.

Bianca painted the story of Jeff and Nora, a couple who had been going out for over a year and were pretty comfortable with each other. “Now remember,” Bianca explained, “the girl has been consistently taking her birth control pills for um, let’s just say throughout her adult life. And, they always use condoms. But Jeff’s roommate has been upset with Jeff for, I don’t know, maybe always leaving his dishes out in the kitchen, and as revenge pokes holes in Jeff’s condoms. Now we all know that the pill isn’t 100% effective, which means someone somewhere must have gotten pregnant while on it. And mystery solved, that person is Nora. Now her and Jeff have done all that is necessary to not be pregnant, should they have to put their life on hold to raise this child?”

“I understand that couples want to have sex, and that theoretically birth control is the responsible way to avoid the consequences of that,” responded Angelica. “But if they absolutely 100% cannot afford to have a kid, then they should be using the method of birth control that is absolutely 100% effective. I think it starts with an ‘A’.”

“See, I knew you were a fan of abortion,” Bianca smirked.

Ella found herself nodding again, and wrapped her arms more tightly around her stomach. She felt a kick in her stomach and looked down, embarrassed.

Chris and Devon came back, distributed the drinks, and sat down.

“So what are you lovely ladies talking about?” inquired Devon.

“Oh, nothing much. Bianca and I were just having a debate. We were just about to change the topic.” answered Angelica.

“Actually, we were talking about abortion,” Ella interjected. She took a sip of water and a breath. “What are your views on it Devon?”

“Well I have a problem with the federal government taking away an entity’s right to choose,” Devon replied.

“Wait for it,” Chris whispered to Ella.

“So I think that the feds should stop overreaching and let the states choose whether or not they want to allow abortion.”

“There it is,” Chris whispered.

“So you’re still all about state’s rights, huh, Devon?” asked Bianca.

“Well, my dad’s still running for governor. And he’s gonna get it this year, too.”

“I’m sure he will. Unless he’s still putting those dad jokes of his in his campaign speeches.”

“When I told him to take them out, he said he was gonna make like a tree and leave them in there.”

“Maybe next term, then.” They both laughed. “So what are your dad’s opinions on abortion?”

Devon went silent. “Hey, maybe we should change the topic.”

“Yeah, maybe.” Bianca rubbed her arms. “It’s just--he’s the one that’s gonna be making the decisions, you know? I gotta try.”

“I know. I can ask him if he has time to talk with you. I’m sure he’ll listen to you. Whether you can convince him is another matter though.”

“I know it won’t be easy--I can’t even convince Angelica.” She sighed. “Does he know about mine?”

“My friends’ secrets aren’t mine to tell.”

She put an arm around him. “Thanks, Devon.”

Chris sneezed. “Bless you,” Bianca said.

“See, you are religious!” Devon joked.

Bianca smirked at him. Not wanting to tangle with Angelica again, she set her sights on Chris. “So Chris, what do you think about abortion?”

Chris glanced briefly at Ella, and then back to Bianca. “I don’t think that a mother should be able to make that decision.” Devon choked on his drink. Bianca took a big sip out of hers. Angelica just stared at him. Ella looked away. “Let me explain, I don’t think the choice should be the father’s or the governor’s or the president’s.”

“Do you think it should be up to some higher power, or fate?” asked Angelica.

“No. It should be up to the child,” Chris responded. “It seems unfair to take the child out without giving it the ability to decide. A lot of people think that being born to parents who aren’t fit to take care of you is worse than not being born. But it’s not.” Ella rubbed his shoulder. “Look, I don’t know want to be a Debbie Downer, but my mom almost didn’t have me. And sure, life wasn’t a fairy tale all the time. But it was life. And if you had given me the choice I would choose life every time.”

“Well, some people wouldn’t.” Bianca said.

“And when those people are old enough to understand, they can choose that for themselves.”

Ella cleared her throat. “What was your mom doing? Before she had you, I mean.”

“Just some odd jobs, here and there.”

“So,” Ella began, before stopping herself.

“So nothing. I know. She did not have the same aspirations as people like us, so it’s seems like an easier decision to make. But ask your mom if she would sacrifice her career for you to live. I know all of ours would say yes.”

Ella thought about all the nights her mom had stayed up with her when she was sick, or when her mom had to go in late to work because Ella had missed the bus and needed a ride, or that time when she hadn’t taken a new job opportunity because it had meant Ella needed to change schools. Ella felt a kick and smiled.

“You know, El,” Angelica said. “I have been reading up on UNC’s family options and they have some housing.” She handed Ella her phone.

“Thanks.” Ella looked around at all of her friend’s smiling faces. “I have one more question to ask you guys: what do you think makes a good baby name?”