

Chapter 17

"Boss? Aren't we going in?" Aaron asked.

Corinne was rooted to the ground as she watched Jeremy get out of the car and walk into Peakrise Auction House. With a frown, she said, "I saw someone I'd rather not see. Let's wait a while before going in."

Aaron looked in the direction of Corinne's gaze. "That seems to be Jeremy from the Holdens. Do you know him?"

Corinne looked disgusted. "Not really."

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The auction hall was divided into upper and lower floors. The first floor was for ordinary buyers, while the second floor was for VIP buyers who did not wish to show their identity. They were granted excellent privacy and were identifiable by their room numbers.

Jeremy was in room one, while Corinne was in room seven.

After several unremarkable artifacts were auctioned off, a set of bronze pieces from this auction were carried to the display stand. Once the auctioneer gave a brief lecture on the background and value of the artifacts, bidding commenced at 1.5 million dollars.

"Two million!"

"Three million!"

"Four million!"

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Eventually, the mysterious bidder from Room One managed to bid for the set of bronze artifacts at a high price of four million, which elicited gasps of awe from the audience.

Inside room seven, Corinne leaned lazily on the sofa and breathed a sigh of relief. Jeremy seemed to have been eyeing the set of bronze artifacts, and judging from the fact that he had already secured it, he would probably leave soon since there was no reason for him to remain there.

"The next piece is a posthumously published painting titled 'Geese in Late Autumn' by the famous impressionist painter Nellie Nymphaea. The starting price is seven hundred and fifty thousand!"

"We have a bid of eight hundred thousand from bidder number three!"

"Bidder number eleven, nine hundred thousand!"

"And now bidder number five, nine hundred and fifty thousand!"

Corinne raised her chin to give Aaron the signal that he could start raising his placard.

"One and a half million from bidder number seven!"

The audience was once again astonished to see such a bid, and they began wondering who the powerhouse behind the 'number seven' placard was.

The auctioneer began to count, "One and a half million going once! Going twice! Going thrice, and..."

A second before he struck the gavel and uttered the word 'sold', Tommy raised his placard from room one.

The bid caught the auctioneer by surprise, and he spoke in a more excited tone compared to before. "Three million from bidder number one!"

Another round of shocked gasps resonated through the hall when bidder number one raised the bid by that big an amount. Everyone wondered if the painting would spark a bidding war between bidder number one and bidder number seven.

Corinne frowned and wondered why Jeremy was still there.

Aaron was just as upset as her. "What in the world is Mister Jeremy's problem? He's just trying to flaunt his wealth!"

Corinne ordered calmly, "Bid higher, Aaron!"

"Right!"

"We have a bid of four million by buyer number seven. Do we have a higher bid?"

"Yes, we do! Here comes the five-million bid from bidder number one!"

"Oh, bidder number seven is going even higher! We now have six million from bidder number seven!"

"Do we have seven million? Oh, it's higher than that! Bidder number one goes for seven and a half million! Any further bids from the floor? No? Alright then. Seven and a half million, going once, going twice..."

Corinne was annoyed at the development. Her main issue at that juncture was a lack of money.

Aaron suggested, "Since this painting is very important to you, perhaps we can shift the project funds to it for now."

Corinne raised her hand and shook her head. "No, I can't just divert the company's capital to my personal affairs. I'll find another way to get it. We can let Jeremy keep it for now."

Aaron had no choice but to heed her words.

The auctioneer sealed the deal with a knock of the gavel, and it was soon announced that bidder number one had secured 'Geese in Late Autumn' with a final price of six million.

Everyone was astonished to see bidder number one spending six million to buy that painting at several times more than its original value. This merely showed that rich people could do whatever they want with their money.

Meanwhile, Corinne was lost in thought. Her mother had only painted under the pseudonym Nellie Nymphaea in her spare time. Despite being relatively well-known, she was not a particularly mainstream painter, and her works were not very popular either. Jeremy's reasons for bidding such a high price for 'Geese in Late Autumn' could point to two possibilities: Corinne's mother was either someone he knew personally or someone he had connections to.

"Hi there." Two beautiful receptionists from the auction house came into their room to serve coffee and dessert.

"Corinne? Why are you here? How did you even get to sit in this room?" one of the female receptionists suddenly exclaimed.

Corinne looked up and recognized the person as Zoey, who had apparently taken up a job as a receptionist at the auction house after being fired by Alpha Enterprises.

Zoey stared at Corinne in shock, and before long, she spotted the handsome, well-dressed Aaron in a designer suit sitting to one side. She gritted her teeth in envy and yelled, "Bravo, Corinne! You made me lose my job, while you're living the good life with a sugar daddy!"

Her high-pitched voice was so frantic and loud that the entire auction hall could hear it. Over at room one, Jeremy had just walked out of the room and was about to leave when he heard Zoey's screech. He halted his footsteps at once and glanced coldly at room seven.

Zoey had just applied for the job a day ago and had just started her probationary period, but she was already speaking rudely to the VIP buyers! Her actions startled everyone at the venue and left an extremely bad impression on the patrons.

The manager of the auction house rushed over with several security personnel. He had Zoey dragged out while he apologized profusely to the bidder in room seven.

Zoey knew that she was almost certainly heading for the sack that day, so she let all hell loose when she was taken away by the security guards and yelled out loud, "You're a b*tch, Corinne! F*ck you! You made me lose my job twice now! It won't be long before your man gets tired of f*cking your sick *ss and dumps you!"

Jeremy heard her crystal clear on that occasion—there was no doubt that someone named Corinne was there. That girl... She's here? And she was the one bidding in room seven? He narrowed his eyes coldly and turned around to walk toward room seven.

Aaron had just sent the auction house manager away after receiving an apology from the latter, and he was about to close the door when Jeremy's tall figure appeared right in front of him.

"Is there a Corinne here?" Jeremy shot Aaron a hostile look.

Aaron was taken aback for a moment, then nodded with a smile. "Is there anything you'd like to talk to her about?"

Jeremy's handsome eyes narrowed slightly as he said in a cold voice, "Tell her to come out, please."

Aaron did not hesitate at all as he turned his head to the room and said, "Hey, someone's looking for you!"

Soon, a girl in overalls came out from room seven and stared curiously at Jeremy. "Can I help you, sir?"

Jeremy looked down at the unknown woman in front of him and frowned, "You're Corinne?"

The female receptionist said, "Yes. Corynne with a 'Y'."

Jeremy's gaze turned cold, and his interest disappeared into thin air.

He looked at Aaron, nodded subtly, and said, "Sorry for bothering you."

As Jeremy turned to leave, Tommy followed respectfully behind him.

When Aaron saw that Jeremy had walked far enough away, he reached into his wallet, took out a platinum shopping card from a luxury brand, and handed it to 'Corynne'.

"Excellent acting. Now go and get your name legally changed. You'll be known as Corynne from now on."

"Yes, sir. Thank you, sir!" The female receptionist happily took the card and recused herself politely.

Aaron closed the door and said, "He's gone! How did you even meet Jeremy, though? And why are you avoiding him?"

Corinne said disgruntledly, "Well... I married him a few days ago."

Aaron spat out the coffee he had just sipped and coughed violently. "What did you just say?!"

Corinne calmly explained everything that happened to Aaron, and he was surprised at first, but that look of surprise soon morphed into a wicked smile. "So... Did he live up to his name as the city's Prince Charming on your wedding night? Mature men happen to be particularly loving toward their partners. At least, that's what I'm told!"

Corinne rolled her eyes at him. "Do you want me to beat you to a pulp?"

She was never one to joke about beating people up, so Aaron hurriedly ran off. "I, uh... I'm going to the bathroom!"

Corinne got up from her seat and tagged along too. She went to wash her hands at the common sink while waiting for Aaron to come out, but as soon as she looked up, the reflection in the mirror caused her to turn stiff.

Jeremy had been standing behind her with his hands in his trouser pockets, and she could not tell if he was happy or angry to see her.

Just because she managed to escape once did not mean that she would escape all the time.

Jeremy walked up slowly to her. He had a lofty aura to him, and his unfeeling gaze seemed to be brimming with suspicion over who she really was. "What are you doing here?"

Corinne did not answer.

At that moment, Aaron was taking his sweet time coming out of the men's bathroom. "Boss, the more I think about it, the more I feel annoyed at him! That man has enough money to choose whatever world-class painting he wanted, so why does he have to snatch 'Geese in Late Autumn' from us? It's so irrit—" He did not have the chance to finish his sentence when he saw Jeremy standing in front of Corinne.

Jeremy turned his head to look at Aaron, then at Corinne. He narrowed his eyes and stared scrutinizingly at them both. "Boss?"