

# Fractured Affection

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Menu

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I didn't want to see them and pretended not to recognize them. I frowned. "I am Sylvia, but I don't know you."

I tried to leave, but Noah quickly grabbed my wrist. His voice was urgent. "We're not mistaken. You're Sylvia. Even in a new body, your habits remain—like the vocal flourish on the last lyric." It turned out that this minor quirk had betrayed me.

Seeing Sylvia's grim expression, Adam knew he couldn't push too hard. He softened his voice. "Sylvia, we know we wronged you and you have every reason to hate us. We don't expect instant forgiveness. We just want a chance to make amends."

think those

I dropped the act, looking at them with a mocking expression. "Wronged me? Do you wonder all the pain I've suffered? You have no idea how heartbroken I was." Whenever I remembered what they did to me for Charlotte's sake, I hugged myself in pain. The icy snow, the freezing pond, my ruined voice—they made me fear winter, a season I once loved. Seeing the mockery in Sylvia's eyes, Adam felt a sharp pain in his heart. He quickly explained, "No, Sylvia, Noah and I never intended to brush it off. We know the damage is done. Just tell us how we can compensate you, and we will."

Noah didn't know what to say, only adding, "Yes, Sylvia, please give us a chance."

laughed, as if hearing a joke, tears welling up. "A chance? Who's going to tell me how to overcome the harm I suffered? How can I forget what you did to me?"

Adam felt a sharp pain in his heart. Noah felt the same. Two men who had always stood at the top of the world were experiencing the greatest failure of their lives.

I took a deep breath, calming myself. I was tired of arguing with them. “Don’t show up again. That’s the best compensation.”

Back home, I was still in a daze. My brother noticed my unusual behavior and gave me a glass of water. “Sylvia, what’s wrong? Didn’t you do well in the preliminary round? It’s okay; we can try again next time.”

His warm voice dispelled my anxiety. I shook my head. “No, I was just a little nervous.”

He smiled, ruffling my hair. “It’s alright. First times are always tough. You’ll shine next round! I believe in you.”

I couldn’t tell him the truth—not when this fragile peace hung by a thread.

But unexpected guests arrived that night.

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My parents had returned from work and my brother had prepared dinner. Then, a knock came at the door. A bad feeling washed over me.

My brother opened the door to reveal Adam and Noah. He asked with confusion, “Who are you looking for?”

Adam offered a practiced smile. “I’m looking for Sylvia. Actually, we’re here to discuss a collaboration. Her audition today was exceptional. We’d like to offer her a contract with Fowler Entertainment.”

How ironic—the man who once sneered at “peasant talent shows” now stood in our cramped living room, a leather-bound contract in hand.

I stood up from the dinner table, not even glancing at the contract Adam offered, pushing them

out.

“No, thank

you. I don’t need it.”

Noah stepped forward, desperation cracking his polished facade. “Sylvia, this contract guarantees you complete creative control! Adam drafted this for

you...”

“So what?” I retorted coldly.

Adam calmed Noah down, turning to my parents. He spoke softly, “You must be Sylvia’s parents. Please check this contract out. We own the top music company in the country. It can definitely

top music company in the country. It can definitely

I had once longed to attend a music academy, only to be coldly refused by Adam. Now, he was proactively suggesting I enter his entertainment industry. They were resorting to any means to get my forgiveness, revealing their greed and selfishness.

Reading the contract, Sylvia’s parents gasped. Every clause was beneficial to Sylvia; they didn’t even seem to care about profit, promising to give her plenty of resources.

company

Adam saw their shocked expressions, a hint of disdain in his eyes. “I don’t think you need to refuse such a good offer.”

Noah added eagerly, “Countless people are desperate to join us. This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.”

But

my

father smiled. “Sorry, Sylvia doesn’t want to, and we can’t decide for her.”

A wave of warmth surged through me. My parents always respected my decisions, unlike Adam and Noah, who forced me to do things I disliked.

So, I politely but firmly rejected them again.

It was New Year’s Eve, a time for family togetherness. But I received a strange text message. “Sylvia, Noah and I are downstairs.”

“You don’t want us to come up and get you, do you?”

The sentimental approach failed, so they resorted to coercion and enticement. I had witnessed Adam's ruthlessness in the business world; I didn't want my family to get hurt, so I found an excuse to leave.

As soon as I went downstairs, I saw Adam and Noah standing in the snow. I said coldly, "What do you want?"

The coldness in my voice made Noah's smile stiffen. He said innocently, "Sylvia, we always spent New Year's Eve together. We're family, aren't we?"

I almost laughed. I didn't understand why they were so persistent; was it only guilt over hurting

me?

"Family? Hilarious." I retorted sarcastically. "Besides using your influence to force me, what else did you do?"

Sylvia was covered in thorns, each word piercing Adam and Noah's hearts. It wasn't surprising. After what she'd endured, the fact that she wasn't attacking them with knives was the courtesy they could expect.

greatest

Adam's face turned pale. He offered me a gift box. "Sylvia, this is your favorite jade bracelet." Every New Year's Eve, they sent me gifts. Are they hoping that their kindness would win me back?

I didn't even look at it before snatching it and smashing it on the ground. The bracelet shattered. I glared at them. "So, you want my forgiveness? Unless you experience the pain I suffered, I won't forgive you."

I only intended to make them back down, but to my surprise, they answered in unison, "Okay."

"If we experience your pain, will you really forgive us?" Adam asked.

I didn't think they would actually choose to self-flagellate. They were spoiled brats, incapable of enduring such hardship.

I said casually, "Yes."

I thought they'd leave me alone, at least for a while. But as soon as I returned home, a stranger friended me on Whatsapp.

I accepted the request and received a video call. Seeing the familiar black profile picture, I recognized it was Adam.

The call connected. The screen showed the Fowler family's snow-covered tilted dizzyingly, framing Adam's pale face. He stood in the blizzard wearing only a thin white

gates. Then the camera

dress shirt.

"Sylvia, if you forgive me, I'll do anything."

Before I could react, he knelt. His tailored suit trousers sank into the filthy slush. Noah exclaimed, "Adam! Let me do it instead."

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Adam shook his head. "It was my sin. I'll take the punishment."

My heart was in turmoil. I never expected Adam to disregard his dignity and kneel before me. My eyes felt slightly watery. It wasn't pity for him, but rather a sense of bewilderment over our

situation.

"Sylvia, we know we were wrong. Just forgive us. He's never knelt to anyone! Have mercy..."

Noah's plea was cut short by Adam. "Noah, shut up. I deserve this."

Apparently feeling the cold, Adam rubbed his arms. After less than half an hour, he couldn't take it anymore. He offered a pale smile to the camera. "Half an hour in this... and I'm breaking. Yet you endured three hours.. This... this is my apology. For the snow. For the ice. For every wound."

Sylvia, did you hear? We experienced your pain, and we apologized.

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I had knelt in the snow for three hours that day. Adam knelt for three hours as well. He couldn't stand up; when he tried to get up, his legs hadn't fully recovered, and he fell forw

ard clumsily. “Now we know that fall was real. Noah and I thought you were faking it. I’m really sorry,” he said. Before I could reply, he went to the back garden. Realizing what he was about to do, Noah yelled urgently, “Sylvia, stop him! He just knelt for three hours!”

process

Seeing my silence, Noah gave up pleading, watching helplessly as Adam jumped into the icy pond. After a while, he climbed out and then jumped into it again. He had repeated the thirty–two times.

Adam was a fitness enthusiast; his physique was better than average, but this ordeal nearly cost him his life. He wanted to apologize again, but when he picked up his phone, he found that I’d hung up.

That night’s events stirred up my old wounds. I didn’t want to feel this pain; we shouldn’t have

any more contact.

But the next day, Adam fell ill.

I only found out when Noah’s secretary came to invite me to the Fowler residence. It was midday; my parents and brother were home.

I couldn’t refuse. Noah had countless ways to force me to go, and if things got too ugly, he would hurt my family. I didn’t want that.

Under my parents’ and brother’s worried gazes, I knew I had to tell them the truth. After all, the original owner was an ordinary girl from a normal family—how could she be involved with the Fowler family?

I calmly put down my chopsticks. “Mom, Dad, I’ll be back soon. I’ll tell you everything the n.”

I left with Noah’s secretary. The entire journey, the secretary tried her best to convince me. “It’s your good fortune to share a name with the deceased Miss Lawrence. As long as you compromise...”

I interrupted impatiently. “How about I give this good fortune to you? From now on you’re Sylvia Lawrence. You’re welcome.”

The secretary was annoyed, but then she thought of Noah’s instructions—to not hurt Sylvia—she could only swallow her anger.

Arriving at the Fowler residence, I went straight to Adam's room. Noah was giving him medicine. "Adam, just take your medicine. The doctor said it'd help you recover."

"No..."

Before Adam could finish, he started coughing violently.

Seeing me, he obediently took his medicine. His face was pale, his weakness evident.

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"Sylvia, you came."

I stood at the doorway, staring at them. I knew they were doing this on purpose. He'd never resorted to such tactics before, but now he was using every means necessary.

"If

you just want me to know you're sick because of me, just call me."

Seeing me about to leave, Adam, despite his weakness, got out of bed and grabbed my hand. He almost fell in his haste. "Sylvia, don't go. Noah got you

here because he wanted you to see

something. Don't you want to know where Charlotte is?"

It was a polite way of saying he forced me to come. Since I was already here, they wouldn't let me leave until they got what they wanted.

"What happened to her?" I asked calmly.

I didn't believe Charlotte would have a good outcome under Adam and Noah's control.

Instead of answering, Adam said, "I'll show you."

I followed him and realized we were heading to the basement:

Noah, sensing the heavy atmosphere, tried to lighten the mood. "Sylvia, do you know why we were inexplicably so nice to Charlotte?"

< 20

The word “inexplicably” made me raise an eyebrow, but I wasn’t interested in the question. Perhaps Adam and Noah had their reasons.

So what? Would that make the pain I suffered gone?

Seeing my silence, Noah said awkwardly, “Sylvia, I know you still hate us, but we lived together for fifteen years! If that bitch hadn’t used an item to increase affection points, we wouldn’t have treated you like that.”

I had heard about that item. After I accidentally bound with the system, it mentioned providing me with an item that would increase affection points upon contact. But it had a flaw; it might not work for firm hearts.

I had naively believed that I didn’t need such an item. Our childhood friendship and fifteen years of companionship had made me confident about succeeding in my quest. Reality, however, slapped me hard.

I chuckled sarcastically. “The item only increased the probability by 50%. In other words, if your hearts weren’t already leaning towards Charlotte, her affection points wouldn’t have risen. Don’t blame everything on the item.”

I went down to the basement first. I had expected Charlotte’s fate to be terrible, but not this terrible.

up in

Opening the door, I saw her like a dog, locked in a cage too small for her. She was curled in pain; dried blood stained her hands and feet. She had clearly suffered inhuman treatment. Seeing me again, she frantically banged on the cage, shouting, “Bitch! Are you here to laugh at me? When I get out, I’ll kill you!”

The guard immediately shocked her arm with a stun gun. She convulsed, screaming in pain. Seeing her suffering, I felt nothing. I wouldn’t be a saint and plead for her. She had this coming. “Sylvia, Noah and I will never let those who hurt you go free,” Adam said softly from behind me.

of irony. “Aren’t you the ones who hurt me?”

I felt a surge Noah sighed. “Sylvia, we hurt you because Charlotte used us. If you’re not satisfied, we can torture Charlotte in various ways until you are.”

Adam didn't argue. He was used to punishing his enemies in inhuman ways. "You're right, Sylvia. Noah and I intend to spend our lives making amends. You once said you loved us. We rejected you. Now... we retract that answer. You may choose either of us to marry."

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