The Arrangement

Lost in the Dark

ANGELA

Tonight would define my career as an event planner.

I stared out of the car window. The streets sped by outside, and my heart raced along, keeping pace.

The Gala.

I took a few deep breaths, trying to assure myself that I'd done everything that I could, that no matter if I was stressed

or not, the event would pass by all the same.

What was the point in stressing, right?

If only my heart would listen to my brain.

Nausea made my head spin. Bile churned in my stomach, but there was no way I was going to let myself throw up.

What a disaster that would be.

Dionysus or Apollo.

Chaos and Order.

Impulse or Logic.

move and mingle freely as they pleased.

All of the invited guests would choose a side to represent, their clothes and their actions representative of their chosen deity.

I felt like an imposter in the custom-made dress I had designed for the event.

I wore an asymmetrical dress, each side representative of a different god.

I thought it was only fitting, as the event planner, that my dress reflect both sides of the coin.

The event itself would be split evenly down the middle between the two factions, though the guests would be free to

Apollo's side was a quiet but bold cream-colored fabric, with gold lace accented throughout, the fabric hugging my

skin before ending at my upper thigh. It spoke of elegance, power, and most importantly, order. That order bled away and bloomed into the vibrant and shimmering Dionysus, creams and golds flaring out into

skirt that dropped all the way down to my ankle, the shimmering fabric reminiscent of an open flame. Spontaneity. Movement. Chaos.

glowing purples and maroons. Swirls of color flowed chaotically down my waistline, flaring out into a ruffled half

A diamond stud was pierced into Apollo's ear, a hanging grapevine earring in Dionysus's. "You look out of this world." Xavier squeezed my hand in the car.

"Angela, go home," I muttered darkly. I totally looked like a freak. An alien.

I wore my hair down in loose waves, black Louboutin stilettos adorning my feet.

"Yes."

Xavier laughed, and I found that the sound actually helped calm my nerves a little. He leaned over and gave me a

"You'll do great, Angela. Believe in yourself" He smiled encouragingly at me before a shadow fell over his face. "I wish

"It's okay," I said. "Your meeting is really important, right? You already came home just to see me off to the Gala. That's

"That was meant to be a compliment, Angela. You look stunning beyond words. Art come to life."

"Oh, right. Picasso. I can totally see it."

Still, I'd be lying if I said I didn't wish he would come anyway.

with his. When I opened my eyes, I got lost in his gaze.

He reached over and pushed the door open, and my breath caught in my throat.

up in the exact center of it all, their music drifting on the night breeze.

a frantic percussion hammered out by extravagantly dressed musicians.

I could be there to support you, but

quick peck on the cheek.

more than enough."

my eyes.

The Gala was stunning.

And my gosh, the camps.

Dionysus was a blur of movement.

What the heck is going on with me?

bored and sneak home anyway.

suggesting she belonged to camp Dionysus.

"Not at all," I lied. "Things are going smoothly."

"Hi, Darla." I forced a smile.

to you?"

"Dustin!" I cried.

I blushed.

"Angela."

Oh, hello again, anxiety.

Idiot, I scolded myself.

Oh. My. God.

The lights went out.

All of them.

I felt like I was on cloud nine.

"Thank you so much!" I gushed. "I won't let you—

"Is this part of the program?" she asked.

No. I panicked. ~No, it isn't.~

you'll excuse me ..."

"Embrace your inner Dionysus, girl."

I laughed, my anxiety slipping away.

"Maybe after work," I said with a grin.

"Was that an *E.T.* reference?"

I understood why he couldn't come. I knew that without a doubt, if my husband could get away from work and come to the Gala, he would have.

Marco pulled up next to Hudson Yards. All I had to do was open this door and walk out. I took a deep breath, closing

I felt Xavier's lips press gently into mine, his touch lingering and sweet. I felt my pulse slow, my heart beating in sync

Xavier had been gone all day, preparing for whatever big meeting was going to take place tomorrow.

"It's going to be amazing," he assured me in a soft voice. "Now get out there, babe."

The red carpet stretched out before me, a line of bright red that split Hudson Yards down the middle. *The Vessel* stood at the end of the carpet, each half perfectly aligned between the Apollo and Dionysus camps.

The space looked surreal, almost dreamlike, outside in the night sky. It was like the space had been ripped straight out

of a storybook and plopped right into the middle of New York City. Apollo was to the right; tall lanterns spaced in perfect intervals lay in a grid through the space. Elegant ice sculpture

fountains spewed crystal clear waters, art pieces and installations decorated the space, and a small orchestra was set

Apollo was like an elegant museum, Dionysus a carnival, the two colliding with one another with *The Vessel* as the centerpiece. The ambitious plan on paper had come to life.

The guests were dressed almost as extravagantly as I was, the entire grounds a fashion runway.

emotions took an immediate nosedive. I went from unreasonably giddy to unnecessarily anxious.

I turned to share my excitement with Xavier, but Marco had already driven off.

organizer, trying my best not to fumble over my words or trip on my feet.

Still, I found myself wishing that I could share this moment with someone.

I'd invited everyone, but they were all busy with one thing or the other.

I scanned the crowd around me, wishing for a familiar face.

Fire spinners roamed the area, acrobats hung down from brightly colored silks, their bodies twisting and contorting to

It was a designer's dream. *If only Zoe were here with me*

More guests surged past me on the carpet, and I suddenly felt desperately alone despite being in a crowd of people. My

I took a deep breath, walking along the red carpet, trying to focus on my job. I ran a critical eye over everything, making sure every detail was set and in its place.

Several people greeted me along the carpet, commenting on my outrageous outfit. I smiled, playing the cordial

Em and Lucas had a baby to take care of. Danny was busy running the restaurant.

And honestly, this wasn't Dad's scene at all. I'd feel really bad subjecting him to these artsy folk. He'd probably just get

Anyone but this familiar face, I silently pleaded.

I turned, and sure enough, there was Darla. She looked stunning in her dress, the wild flare of feathers and chains

"What's the matter?" she asked, her voice dripping with feigned concern. "You look a little pale. The pressure getting

"Hmm," she murmured, unconvinced. "I like your outfit. If you were going for brash and hideous, I'd say you really

"Ah, look who it is. The woman of the hour." I froze. I'd recognize that reedy French accent anywhere.

nailed the look." Darla just stared at me, as if she was waiting for the second I'd crack.

That's when I spied Dustin, looking absolutely ridiculous in a pastel suit.

"Well, if you'll excuse me ..." I murmured as I slipped away, Darla glaring at me all the while.

of wine and parties?" He nudged me, leaning in closer, one eyebrow raised. "And fertility."

I smiled, radiant at his praise. "Where's Jake?" I asked him.

"Oh, he's over in Apollo somewhere, being a square. I told him that Dionysus is where it's at. I mean, come on, the god

Dustin looked like he was about to say something else, but his eyes widened, looking at somebody over my shoulder.

"Oh, Angela!" He walked up to me and gave me a big hug, careful not to mess up my dress. "You and Zoe did a

marvelous job. I mean, look at this place! Fire dancers? An entire freaking orchestra?" He kissed his fingers.

I spun, nearly jumping out of my skin to see Hannah Flintour standing behind me, her gaze as fierce and intimidating as ever. She opted out of wearing a dress, instead wearing a tailored silver tux, the coattails flaring out behind her.

"Hannah," I squeaked. "Are you, uh, enjoying yourself?"

"I look forward to working with you again in the future," she said.

Her hair was slicked back to further accentuate her prominent cheekbones.

She raised an eyebrow, which might as well have been a roaring laugh for someone like her.

"Relax, Angela. You've done a good job here. Everyone seems to be having fun." She looked around, nodding slowly to herself. "A very good job." "Thank you, Hannah."

She held out her hand, and I stared at it dumbly for a second too long before I realized I was supposed to shake it.

I froze, plummeting from cloud nine straight down to the cold, rocky earth. I looked around, confused guests milling

"We might have some technical difficulties," I said, trying my utmost to sound calm and composed, when really I was

anything but. My eyes were fixated on the big electrical tent on the outskirts of the Gala grounds. "I'll go look into it. If

A girl in a familiar red dress was rushing away from the Gala, off into the night. I squinted, trying to get a better look.

about. The musicians stopped playing, the performers stopped their acts, cautious of proceeding in the dim light. Hannah Flintour looked around, confusion plain on her face.

I began making my way to the tent when a flash of red caught my eye.

Why else would she be here? And why would she be running away?

Zoe? I went to go follow her when it hit me. A pit of dread opened up in my stomach, betrayal sliding like a knife in between my ribs.

Did she do this?

I needed to fix this problem. The entire night depended on it.

The Gala was devolving into chaos. It seemed like Dionysus would have his way.

Tears sprung in my eyes, but I blinked them away, refusing to let them fall. I continued making my way towards the electrical tent, stumbling in the dark.

The crowd began to murmur, their voices rising in displeasure. Gala staff milled about, partygoers stumbling over each other in the darkness.