Preparations

Then I got to the final slide:

It was Hannah Flintour who spoke first.

But then it hit me.

opposites."

ANGELA

Standing in a meeting room at Vague magazine, I could say I haven't been so intimidated since ... ever. Literally ever. I had seen my share of mean girls and beautiful women. But the group before me was on a whole other level. They were more than supermodels. These were the men and women who *chose* the supermodels. I smoothed my hands down the skirt of my dress to wipe off my sweaty palms.

Xavier had helped me pick out my outfit, and I felt glad that someone with impeccable taste had already approved my look. I wore a structured red dress with a mock turtleneck.

It was fitted, but not tight. Confident, but not showy. Sexy, but not slutty. Xavier assured me of all of this.

My statement piece was my shoes. They were black stiletto pumps with an asymmetrical design. One had a translucent

ribbon bow on the arch of my foot, and the other on the heel. I was standing tall, even if I was quaking in my heels.

"So," I began, already cursing myself for my weak entrance into the pitch. "Thank you for having me. I'm excited to share my ideas for the Gala." Hannah Flintour scowled at me. Her eyes were hidden by her sunglasses, but her face gave away her distaste.

I clicked the little remote, and the photo of Lady Gaga in the headpiece appeared. Then the Alexander McQueen runway. I had chosen the same images I had showed to Zoe.

THE FUTURE OF FASHION

"At this year's Gala, let's imagine what *will be*. Our guests will reveal the innovative future that ~they~ imagine." I delivered the lines I had rehearsed in my mirror.

"It will be a night of looking forward. Together, we will create 'The Future of Fashion."

I gulped.

But the editors of Vague betrayed no hints of excitement. Their faces were as flat as the paper shuffling in their hands.

"It's sort of like Vague's garden party two summers ago. We called it 'Fashion's Future." Her delivery was emotionless, but I knew that this was a devastating blow.

How could I have been such an idiot?! I hadn't done my research. I didn't even know the other themes that Vague had used in the past.

My speech delivered, I smiled at the faces around me, breathless and hopeful.

What else could possibly impress the moguls of Vague? What could pack a punch? My mouth was dry. I had nothing.

Chaos and Order. "Well then, imagine this. Apollo and Dionysus. Both sons of Zeus, but they couldn't have been more different. One was

"Oh," I said, scrambling. I refused to believe I just blew my chance. But what else could I tell them?

logic, the other, impulse. The head and the heart. "Chaos and Order, Dionysus vs. Apollo. Our guests can choose which god they wish to embody. It will be a night of

The group was still silent, but the air in the room seemed to change.

"The guests can choose which god to embody in the way they dress

The room burst into hushed giggles.

as if I'd been holding it the whole time.

"Thank you for your time

Drinks only.

idea.

Shoot the shit and get blasted.

And then I was cracking up.

address her.

whispered fiercely.

I didn't spare her a second thought.

"Another round!" I called.

I didn't mind.

couch and began to read.

07/15/1975, Martha's Vineyard

the old man looking over your shoulder?"

"We could have two sides of the party," I plowed on. "Apollo's side would be full of art, jazz, and fancy food, while ... beautiful chaos."

"The god of wine and the god of reason," a woman remarked. "It works."

Yes! I thought. The seal of approval from the queen herself.

I nodded and gathered up my belongings. When I closed the door of the meeting room behind me, I released a breath

... Angela," Hannah said, checking her notes. "We'll get back to you within the week."

... and the way they act."

Hannah Flintour liked my idea!

"Thanks, sport!" Rodney cried out, clinking his emptying glass against mine before we both drained our drinks. I couldn't remember what number that old-fashioned was. Five? It was enough to make me feel loose.

"He still is!" I shouted, accepting the newly filled tumbler that was placed before me.

"He made his girlfriend goddamned *chairman* of the board!" I roared.

Then I set off through Vague's hallowed halls with my stilettos clicking on the white floor.

"So, Xavier," Will from Wall Street called from the leather couch across our circle. "How's it going at Knight without

"You won't believe what my old man did," I groaned. All my companions leaned in to hear the juicy news, and I took a hearty drink.

"Ain't that always the way!" Rodney shouted. "It was the same when old Bernard passed on. He made me CEO, sure,

"She must have had the poor bastard by the balls!" Rodney chimed in, and I laughed until I cried. Suddenly, Will stopped laughing.

The guys burst out in laughter. Until then, the situation had been a tragedy. Suddenly, I too could see the humor in it.

"Xavier, I was hoping to talk to you," she began. Her tone meant business, but I saw right through her. "Hey, darlin'," Rodney called.

Who did Penny think she was, coming into this place of *business?* This was practically a men-only bar. She was in the bullpen, and I wasn't going to play nice. "At least your dad had good taste," Rodney said to me under his breath.

..." she

Instead she just stared me down, a look of disgust in her eyes. "If Brad could see you now ..." She turned around and left without a word.

I was bursting to tell Xavier about my exciting day. I was in the penthouse, waiting for him to return. He was probably

I had the perfect activity to occupy my time. Opening Brad's diary to where I had left off, I settled into the soft leather

ANGELA

BRAD

Amelia left the island today. She's going home to Pennsylvania to work as a waitress until school starts again.

As we sat by the fire, I told her I'd been thinking about her all the time and wanted to see her as much as I could before

I went to bed feeling like the world was bigger and better than I ever imagined before.

Now I'm sitting on the beach with Mom, cursing myself because I never asked Amelia—

HANNAH FLINTOUR No way!

Could they possibly be ... Interested? Dionysus's side would have wine, vices, dancing music. It would be The table of editors wore the same blank expressions. I was sweating, standing before them, waiting practically an eternity until one of them spoke. "I like it," one man in a red leather jacket said. Then Hannah Flintour herself opened her mouth.

XAVIER "Another round!" I called out. While a few years ago, I would have taken this opportunity to sidle up to The Hatchback's busty and beautiful bartenders, today I meant business.

Of course, that was why I was here. To blow off steam. And the businessmen who populated this bar all had the same

but he filled the board with his cronies."

I turned behind me to see a woman walking toward us, her shapely body peeking out even from beneath her modest business attire. It was *Penny*.

Seeing her in the men's bar struck me as totally hilarious. When she arrived beside us, I was laughing too hard to

"This is the girl I told you about!" I guffawed. The boys and I lost our shit all over again.

"Xavier ..." Penny eyed me and my drinking buddies warily. "Can we talk about work for a minute?"

"That's true ... and I would know— I hit it first!!" I didn't even bother keeping my voice down.

I glanced around us. A few men had their phones out. But what did I care?

Rodney slapped me on the back. "'Atta sport," he said with a belch.

blowing off steam after a stressful week at work.

talking about art, and then the evening went fast.

It was kind of embarrassing, but it also felt nice.

would see Amelia every time I turned a corner.

The next few days are kind of a blur to me now.

I strode right to her, getting sand in my loafers.

I said she could visit me, too, and she said she might.

My ringing cell phone broke my concentration.

heard so much about.

The screen flashed:

My heart soared from my chest, up to the stars and back again.

she left.

didn't dare.

be all right.

wanted, and then she went inside without saying a word.

"Xavier!" Penny cried out, indignant. She took a quick glance around the bar. "People are *recording us*"

She looked at me like I was a ticking time bomb—spoke as if she thought she could defuse me by keeping a level voice. But it was too late. I was past the point of no return.

want it ..." Penny's hands curled into fists, and for a second I thought she was going to hit me. I almost welcomed the violence. Maybe it was exactly the jolt I needed.

"Yeah?" I mumbled. "Does that excite you? Sorry, hun, but we aren't giving them a show, no matter how much you

I still have a month here, and I'm worried I'll spend the whole time thinking about her.

On Monday, Amelia came over for dinner. She was shy at first, but Dad mixed us all cocktails, and she and Mom got

When I walked Amelia back to her friend Lyla's house, I finally kissed her. We kissed for a while, but not as long as I

I spent the next day at the beach with my friends, then we went to town for dinner. I was on edge the whole time, hoping I

I saw her, finally, at the bonfire on the beach. She was with her friends, and I knew she saw me, but she didn't come over.

That night I went crazy because I didn't know when I would see her again. She said she would be busy.

I knew Mom loved her. She kept looking between us like something important was happening.

I knew it made her happy, even though she didn't say anything in response. She did reach for my hand, though, and later, she kissed me first. How did it happen so quickly? Last night, her last one here, we lay out under the stars on a blanket for hours.

When we said goodbye, I tried to memorize how she felt in my arms, how warm her skin was under my hands

I didn't want to leave Brad's world. I wanted to stay, reliving his magical summer with Amelia, the love of his life I'd

ANGELA

I held her in my arms and wondered if that was what love felt like. I almost wanted to tell her what I was thinking, but I

I did say that Vassar is pretty close to New York, and I would like to visit her there if she wouldn't mind. She said it would

But what if the call was from Vague? I leapt up from my seat and grabbed my phone.

I gasped. I accepted the call, answering breathlessly. "Hello?!"