

# Save Myself From Desperation by Cara Agnes

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Halfway through the auction, a hostess cautiously took the stage to present a landscape oil painting.

The auctioneer announced loudly, "Ladies and gentlemen, this piece, Whispers of Frost, is the final masterpiece of the renowned modern artist, Mr. Simon Hunt. It is also the pinnacle of Mr. Hunt's artistic skills! This is a must-have for lovers of landscape oil paintings!"

Ashley immediately perked up upon hearing this. She pondered, 'Grandpa was a top-tier landscape oil painter. Many people were willing to spend a fortune on his paintings but were turned away. I essentially grew up surrounded by landscape oil paintings. And Mr. Hunt was one of Grandpa's good friends.

Ashley looked over with great interest, but after just one glance, her brow furrowed slightly..

Valentin noticed her expression and couldn't help but ask, "What's wrong?"

Ashley sighed softly, "This painting is a fake."

Valentin thought in shock, 'What? It was a fake painting?'  
eyes

Tom, who was nearby, also widened his in disbelief. "Ms. Ramos how can this be a fake painting?"

He pondered, 'Not to mention that the venue of this auction is extremel reputable and one of the largest in the country. Considering the items being auctioned, professionals thoroughly authenticate each one before being put up for auction. The likelihood of it being a fake is incredibly slim.

Ashley blinked, her eyes clear and resolute, and she stated, "This "Whispers of Frost' is indeed a fake one."

Tom couldn't help but ask, "Ms. Ramos, are you knowledgeable in art. appraisal?"

Ashley replied casually, "Fairly so."

Tom scratched his head in confusion, turned to Valentin, and waited for his instructions. Valentin, with deep eyes, glanced at Ashley and immediately believed.

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her. He gestured for Tom with a wave to handle the situation.

Still filled with doubts and surprise, Tom left the private room as instructed.

Tom then went to the auction's backstage, found Noah Palmer, the auction manager, and informed him about the suspected fake painting. The Kingsley Group held shares in this auction house.

Therefore, when Valentin arrived, several of the auction's managers greeted him with utmost respect, essentially welcoming their own boss. Upon hearing Tom's explanation, Noah couldn't help but laugh. "Mr. Shaw, you must be joking. How can it be a fake

painting? Our items are professionally authenticated and come with certificates. We wouldn't dare to auction anything without such certificate."

Tom was at a loss for words and insisted, "I'm not joking with you. Someone just said that the painting on stage right now is fake."

Seeing Tom's serious face, Noah's smile faded, and his brow furrowed. "Tom, who told you this painting is fake?"

Tom pointed toward the private room on the second floor. "There, Ms. Ramos, who was bidding against Jeremy just now."

Noah thought, 'I know this Ashley. She came to the auction with Mr. Kingsley. He seems to take great care of her, and they appear to have a close relationship. But...

Noah was skeptical. "Can a young girl like Ashley really discern the authenticity of this painting? She's not just pulling my leg, is she?"

Tom pondered, 'Honestly, I don't understand it either, but Mr. Kingsley has absolute trust in whatever Ashley says. He indulges her to the extreme.'

As the auctioneer on stage finished the detailed presentation and was about to start the bidding, Tom clicked his tongue and urged, "Noah, no matter whether it's real or fake, you need to have the painting removed. immediately. What will happen to our auction house's reputation if it turns out to be a counterfeit after being sold?"

Noah glanced toward the private room and was still hesitant.

He pondered, 'Can I really take the word of this young girl who knows

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nothing? Is she just intentionally causing trouble because of Mr. Kingsley's indulgence? This painting could fetch at least six million dollars today. Removing it now would mean a significant loss.

Seeing Noah's inaction, Tom urged him anxiously, "Hurry up, Noah. This is Mr. Kingsley's order!"

Hearing Valentin's name, Noah didn't dare delay any longer, though his tone was still reluctant. "If it's Mr. Kingsley's order, then I'll have someone notify the auctioneer to remove the painting and call in a few more appraisers for a re-appraisal."

Noah thought, 'Hmph, I want to see for myself whether this painting is a fake or not. If it turns out not to be, I'll have a word with this Ms. Ramos.'

Tom then returned to the private room on the second floor.

"Mr. Kingsley, the matter has been taken care of," Tom reported, glancing at the situation in the hall. "The painting has been removed and replaced with a new item."

Ashley turned to look at Valentin and smiled, "You really trust me that much?"

Valentin slowly poured her another cup of coffee. "Of course I do."

Upon hearing his affirmative response Ashley rolled her eyes playfully and looked at him mischievously. "Aren't you afraid I was just making things up?"

Upon hearing her words, Valentin glanced at her, leaning back lazily in his chair, his pale and slender fingers tapping lightly on the table. "Even if it was made up, so be it."

Ashley was momentarily stunned, and her eyes widened in disbelief. "If I was making it up, withdrawing that painting from the auction could have caused a significant financial loss."

Valentin's brows lifted imperceptibly, and he appeared seemingly unconcerned. "So what?"

Meeting his intense, deep gaze, Ashley felt an inexplicable flutter in her heart and uncomfortably shifted her gaze away.

Tom was shocked when he saw this scene.

He thought, 'Is Mr. Kingsley really just indulging Ms. Ramos' whims to Clufter lti

this extent? It feels like he's becoming more and more muddle-headed."

About 20 minutes later, while Ashley was observing the auction. downstairs, Noah, accompanied by several professional art appraisers, respectfully knocked on the private room's door.

Tom glanced outside and reported to Valentin in a low voice. "Mr. Kingsley, Mr. Palmer is here."

Valentin's voice was deep as he replied, "Let him in."

Upon receiving permission, Noah entered with a bright smile, followed by the appraisers. "Mr. Kingsley and Ms. Ramos, sorry to disturb you both."

Having a rough idea of the reason for their visit, Tom was filled with curiosity. "Have you determined whether the painting is real or fake?"

"Yes." Noah's eyes sparkled as he looked at Ashley, who was seated gracefully. "Ms. Ramos is truly incredible. We had eight appraisers thoroughly examine the painting, and they concluded that it is indeed a fake!"

Valentin was not surprised by this outcome at all.

Tom, however, was astounded, and his mouth agape.

Noah was somewhat embarrassed. "We had it authenticated before but never identified it as a fake. Today, with eight appraisers, only these two were able to identify it as a fake after a detailed examination. This painting... It's incredibly deceptive."

Tom, hearing this, was even more astonished.

He thought, 'Only two out of eight appraisers could tell it was fake after nearly 20 minutes of detailed examination. And yet, Ms. Ramos knew it was fake at just a glance. This is...

Tom couldn't help but look toward Ashley and pondered, 'My goodness, Ms. Ramos is too impressive! No wonder Mr. Kingsley trusts her so much!'

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Noah, who had initially thought Ashley was just a young girl with no real abilities and felt Valentin was just indulging her whims, completely changed his attitude, thoroughly impressed.

He pondered, 'After all, if this fake painting had been sold and later

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discovered to be a counterfeit, it would have ruined the auction house's reputation.

Noah said, "Ms. Ramos, we are truly grateful to you!"