

Chapter 1 – A famous business

Ed Valdemar looked down at the papers in front of him and then at the other people round the long table. Angie Ballantine, a quiet woman of twenty-five, sat across the table from him. She had a beautiful face, but just then she was tired, and her eyes were red. Her brother Don, who was two years older than her, sat next to her. He was worried, and he was watching his sister carefully. Vera Donato – a woman of forty-five with dark hair and a strong, **confident** face – sat on Valdemar's left.

'This is a difficult day for all of us,' Valdemar began in his deep voice. 'Don and Angie have lost their mother and father in a terrible accident. Vera has lost her friends and business **partners**. As an old friend also, and the Ballantine family's **lawyer** for many years, I want to make this as easy as possible for all of you. So let's begin. You are here to listen to the reading of George and Anne Ballantine's **will**.'

confident sure of yourself

partner someone who owns a business with other people

lawyer someone who works to help people with the law

will the paper that says which people you want to have your money when you die



become

(*past became, become*) to begin to be

future the time that will come

fashion house

a business that makes and sells clothes

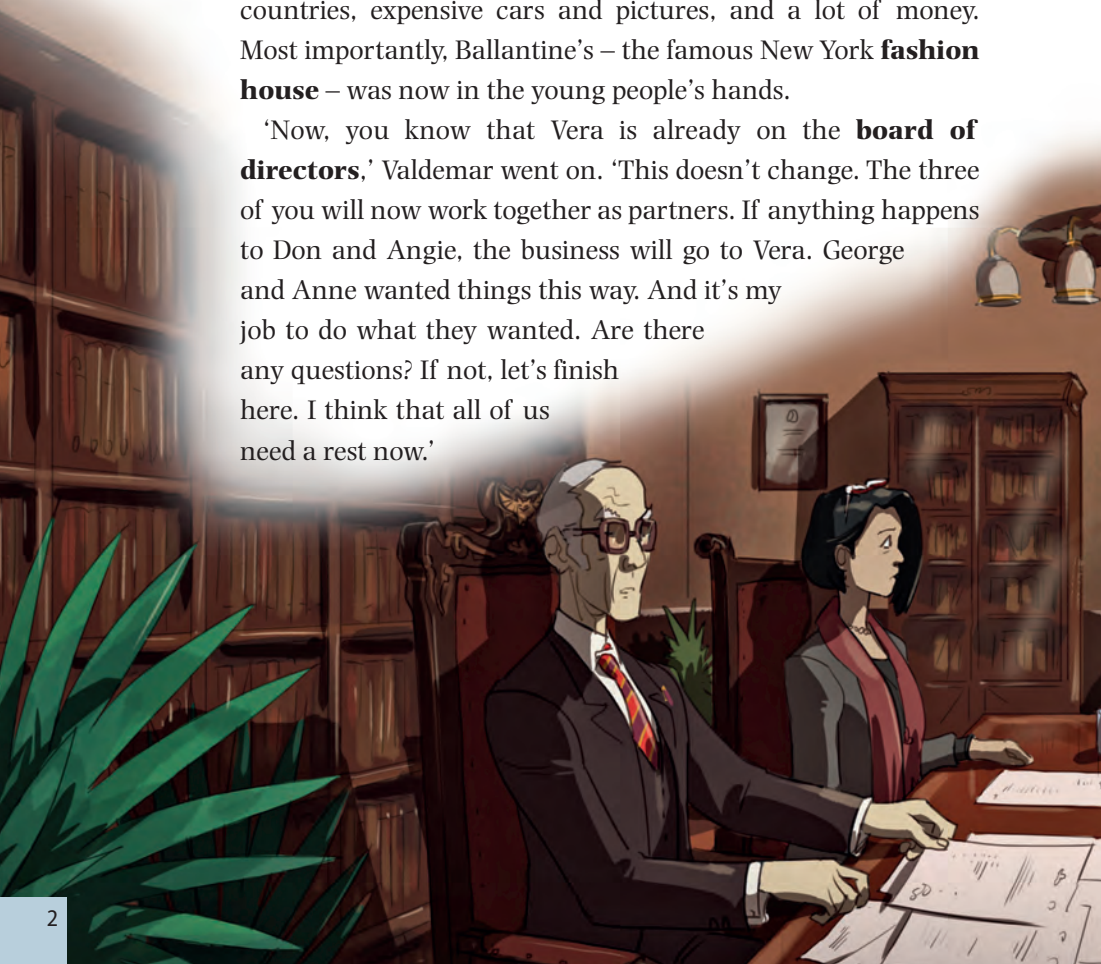
board of

directors a group of people who look after a business

The old lawyer was silent for a minute. Then he began to read aloud from the papers in front of him. His voice, at first quiet and shaking, **became** louder and stronger. Angie began to cry softly while she listened to Valdemar reading the words of the will. Don held her hand. Vera listened sadly, and looked at the large photograph on the wall of Anne and George in happier days. George – a tall man with brown hair – had his arm round his wife, and they were smiling.

The reading of the will did not take long. The Ballantines often talked to their children and Vera about their plans for the **future**, so there were no big surprises. They were leaving everything to Angie and Don. There were houses in different countries, expensive cars and pictures, and a lot of money. Most importantly, Ballantine's – the famous New York **fashion house** – was now in the young people's hands.

'Now, you know that Vera is already on the **board of directors**,' Valdemar went on. 'This doesn't change. The three of you will now work together as partners. If anything happens to Don and Angie, the business will go to Vera. George and Anne wanted things this way. And it's my job to do what they wanted. Are there any questions? If not, let's finish here. I think that all of us need a rest now.'



READING CHECK

1 Are these sentences true or false? Tick the boxes.

- a Angie's parents die before the story begins.
- b Ed Valdemar was a friend of George and Anne's.
- c George and Anne were poor when they died.
- d Vera wants to work hard for Ballantine's.
- e Angie and Don need Vera's help.
- f Ed Valdemar never thinks about the plane crash.
- g Vera thinks that they need to change things at Ballantine's.
- h Ballantine's next fashion show will be in Paris.

True False

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2 Match the first and second parts of the sentences.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a 'This is a difficult day for all of us,' b 'So why exactly did they crash?' c 'Don and I are new to the business,' d 'How exactly are we going to change our image?' e 'We need new faces and new ideas,' f 'I'll never forget you,' | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Vera says to her dead friends. 2 Don asks Vera. 3 Vera says to Don and Angie. 4 Valdemar says to the people round the table. 5 Valdemar asks himself. 6 Angie says to Vera. |
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