## Vague Planning

## ANGELA

Dustin delivered two iced peppermint mochas to my regular table in his café.

The coffee shop was even busier than normal, with young people working remotely on their laptops and overalled hipsters that must have drifted up from Brooklyn.

hipsters that must have drifted up from Brooklyn.

"Thanks, Dustie."

I blew him a kiss before turning back to Zoe.

excited to explain her plan.

She smiled devilishly.

"Okay, so ..." I began, looking over my notes. I had spent the previous day poring through back issues of Vague magazine, cutting out pictures and trying to get into the mindset of New York's fashion elite.

"Every year they choose a theme for their Gala," I explained. "And the theme has to inspire many different looks. It's a costume party, after all."

I went on to detail the meeting. "Next week, I have a meeting with the Gala committee where I'll pitch the theme that we decide on ... and if they like it the best, then the event is ours!"

I took a sip of my coffee drink. The peppermint mocha was the first coffee I ever had in Dustin's shop, and it was still my favorite.

Zoe took a folder out of her bag and opened up her own extensive notes.

"I did a lot of brainstorming yesterday," she said, "and I have one idea that I think is *really* good. The rest is ~eh."~

I grinned. "Let's hear it!"

Zoe took out a reproduction of a Greek painting and handed it to me.

It showed figures in light brown wearing togas and elaborate headpieces against a black background.

"That is Dionysus." She pointed to the figure wrapped in grapevines, and he carried in his arms a large vessel of wine.

"And that," she went on, gesturing to the other figure, who was seated and playing a small harp, "is Apollo."

I looked up at her, waiting for her to explain what she was talking about. She was leaning over the table, clearly

"So, they were both sons of Zeus, but Apollo was all about order, logic, and rational thinking ... while Dionysus was the god of chaos and dance, wine and primal emotion."

I furrowed my brow, still not sure where she was going with all this. She continued, undeterred.

"How about this for a theme? Chaos and Order: Dionysus vs. Apollo. The guests can choose which god will rule their

look for the evening ... and their behavior."

I wanted to let her down easy. Her idea was certainly *creative*, but I thought it was just too much.

"That's a really cool theme," I began, "and you're right. Everyone loves Ancient Greece. But I'm worried it's a little

I was unconvinced. My confusion must have shown on my face because she rushed on: "Plus, people could just play on

too ... complicated."

I grimaced as Zoe's smile disappeared. She looked at her lap for a moment before rallying up a smile again.

Now *I* smiled.

Lady Gaga wearing an elaborate silver headpiece. A model walking the runway at Alexander McQueen's last show. Finally, a Star Wars stormtrooper.

"I understand," she said with a little shrug. "Now tell me your idea."

Ancient Greece for inspiration. Everyone loves the Greeks."

Zoe looked at me skeptically, but she wore a small, knowing smile.

Zoe nodded. "I like it."

I waved my hand.

*Dustin* in ∼love?!∼

"Yes," he went on, without prompting. "I met a man

"I'm so excited for you!" I gushed. "So, is it official or what?!"

I squeezed my best friend's arm. I couldn't be happier for Dustin.

As I looked back at my assistant, I knew she felt the same way.

I gritted my teeth and clenched my fist beneath the table.

were in the room at all, let alone in positions of power.

"We'll be renovating the whole spa facility," Penny added.

"Here, we've detailed our plans for a freshwater lazy river pool

He puffed out his chest and cleared his throat. I glared at him.

The members of the board let out a collective *hmmm*.

I rolled my eyes. I couldn't help myself.

Henry laughed, throwing back his head.

Hell, I didn't want to help it.

I glared at her. I'd reached my limit with her, too.

nice, but that hadn't gotten me anywhere.

profitable property?!"

"Well?" I demanded.

boardroom.

I sighed, exasperated.

image of a pool beneath a bright glass dome appeared.

Power that they were both exercising.

It gave me a headache.

seemed to take a liking to her.

Dustin sighed, gazing up to the ceiling.

I fanned a selection of photos before her.

"The Future of Fashion," I said, fanning my hands before me as if I saw the words in lights.

"Imagine the outfits people will come up with!" I gushed.

"True!" Zoe tucked the Greek image back into her folder. "It's straightforward and fun."

"Thanks," I said. I knew I was right.

Zoe sighed, resting her head on her fist. "I like my idea for the social aspect. But I guess it *is* a little bit complicated

She nodded. I hoped I hadn't hurt my assistant's feelings, but it was clear to me—my idea was better.

"Don't worry about it. But let's go with the Future of Fashion for the proposal."

Just then, Dustin pulled a chair over and joined us at the table.

"Hi, darlings," he said, tossing back his head so his glossy hair flipped back.

"Dustin!" I cried. "Aren't you looking gorgeous today?"

It was true. He was looking especially fabulous.

"I know," he said with a wink. "It's because I'm in love."

I gasped.

My eyes met Zoe's, and we grinned.

He rolled his eyes. "Oh, Angela. You are so old-fashioned. Of *course* it's not official. We just met at the opening. But I have a feeling that I'm onto something big."

This board meeting was already going south, and we'd only been talking for ten minutes.

I was in my proper place, at the head of the table, but I was flanked by Penny and Henry. It was bad enough that they

a senior board member who had known my father well and always acted as moderator.

"The spa is our top priority," I began. "It's necessary that we market the resort to non-skiing clients as well."

She was still a little awkward at the executive table, but she was learning fast. Much to my annoyance, everyone had

..." She gestured to the screen, where a prototype

...gondolas and restobar. Option

"Let's talk renovations for the ski resort. Our budget is quite large, but we will still need to be strategic," said Matthew,

"I don't know about that." Henry's voice sounded like nails on a chalkboard. "It's a *ski* resort, so I think it's important that we focus on the ~skiing~."

I could hardly believe the imbecile got a little laugh from a few of our older board members with that one.

largest dividends."

Henry pressed the remote to reveal an animated simulation of a luxurious gondola approaching a mid-mountain lodge and resto-bar.

"The mountain improvements I've outlined here would require most of the budget, but I think they would receive the

"I agree that we'll need to replace some of the lifts and gondolas on the mountain," I began, "but a mid-mountain *resto-bar*? Is that really necessary? Imagine the lawsuits we could face with intoxicated guests racing down a black diamond slope!"

"This is *Europe* we're talking about! There would never be any complications because of a silly ~bar~."

All right. That was enough.

"I've *been* to Europe, you idiot!" I spat before I could stop myself. "I went to a French fucking boarding school!"

A few people murmured. I knew I was getting out of hand, but I couldn't help it.

I wanted to give my entitled prick of a cousin something that would really wipe that smug smile off his face.

"Xavier ..." Penny started, looking around uncomfortably.

Both of them were just users, trying to take all that they could from my father. And now, from me. I'd tried playing

"This is *bullshit!*" I slammed my fist down on the table. "Does anybody else in this room actually care about creating a

The table went quiet.

I locked eyes with each board member, challenging anyone to speak up.

"Why don't we start with a vote?" Penny suggested, breaking the silence. "Option one

Henry shot his hand in the air like the first-grade teacher's pet.

I raised my arm with the rest, glaring at Henry.

Just the thought made me want to vomit.

Like an unfit leader.

Was my idiot cousin succeeding?

I kept my eyes fixed on Harry, my fist still curled on the table.

He didn't seem perturbed that he didn't get his way. In fact, the bastard was smiling.

two ...gondolas when necessary and spa renovation. All for option one, raise your hands."

Only two hands were in the air.

"All for option two ..."

I wouldn't meet her gaze. Who the fuck did she think she was, my babysitter?

My stepmother ...?

I could see her glance up at me every now and then, and the concern in her eyes just pissed me off more.

"Option two it is ..." Penny concluded, busying herself with writing notes to avoid the tense atmosphere in the

Then I understood.

Henry didn't give a fuck about the resort. All he cared about was making me look bad.

I glanced around the room to find the board members exchanging wide-eyed looks and murmuring quietly among themselves.