

Chapter 19 Noah Cunningham

Noah

That woman is here again. The one that paints. She has been unnervingly persistent in the pursuit of Noah's acceptance of the invitation that Molly Whitmore is once again trying to shove down his throat.

It had been three days since the first time she came and every day was the same. She would ring the doorbell. Noah would ignore her. Then she would set up her art supplies like the yard belonged to her and paint the day away.

At first it had been rather annoying. She'd mistaken him as a female and he was most certainly not a female. But try as he might, he could not stop watching her. And it was on the third day that his curiosity got the better of him.

He'd left his house about thirty minutes before she was due to arrive. He had put on a cap and glasses to cover his features. If she wasn't expecting him, then his eager disguise should work. Much like Clark Kent.

When he had watched her paint for about 10 minutes, he meandered over to her, playing the part of a curious passerby.

"What are you doing?" Noah asked, trying to keep his voice light and not as if her presence here bothered him in any way.

"Oh, hello. Are you one of Mr. Cunningham's neighbors? Do you know where I might find him?" Her questions were incessant. This is exactly why he avoided people.

"I'm afraid not. He mostly keeps to himself. Has he hired you to paint on his lawn?" he asked and had to fight back a smile at the absurdity of the question. Like he would ever need to hire someone to paint for him.

"Oh, no! I work for an art gallery in the city. My boss would really like to showcase his work so I've just been sitting here, waiting for him. I don't mind though. He's probably my all time favorite artist. I've even tried to copy some of his artwork," the woman laughed nervously and Noah's eyebrows rose.

Who did this woman think she was? As if anyone could ever hope to copy his artwork. He'd just have to put her in her place.

"May I see what you've been working on?" Noah asked as politely as he could, already leaning over her shoulder before she could answer. He fully expected to downright laugh at what he saw, but that wasn't the case.

He recognized something of himself within her painting. The brushstroke and the fine details called to him and he found himself leaning in closer. Yes, there. Hidden among the trees he could see a few forest animals...and was that a unicorn? He found himself truly smiling.

"That's a fine painting, Miss..." It wasn't lost on Noah that this is exactly the same she had addressed him on their first meeting. Not that she was aware of it.

"Almara. Almara Lewis. And thank you," she said, blushing. It appeared that she didn't receive many compliments for her work. Was she a beginner? With a skill like that, Noah thought that she had at least been in the field for a while.

"It's nice to meet you, Almara. I'm Noah Cunningham. And I would be delighted to accept the invitation from Ms. Whitmore."

Almara

I stared in open-mouthed shock at the man that I had been chatting with. This was Noah Cunningham? I had been speaking to Noah Cunningham this entire time? My hands started to tremble from my excitement.

I bounded to my feet, upending the easel in the process. But I didn't care. Nothing was as important as the man in front of me.

"Oh my god, Mr. Cunningham. It's a pleasure to meet you! I'm sure Ms. Whitmore will be thrilled with your answer!" I practically yelled, taking his hand and shaking it enthusiastically.

"I'm sure she will be," Noah said dryly, gently taking his hand back. "I guess I won't be needing this anymore."

He took off his shades and ballcap. I instantly recognized him as the woman from the window and I could feel my face heat in embarrassment. However, I didn't want to bring that particular faux pas up in case he had forgotten.

Dark violet eyes peered at me through thick, long eyelashes. It's not a color that would usually be seen on humans or wolves, but there were rare cases here and there. They were devastatingly beautiful.

I quickly looked away before I got lost on them. I had enough men trouble in my life without adding more. I didn't think Arthur would appreciate it either.

"I'm so happy that we'll be seeing more of each other. I should be on my way. I need to let Ms. Whitmore know," I said, packing away my things. I picked up the canvas and breathed a sigh of relief. There wasn't any damage to it.

"Before you go, I do have three conditions in exchange for cooperating. First, I would like for you to be my new assistant for three months. I promise it won't interfere with your job at the gallery. Second, I need you to be solely responsible for this exhibition. Third, I want you to give me one of the finished paintings that you worked on here."

I blinked rapidly, wondering if I heard him correctly. If so, he was putting a lot of faith in me. And it wasn't going to make Molly happy at all.

"Um, I'll pass on the message. But I'm not sure if Ms. Whitmore will be willing to go that far. I mean, the third one is easy enough, but the other two..." I trailed off, not sure what else to say.

"If Ms. Whitmore wants me at her gallery, this is the only way I'll do it. I expect to hear back from her no later than tomorrow evening. Now, I believe I must bid you good evening, Almara. Until we see each other again," Noah said with an air of finality that booked no argument. He took my hand and laid a brief kiss on it. Then he was gone, vanishing inside his house.

I arrived at Arthur's house much earlier than I had the past couple of days. I was incredibly excited, despite the discouraging phone call I'd had with Molly on the way back.

She had not been happy in the slightest. But there was nothing she could have done. Noah had been far more important than her petty jealousy toward me.

I was practically skipping by the time I got to Arthur's study. I knocked, but barely gave him enough time to answer before stepping inside. Instead of sitting behind his desk, I found him in one of the plush chairs, reading a book.

"To what do I owe the pleasure of your company?" he asked, setting the book down on the side table. He held out a hand to me and I happily took it, drunk off the giddiness racing through me. He pulled me into his lap and I giggled.

"I got some good news today," I told him and recounted everything that had happened. While I was going on and on about how much Noah Cunningham inspired me, Arthur's expression remained calm, but I could feel his body stiffening.

"As much as I would love to hear you go on and on about this...artist," Arthur said the word like it was a bad thing and maybe he hadn't meant to say artist at all. "But I would very much like to continue where we left off a few nights ago."

I leaned away from him and was downright surprised to see a deep red vortex swirling over his head. While I hadn't exactly expected lust, I had expected maybe a bit of yellow or a light blue. Not anger.

Why is he so angry?

You've just been raving about another man. He's jealous as hell, Lily cackled and I shook my head at her. Something must have happened today to ruin his mood. He was probably just using sex with me as an outlet.

Keep telling yourself that, Lily said, frustrated.

However, I didn't let it affect my mood. I was still brimming with excitement and what better way to celebrate?

"I'll see you in the bedroom. Let me just get ready first," I told him and his eyebrows rose. He probably thought I was going to argue with him or try to run like I usually did. But I had come to the conclusion that we were going to eventually have to have sex. Why not do it on my terms?