

## 17; The Highest Bid.

Chapter Seventeen- "The Highest Bid".

Isabella Montague.

I ended up buying the Melodie d'Aurore, English name, Aurora Melody at the auction for fifteen million dollars. A lot of money huh? I know, but none of that crossed my mind when I sat in that auction room, watching with a passive expression as the auction on it started at twenty-five thousand dollars, it being the main piece for the exhibition.

I pressed my thumbnail into my index finger, my head tilted to the side slightly, my legs crossed and my spine straightened as my eyes lazily watched almost everyone interested in it. They rose the stakes slowly, each willing to place the highest.

"Melodie d'Aurore painting by artist BR going for 4.5 million dollars...can I get a higher bid? Going once...going twice..." I extended my hand, my fingers wrapping around the paddle handed over to me, "...going thrice--"

I raised it then, the woman announcing the bid stopping when she caught the sight of me, almost everyone else doing the same, no doubt surprised

## 17: The Highest Bid.

by the sudden interest. Only, it wasn't sudden. I then called out my bid.

"15 million dollars." Subtle gasps filled the hall, eyes widening at the amount I placed. No doubt surprised someone would place that much amount of money on the painting, considering the stakes weren't that high. I made it so for a reason, I was trying to get rid of anyone that might even think of raising it higher.

For some reason, I felt none of them would place that much money, if they were willing to do so, they would've raised it higher than 4.5 million. If my calculations are right, their aim at most should be around 10 million at most. I simply added five million more to it, nothing much.

It's a business tactic I learned from my father, and one of that I've been employing for the past two years, and it's that if you want something, you should bet whatever you can at a price you know no one else would offer. You raise the stakes so high, no one else would be able to reach. That's how to win and get what you want.

I know most of the people, if not all in the room. They are big business owners no doubt, but I doubt they'd spend that much money on a painting. I wouldn't—the only reason I am doing this is because the painting means a lot to me. So, I'd do whatever I can to get my hands on it. That's

17; The Highest Bid.

how much I want it.

The woman's lips slanted into a smile, as her gaze moved around the room, throwing curious looks at the others that raised it earlier. "Alright, Melodie d'Aurore going for 15 million dollars. Do we have any higher bid?" I dropped the paddle, crossing my

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arms over my torso.

I need not look around, even from the corner of my eyes, I could no one raised a hand, nor made an attempt to place a bid higher. A small, satisfactory smile made its way to my face, knowing I practically own the painting. I flicked my eyes close, waiting for her to announce that it has



17; The Highest Bid.

been sold off to me. Any minute now...

"Going once, going twice, going thrice...and so--"

"25 million dollars." A deep, calm voice suddenly came from behind, indirectly declaring war. That's the only way I'll consider this.

My eyes peeled open almost instantly, my brows drawn in and my lips slanted into a slight frown. If I thought I heard gasps before, then I must've been mistaken. The reaction I heard then was louder than before. It started with gasps, which slowly escalated to hushed whispers, eyes staring at me, and the man.

I was tempted to turn around and look at the owner of the voice, believe me, I'm itching to do so. But, I knew to keep my calm, and truth be told, if anything, the sudden competition has me amused. It's been a while since someone last amused me. My thumb reached out to swirl the ring on my index finger light.

The corners of my lips slanted upwards into a small smile, a ghost one. And then, I reached out to pick the paddle and raised it again, vocalizing my next bid. "32 million dollars." By now, I care not for the onlookers, but to get my hand on that painting.

I could only guess this man with the sudden interest as well wouldn't back down that easily.

## 17; The Highest Bid.

And I was right, because yet again, placed another bid, his voice calm, and collected. "35 million dollars."

"35 million dollars, do we have a higher bid?" The lady shifted her gaze from I, to the guy seated behind, wherever he's seated, whilst everyone watched us with interest. It's obvious we're the last two standing. And everyone seemed curious to see who will emerge as the winner of our little battle. "Do I hear 40 million? Do we have 40?"

I folded my lips in, my smile disappearing slightly. I raised the paddle again. "Forty million dollars." Someone I know once said whoever said money can't solve your problem, must not have enough to do so. I have a problem at that moment, and it's that painting to be mine.

"40 million dollars' ladies and gentlemen for Melodie d'Aurore, the most valuable painting by artists BR. The only one in the whole world. Who is taking it home tonight. Do we have a higher bid? Do we have a 45 million?" Yet again, I made a move to raise the paddle, but before I could, the man beat me to it.

"50 million dollars." The gaps became louder, and the hushed whispers were now a mirage of voices cocooned together to create a loud noise.

I flicked my eyes shut, wanting nothing but to shut the voices out. I've never been one to enjoy too



17: The Highest Bid.

much noise, none like this. It makes my head ache, and brings back memories I would rather keep closed off and sealed, the key thrown into a river or something.

"50 million dollars? Any higher bid?"

I made a move to raise the paddle again, prepared to put an end to this once and for all, I'm tired of this back and forth game, it's no longer interesting. However, before I could raise it, my phone that was on the table pinged, signifying the arrival of a message. I fully intended to ignore it, however upon sighting the sender's ID, I found myself keeping the paddle aside and bringing the phone up.

My eyes went over the message written there, with a video attached. My hold on the phone tightening as I felt anger slowly brewing within me. Suddenly, my environment and everyone else blurred out, and I found myself zoning in that exact moment with no care for anything else.

I felt as though I was sucked into the moment, and was unplugged from the reality of what was going on around me—my mind bare of anything else. I have no idea how long I stared at the message, wishing nothing more than to send the phone flying across the hall so it could shatter, as if it would erase the message. Then, a call came in, from the same sender of the message. I stared at

the call, the phone lightly vibrated in my hand. Then, I felt my breath becoming shallow, and the simple act of breathing threatened to become a tedious task I couldn't bring myself to do.

One of my hand went to take a hold of the table in front of me, desperately needing to grasp something and keep myself grounded, perhaps to even break me out of this trance. Somehow, my eyes couldn't break free from watching the video, making my heart tighten.

My fingers managed to reach the table, and instead of grasping it and using it to support myself, my fingers pushed the paddle, making it drop to the floor. It was the sound of the paddle dropping that sucked me right out of the trance I found myself in. I took in a deep breath, blinking while I managed to drop the phone on the table, locking it.

Then, I heard voices of the people in my surrounding returned, and a particular announcement served as the last pull back to the reality. "...sold at 50 million dollars to Mr. Christian Kingston!"

Wait...what? I looked up, turning my head around to see if I actually heard the name right just in time to see someone coming to walk past me, making his way to the podium where he would be given the painting. A man trailed behind him, not



17; The Highest Bid.

giving me the room to stare at him. However, when he reached the stage and turned around to face everyone, I could swear I ceased to breathe again. It really is him.

Then, our gazes met, and his lips slanted upwards into a smile I etched to my memory.



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