

INTOXICATING

Written by

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INT. GALLERY - DAY

AMARA (27) stands face to face with a large canvas. The canvas is carefully plastered with color. She seems entranced by it, consumed. The longer she looks, the more connected she feels. She appears to be breathing with it.

We stay on the painting. Find ourselves being drawn in by it's allure. We see other paintings in the gallery, all by the same artist. All speaking the same language. Other people stop to look, but none so transfixed as Amara.

Amara closes her eyes. It speaks to her.

MAN (O.S.)

Amara?

Nothing.

MAN (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Hey, you about ready to go?

CUT TO:

INT. GALLERY - NIGHT

She snaps back to reality and looks at him with a soft smile. This is MICHAEL (29).

AMARA

Sure.

He finishes putting on his coat and they step out of the gallery. She steals one more glance before the lights go out.

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Amara and Michael sit across from each other at a restaurant nice enough for them to have a glass of wine and stay a little too long.

AMARA

It seems like you're getting a good response.

MICHAEL

I better be. I'm barely breaking even with the gallery cost. But you remember that 16x20? The mostly blue one?

AMARA

With the red line at the bottom?

MICHAEL
Yeah, sold it today.

Amara takes a pause. She liked that piece.

AMARA
Well that's good news! You've had it for a while. But I do hope you paint something similar soon, I liked that one.

MICHAEL
Yeah, maybe

AMARA
What do you mean by "maybe"? Do you have other ideas that you're working on?

It's an innocent question, but Michael takes offense.

MICHAEL
I mean maybe I will maybe I won't. I don't know.

Amara backs down.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
No, I'm not working on anything at the moment. Honestly... I just want to get rid of all the ones I have done and move on. I'm not sure I have any more in me.

Amara shakes her head.

AMARA
Oh you're just being insecure. Your work is amazing, it will sell. And, when it does, you will miraculously have more ideas.
(beat)
You're a painter, Michael. A good one. My favorite one. I don't think you have it in yourself not to be.

He reluctantly nods in agreement and sighs.

MICHAEL
I love you

Amara, convincing,

AMARA
I love you too.

INT. APARTMENT LIVING ROOM - DAY

Amara sits on the couch and lets the television run in front of her. The sound is muffled and blurry. The only thing in the room that seems clear is the painting behind the entertainment center.

The large yellow brush strokes are complimented by bright blue accents. Whatever she sees in it, she is transported there. We feel her as though she is not in the room. We stay on the canvas.

Off screen, we hear a door open and close.

MICHAEL (O.S.)
Hey baby

AMARA
Hey

We stay with the painting, we hear the rustle of paper grocery bags on the counter. The various items being put in their place.

MICHAEL
They were out of that creamer you like so I grabbed a new one for us to try. Uhhhh.. Sweet cream something. It's made with oatmilk so should be good.

AMARA
Sounds great

MICHAEL
Harrison bailed on dinner tonight so looks like I'll be here if you wanna do takeout and watch a movie? I have time to hop in the studio now too.

We see her finally look to him.

AMARA
Can I watch?

INT. STUDIO - AFTERNOON

Amara sits behind Michael, who sits in front of a canvas. Her eyes follow his brush into his palette and across the emerging piece. She hears music that isn't there.

Michael stops and just stares at the piece. Something is wrong.

AMARA

Michael?

He abruptly grabs the canvas and throws it across the room. He goes to the pile of unfinished works and begins to kick them in. Ripping canvas and spilling paint. Amaya pleads with him to stop, shock being the only thing to stop the tears. The rage intensifies when Michael lets out a scream.

CUT TO:

INT. APARTMENT BEDROOM - NIGHT

Amara and Michael lay side by side, facing the same direction. If they are cuddling, it's barely detectable. They're both awake, but silent. Their breath fills the air, the moment feels heavy. Finally,

AMARA

What was that?

Michael lets out a heavy sigh but doesn't answer. Soon after, he begins to stifle a cry.

MICHAEL

I just can't do it anymore.

Amara knows. She moves closer to him and holds him while he cries.

INT. APARTMENT KITCHEN - DAY

Michael sits at the breakfast table, staring out the window. The food in front of him is getting cold. Amara walks over with two coffee mugs and sets his down before taking her seat.

AMARA

Gallery called this morning, said you made a sale yesterday.

No response. She presses on.

AMARA (CONT'D)

Kristin said that she invited a few friends from various publications to come and take a look this Friday. I think you have a good shot of--

MICHAEL

Amara?

AMARA

Yes?

MICHAEL

Please stop.

AMARA

Well I cant just let you give up.

MICHAEL

And why not.

AMARA

Because it's your dream. You've worked so hard for this.

To this, he gives a small laugh.

MICHAEL

I don't.. hear the music anymore. And, more than that, the pieces I do have are mocking me. Staring at me while I sleep. Showing me I will never be more than this, which is nothing.

She kneels down beside him and places her hand on his chest.

AMARA

Michael. You are exquisite. You're the only one who doesn't see it. You need to keep going.

(beat)

I need you to keep going. There is something about your work, Michael, it's intoxicating. It speaks to me. It gives something to me that I could never find again. I need you to keep painting because.. my life depends on it.

She can't fight the tears or the honesty anymore.

AMARA (CONT'D)

These canvases hold truth. It's the one real thing I have in my life.

He takes an eternity to absorb this.

MICHAEL

What do you mean by that?

AMARA

By what?

MICHAEL

The only real thing in your life.
That my work is the only real thing
in your life.

Damage control. But, is the truth so bad?

AMARA

You know what I mean. It's like
when someone believes that hearing
a symphony is the closest they get
to God. Or how we can be moved by a
performers words as though they
were spoken only for our soul. Art
can be the closest thing we have to
experiencing the universe in a
truthful way. It's not about you.

MICHAEL

It's not about me. It never was.
That's why you're here, right?

He's right. Michael laughs bitterly.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

That's why you're here. You see God
in my work. I am just a vessel for
you to be closer to whatever God
this is. To be closer to truth.

She slowly backs away from him, scared to be seen like this.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

Is that why you haven't left me
yet?

There it is.

AMARA

I... I..

MICHAEL

You don't love me. You haven't for
a long time.

They sit silently, unable to recover from the truth,

EXT. GALLERY - AFTERNOON

Amara walks in front of the gallery in her work clothes. She looks ready to go home and be done with the day, but the gallery is still open. Who is she to miss an opportunity to be amongst the paintings?

She peers through the window and notices a few pieces are missing. She steps inside.

INT. GALLERY - AFTERNOON

Amara looks around the walls but can't find a single one of Michael's pieces. Someone must have bought them completely out. KRISTIN emerges from her office.

AMARA

Kristin! Did someone buy the pieces? Was it all one person? When did this happen? I have to call Michael.

She pulls out her phone but Kristin places her hand on Amara's wrist.

KRISTIN

Actually Amara, Michael took the pieces down.

AMARA

What?

KRISTIN

A real shame, he lost interest in displaying them I guess. Wouldn't give me a real answer. Picked them up this afternoon.

Amara can't believe what she is hearing

AMARA

Did he say where he was going?

KRISTIN

No, sorry.

Amara mutters a thank you and swiftly exits the gallery.

INT. APARTMENT LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Amara barges into the apartment and doesn't even put her purse down before she starts calling

AMARA
Michael? Michael!

She goes room to room, her desperation growing. The tears are already forming when she gets to the studio, knowing what comes next.

It's empty.

AMARA (CONT'D)
No. No, no, no.

She walks around the room as though that will bring everything back. She bends down and touches a paint spot on the floor and she can't help but mourn.

She walks back to the kitchen and notices a note on the counter.

"It's too late. But you can come say goodbye if you would like. You know where"

CUT TO:

EXT. BEACH - NIGHT

A figure stands alone, silhouetted by a large flame. Amara slowly walks towards it, her horror growing with every step.

The pieces, burning in front of them both. Michael turns to her, stares for a moment, and leaves without a word. He is free.

Amara drops to her knees and looks to the flames. She no longer has a God to pray to.