

INT. CHARLOTTE'S CAR- EVENING

Two people are sitting inside of a car as it sits unmoving at a red light. CHARLOTTE sits in the drivers seat, her fingers rhythmically tapping against the wheel. MAGNOLIA sits in the passenger seat, her eyes transfixed on Charlotte's movement. She chews on the inside of her cheek while her face appears contemplative.

MAGNOLIA

I shouldn't have come.

Charlotte gives Magnolia a knowing look. The streetlight turns green, casting a glow across Charlotte's face as she accelerates the car forward.

CHARLOTTE

Say your piece.

Charlotte urges Magnolia to continue with a subtle nod of her head.

MAGNOLIA

I'm terribly clumsy. I knock into people, I have no social skills, and I have an awkward walk.

Charlotte smiles, clearly amused by Magnolia's worrying.

CHARLOTTE

An awkward walk.

MAGNOLIA

I'll stick out like a sore thumb.

Magnolia groans and crosses her arms against her chest. She turns in her seat to look out the window.

CHARLOTTE

Strip yourself of your ego for a couple of minutes. Nobody is going to pay you any attention, they'll be focused on the artwork.

The car pulls into a parking space and a building comes into view. Magnolia's eyes widen and she slumps in her seat.

MAGNOLIA

I'll just stay in the car.

CHARLOTTE

You already agreed to come and now we're here. So stop sulking and be my plus one like you promised.

Magnolia mumbles in defeat as the two exit the car.

INT. ART GALLERY

Magnolia loops her arm through Charlottes as the two enter the building. A server approaches the two women with a tray of champagne glasses. Charlotte shakes her head and Magnolia grabs one off of the tray as he passes.

CHARLOTTE

Saw that.

MAGNOLIA

For the nerves.

Charlotte rolls her eyes and guides the two towards a small group of people. They stand in a crowd around a painting, admiring and chatting.

As Charlotte approaches, they begin to greet her and Charlotte introduces Magnolia. Charlotte and one of the women become engrossed in conversation as Magnolia scans the room.

Magnolia leaves the group unnoticed and strolls along the gallery wall, studying each of the pieces for a moment. When she reaches the one at the end, she stops and scrunches her face.

GIDEON

What do you think?

A man joins Magnolia, examining the same painting. It's an abstract piece of art, made of dark pastels.

MAGNOLIA

Of the painting?

GIDEON

No, of the wall behind it.

Gideon flashes a smile while Magnolia's face remains unamused. She crosses her arms over her chest.

MAGNOLIA

I don't like it.

GIDEON

No?

MAGNOLIA

It makes no sense. The brush streaks are all messy and the paint is clumped in some spots. Not to mention how depressing the color scheme is.

Gideon focuses harder on the painting, squinting his eyes.

GIDEON

You're right, there are clumps. What if it's an artistic style?

MAGNOLIA

Then it's not a very good one. It just looks unprofessional, like my younger brother could have done it.

GIDEON

How old is your brother?

MAGNOLIA

Eight.

Gideon sucks air through his teeth and clasps his hands behind his back. He turns to Magnolia who still stares at the painting, disgusted.

GIDEON

Are you an artist yourself?

MAGNOLIA

God no, but even I could do better than this. I wonder what rich bimbo is going to waste their money on it.

GIDEON

You really don't like it.

MAGNOLIA

I've changed my mind, I hate it.

Magnolia takes a swig of her champagne. Gideon motions for her to follow him and brings her to another piece across the hall.

GIDEON

What about this one?

This painting is a landscape of a family on the beach. The dad is holding a kite and the children appear to be jumping to grab it.

Magnolia studies it for a few moments before her face again, wrinkles in disgust.

MAGNOLIA

Why don't they have any faces?

Gideon's eyes widen and then narrow, seemingly upset. The focus shifts to the figures in the painting and to their blank faces.

GIDEON

They are so small, surely it doesn't matter.

MAGNOLIA

It looks unfinished. Like whoever made it got bored halfway through and gave up.

GIDEON

I'm beginning to think that you aren't a fan of art.

MAGNOLIA

No I am, I just think these two pieces are bad and don't deserve a spot in the gallery. But I suppose it makes the other paintings look more appealing.

Gideon stares at Magnolia with his jaw hanging down as she walks back towards Charlotte.

CHARLOTTE

Where have you been?

MAGNOLIA

I went to admire the artwork.

Charlotte opens her mouth to respond when the sound of someone clinking their glass echoes throughout the exhibit. The focus shifts to a small stage where a nicely dressed man stands before a microphone. He is holding a champagne glass and is tapping a knife against it.

MAN

Welcome ladies and gentleman, we thank

you all so much for coming. I'm sorry to interrupt all of the fun but if you could please join me near the stage so that the auctioning may begin.

People gradually crowd near the stage. Magnolia once again loops her arm through Charlotte's.

MAN

Let's start by going backwards down the gallery. The artist of this piece is actually here with us tonight and also has another piece in the exhibit.

The abstract painting from before is brought onto stage upon an easel. The man directs the audience's attention to where a worker stands pointing at the landscape painting across the hall. Magnolia shakes her head in disapproval.

MAN

Let me introduce our guests to the wonderful artist who supplied these two, Mr. Gideon Reed.

Gideon walks onto the stage and shakes the mans hand. Magnolia watches on in horror as the man she spoke to before explains the background of his piece.

A servant weaves through the crowd of people, handing them bidding paddles and Charlotte takes one excitedly.

CHARLOTTE

I've always wanted to use one of these.

Magnolia reluctantly grabs one of her own.

MAN

We'll start the bidding at \$10.

Nobody in the audience moves. Gideon looks offended, whilst the man looks nervous.

MAN

\$10?

A single paddle raises slowly from the back of the audience.

MAGNOLIA

I'll take it.

