

Save Myself From Desperation by Cara Agnes

Chapter 17

Noah repeatedly expressed his gratitude, saying, "Ms. Ramos, you've been a great help to our auction house this time. We are very grateful!"

Ashley responded with a gracious smile, appearing humble and unpretentious, "You're welcome. It was just a small effort on my part."

Noah had a growing fondness for her modest attitude.

Initially, his respect for Ashley stemmed from Valentin, but now, Noah genuinely admired her.

The leading art appraiser among the group stepped forward and asked, "Ms. Ramos, could you please share how you identified that this painting, Whispers of Frost, is a counterfeit?"

The suspected fake painting was brought over, and the appraiser unrolled it before Ashley for her insights..

Ashley first glanced at Valentin.

She instinctively looked at Valentin since she was most familiar with him. out of everybody else here.

He raised his eyebrows slightly and casually said, "If you want to explain, go ahead."

Tom, beside them, was at a loss for words.

He pondered, 'How should I say this? I've never seen Mr. Kingsley so accommodating towards anyone!

Ashley didn't hold back. Standing up, she walked to the scroll and pointed her delicate finger to the mountain lines in the upper right corner. "Here, the lines are discontinuous, and the flow of the strokes slightly differs from Mr. Hunt's usual style."

The art appraisers immediately examined the area closely, and it took them quite some time to see what she meant.

"I see it now! Right here, the trajectory of this line is off!"

"My goodness, this detail was so well hidden."

"I have to say, the forger is an expert. He imitated Mr. Hunt's brushwork to near perfection, almost undetectable to the untrained eye."

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"Exactly. Bob and I had examined this painting repeatedly even notice this."

and didn't

"Ms. Ramos, you are truly remarkable and much superior to us old fellows, hahaha!"

Ashley politely smiled and pointed to the signature in the lower right corner. "The placement of the signature is also incorrect. Mr. Hunt. usually signs in less conspicuous

places. This is too obvious.”

The appraisers followed Ashley’s indication and nodded in agreement. “That’s right. Of the eight of us, only Leo and Sam noticed this problem, barely identifying the painting as a counterfeit.”

“Ms. Ramos, if you don’t mind me asking, do you often appraise landscape oil paintings?”

“Ms. Ramos, I have a grandson about your age who also studies landscape oil paintings. Could I give you his phone number? Could you spare some time to give him some guidance?”

The art appraisers, enthused by Ashley’s explanation, eagerly surrounded her as if they had a multitude of questions to ask.

Seeing Ashley surrounded by them, especially after hearing the mention of a “grandson about her age,” Valentin’s expression immediately turned grim.

Tom, witnessing this scene, was nearly speechless.

He thought in annoyance, ‘What’s going on here? Giving phone numbers? Is this turning into matchmaking? Ms. Ramos is already taken. She’s Mr. Kingsley’s secret wife, for goodness’ sake!’

Watching Valentin’s expression grow increasingly grim, Tom quickly stepped forward to ease the tension, saying, “Alright, alright, everyone, now that we know this painting is a fake, let’s not bother Ms. Ramos anymore!”

The art appraisers, getting halted in their tracks, reluctantly fell silent.

Ashley then finally got a breathing spell and returned to her seat.

Noah, being a shrewd businessman, quickly thought of an opportunity. He smiled warmly at Valentin and Ashley, “Mr. Kingsley, would you consider giving us the honor of appointing Ms. Ramos as an honorary consultant for our auction house?”

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Upon hearing this, Valentin looked at Ashley and asked her, out of respect for her decision, “Would you like that?”

Ashley was somewhat confused, and she asked, “Honorary consultant? What is that?”

Noah explained with a smile, “We would like to appoint you, Ms. Ramos, as a senior art appraiser for our auction house. Don’t worry, we won’t bother you regularly. Only when we receive paintings that our own appraisers cannot authenticate will we ask for your help. Of course, we would offer you generous compensation.”

Understanding the proposition, Ashley thought to herself, ‘So that’s what it is. It doesn’t sound too troublesome, just occasionally helping them authenticate paintings. It won’t take much effort.’

Thinking of this, Ashley nodded in agreement. “I accept your offer, but I prefer not to use my real name.”

Hearing her agreement, Noah was ecstatic, even more thrilled than if he had won a million-dollar lottery. He immediately assured her, “Of course! We’ll accommodate all of your preferences, Ms. Ramos! A pseudonym is fine if you don’t want to use your real name!”

“Pseudonym...” Ashley couldn’t think of a good name on the spot and randomly chose one. “Then let’s go with Rita Grant.”

“Great, I will draft an employment contract later. It’s a great honor to have you as our senior appraiser!”

Noah, unable to hide his joy, showered her with praise. Then, turning to Valentin and Ashley, he said, "Please continue enjoying the auction. We won't disturb you further." After a moment's thought, Ashley decided to help them fully and said, with a clear and melodious voice, "The 'Mountain Stream' painting in the corridor is also a fake."

Noah was completely stunned as the words sank in.

He wondered, A...another fake painting?"

But Noah had no doubt or contempt toward Ashley this time, only gratitude. "Thank you for pointing that out, Ms. Ramos.

it immediately!"

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After thanking Ashley several more times, Noah finally left the private

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room.

And with that, the room once again returned to its peaceful state.

Ashley exhaled deeply, picked up her coffee cup, and took a sip. When she put the

cup down, she noticed Valentin silently watching her.

Ashley blinked. "Why are you staring at me? Is there any money on my face?"

Valentin remained silent.

Valentin shifted his gaze away and casually said, "Someone earlier wanted to introduce his grandson to you."

Ashley dismissed it nonchalantly with a wave of her hand. "He didn't mean that literally."

Valentin's deep eyes flicked toward her, and then he fell silent again.

Tom, who was beside them, shook his head helplessly.

He thought, 'Oh, Ms. Ramos, can't you see? Mr. Kingsley is jealous.

As the auction approached its end, Ashley, resting her chin in her hand, lazily observed the scene in the hall below.

She then noticed that Frankie had arrived at some point.

The auctioneer, though his voice was growing higher from shouting, still full of enthusiasm.

"Ladies and gentlemen, here comes the last item in our auction today! It's a sapphire necklace, a unique creation by the world-renowned designer Violet Knight, who spent three years on this unique sapphire necklace. It's the only one of its kind in the world!"

The hostess then showcased the sapphire necklace to the audience below.

The auctioneer introduced it loudly, "This necklace has a beautiful name, Bluelove, a masterwork of dedication by Violet Knight!

"Especially, the sapphire on this necklace is uniquely pure and the only one in the world! A must-have for enthusiasts!

"Now, let's start the bidding for this 'Bluelove' necklace with an opening bid of four million dollars!"

Ashley's eyes lit up upon hearing the name Violet.

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She showed a great interest in the 'Bluelove' necklace.

Valentin noticed the change in her expression and raised an eyebrow.

He wondered, 'Is Ashley interested in this necklace?'

Down in the hall, Jessica was fixated on the necklace on stage, exclaiming in

admiration, "So beautiful..."

She pondered, 'It's indeed a masterpiece by the top designer Violet.

Jessica had once learned that Ashley admired the designer Violet and her creations.

'If I can win this piece that Ashley liked and flaunt it in front of her, her reaction would surely be priceless, Jessica thought cunningly.

Just thinking about it made Jessica eager to see Ashley's defeated expression.

Sitting beside her, Frankie smiled faintly when he heard Jessica's exclamation and offered, "Since you like it, Jessica, I will bid on it and give it to you as a gift."

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