

INTOXICATING

Written by

Jean Evans

INT. GALLERY - DAY

AMARA (27. curious, masochistic, lonely, stubborn. Works at an ad agency. She reads and prefers takeout. She brandishes an optimistic shell, but she seems eternally bored in the life she has made for herself) stands face to face with a large canvas carefully plastered with color. She seems entranced by it, consumed. Her eyes trace the brushstrokes, strengthening the connection she feels -- she breathes with it.

We stay on the painting and find ourselves being drawn in by it as well. 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. She doesn't even blink until suddenly, she closes her eyes.

It speaks to her.

MAN (O.S.)

Amara?

The painting has a hold of her. The music swells, she feels close to something when the man interrupts again.

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. He walks towards her and she greets him with a soft, familiar smile. This is MICHAEL (29. Sunken eyes and a mind eternally elsewhere. His baggy clothes are fashionable though he hardly puts effort into picking them. His hands show greatness, but there is no stardust when he enters a room).

AMARA

Sure.

He puts the rest of his coat on and they step out of the gallery into a brisk night. She steals one more glance inside before the display lights go out.

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Amara and Michael sit across from each other, they aren't there for dinner, but it's not time to go home. The restaurant is close to the gallery and nice enough for them to have a glass of wine, stay a little too long.

AMARA

It seems like you're getting a good response.

He takes a sip and nods.

AMARA (CONT'D)

I noticed that 16x20 was gone. The mostly blue one, red line at the bottom. Did Kristin say who bought it?

MICHAEL

Uhh.. No. No she didn't.

AMARA

Hm. Shame.

She liked that one.

AMARA (CONT'D)

Did she say anything else?

It's a long pause.

MICHAEL

They want more from me.

She grabs his hand, delighted.

AMARA

Michael, that's wonderful! It would be a great opportunity to finish that orange one you've been sitting on.

MICHAEL

Yeah, maybe.

AMARA

What does that mean? "maybe"? Is there another idea that you're working on?

MICHAEL

I mean maybe. Okay?

The mood shifts, he holds her gaze for the first time all night. She backs down.

AMARA

Well whatever it is, I'm sure its amazing.

(MORE)

AMARA (CONT'D)

(beat)

Remember how we used to talk about
this -- dream about what's
happening right now. You're a
painter, Michael. A good one. My
favorite one. I don't think you
have it in yourself not to be.

MICHAEL

Look, can we just not do this right
now?

Amara nods.

AMARA

I'm sorry.

His mind has left her already.

AMARA (CONT'D)

Hey... Michael? I'm sorry.

He doesn't come back.

INT. APARTMENT LIVING ROOM - DAY

Amara sits on the couch, letting 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. She is not in the room anymore. Eventually, we stay
on the canvas with her.

Off screen, we hear a door open and close.

MICHAEL (O.S.)

Hey baby

AMARA (O.S.)

Hey

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

MICHAEL (O.S.)

They didn't have the oatmilk
creamer so I had to grab regular if
that works.

AMARA (O.S.)
Sounds great.

He continues to put away groceries. He looks between her and the painting, clocking it but not surprised.

MICHAEL
Harrison bailed on dinner tonight so looks like I'll be here if you wanna just do thai and watch a movie?

AMARA
You thinking of hopping in the studio at all?

He hesitates. He wants to say no, but he has work to do.

MICHAEL
Yeah, probably.

She finally looks to him.

AMARA
Can I watch?

INT. STUDIO - AFTERNOON

Amara sits on the stool permanently behind Michael's. She waits patiently as he turns on *Le temps de l'amour* and looks out the window. Even executed lackadaisically, it's clearly routine. He sits before her in front of a half finished canvas. Her eyes follow his brush into the palette of color and across the emerging piece. She eventually closes her eyes and settles in.

The sound of his brush gradually slows and stops. Michael stares at the piece. Amara opens her eyes -- something is wrong.

AMARA
...Michael?

She reaches out to touch him, but he abruptly grabs the canvas and throws it across the room. He approaches the pile of unfinished works and begins to kick them in. Ripping canvas and spilling paint. Amara sits in shock until he crosses the room to the one piece that is finished, hung neatly on the wall. She races to it and beats him there, guarding it.

AMARA (CONT'D)
No. You don't touch this one.

He stops just short of destruction. Anger and adrenaline give way to tears and he collapses in front of her. She kneels down to comfort him, but her eyes scan the room of lost potential. Her heart breaks for it.

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'm so tired.

Amara understands, but she doesn't move closer to him.

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. As if nothing is wrong:

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 some local 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, Michael, I can't 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

They're mocking me.

He looks to the painting behind the tv.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

I can't feel them like I used to. I'm just so tired.

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

AMARA

Hey, hey. Michael. You are doing such a wonderful job. You're the only one who doesn't see it. You're making sales, people are getting excited about your work. You need to keep going.

MICHAEL

I'm done, Amara.

This hits her hard. There is a long beat before her breath catches.

AMARA

No.

He stares at her, betrayed. But she doesn't budge.

AMARA (CONT'D)

You don't get to decide to give up. You don't get to just take this from me.

MICHAEL

Take this? From you? What does that even mean?

She takes a beat. It's time.

AMARA

Do you remember when we met and you told me you were a painter? And how cool I thought that was?

MICHAEL

... Yes.

AMARA

See the thing is, I already knew that.

He takes this in. She nervously moves to her seat confesses.

AMARA (CONT'D)

I knew because I saw your work at an exhibition 2 months before that moment. The one hanging in your studio. It... changed my life. Something about it spoke so to me, so deeply to my soul. And I didn't tell you because I didn't want you to think I was some crazy fan but... I had to find you. I had to meet you.

MICHAEL

Oh my god.

AMARA

So I talked to the organizer and got your name and i kind of lost control from there. I wanted to leave it alone but you invited me to your studio to watch you paint and I... how could I say no?

He takes this in.

AMARA (CONT'D)

You were my favorite artist, inviting me to catch a glimpse of your genius and I couldn't resist. I knew then that I would do whatever it took to maintain this feeling.

He stares at her, bitterly unsurprised.

MICHAEL

Two years, Amara.

AMARA

Your work brings me closer to God,
Michael. It's truth to me. You have
to keep painting. If you don't I
just might die.

MICHAEL

That's why you're here. I am just a
vessel for you to be closer to
whatever God this is. To be closer
to truth. You don't love me. You
never did.

AMARA

Michael..

He leaves. She doesn't know how to follow.

EXT. GALLERY - LATE AFTERNOON

Amara gets off the bus in front of the gallery. She wears a blazer and carries a laptop bag, we can feel the weight of the work day in how she walks. It's only a few short paces to the gallery door, but she stops short at the sight of a new piece where our opening artwork once hung. She pauses to suppress her worry before stepping inside.

INT. GALLERY - LATE AFTERNOON

Amara's eyes quickly dart around the walls, but she can't find a single one of Michael's pieces. KRISTIN (30s, gallery owner, all around pleasant woman. The kind to befriend her clients) notices Amara and emerges from her office. Trying not to think the worst, Amara confronts her with a smile.

AMARA

Kristin! Did someone buy the
pieces? When did this happen? I
have to call Michael.

She pulls out her phone but Kristin places an gentle had on Amara's wrist.

KRISTIN

Actually Amara, Michael took the
pieces down.

AMARA

What?

KRISTIN

(she shrugs)

A real shame, he lost interest in
displaying them I guess.

(MORE)

KRISTIN (CONT'D)
 Wouldn't give me a real answer.
 Picked them up this afternoon.

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

The door to the apartment flies open and Amara doesn't even put her purse down before she calls to him. +

AMARA
 Michael? Michael!

She goes room to room. Her desperation growing, her voice getting louder. Behind her panic, we see the empty studio, waiting for her to enter. We hear her approach, brokenly muttering his name. She hesitates, but she needs to know. She opens the door. +

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

She walks around the room as though that will bring everything back and notices the faint outline of a painting that once hung proudly. She touches the wall and mourns. +

On her stool, a note. +

"It's too late. But you can come say goodbye if you would like. Post 45, Dockweiler." +

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 allows a smile to creep across his face. +

MICHAEL
 Thank you. +

He turns to leave, finally free.

+

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

Jean Evans