

Fractured Affection

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The tension in Adam's voice vanished, replaced by a hint of excitement. "I'll send someone to pick you up then."

Adam's warning made me anxious. But Charlotte never appeared again. Even with the Fowler family's resources, they couldn't find her in Washington. She had vanished.

Gradually, I let my guard down, until Noah's birthday party.

He waited at the entrance. Seeing me, his eyes lit up. "Sylvia, you really came!"

I felt a mixture of emotions. I didn't know what to say. In the end, I simply replied, "Yes."

Besides me, the party was filled with prominent figures in the music industry. Noah introduced me to each of them.

"This is my sister, Sylvia. She's a newcomer to this field. Please take care of her."

Those simple words were invaluable. He was telling everyone that I was his family, that they should take care of me. Opposing me would be to oppose the Fowler family.

I knew he was paving the way for my future career. I was about to stop him but he cut me off. "Don't refuse. With our help, you'll avoid many pitfalls. Don't you want to succeed in this industry?"

I loved music; I had always dreamed of a career of my own. But before it could blossom, Adam *had* crushed it. This time, I wouldn't give up.

I pursed my lips. "Thank you."

Hearing *that*, Noah's

eyes welled up. He forced a smile. "Sylvia, you never thanked me before. Ask me for anything; consider it my way of making amends. One day, you will forgive..."

He stopped mid-sentence as a server approached with champagne.

Then, the server threw the champagne in my direction. Noah quickly pulled me behind him; the "champagne" splashed onto him. His skin sizzled, and he cried out in pain, "Aaah ..."

I realized it wasn't champagne but high-concentration sulfuric acid.

The server tried to throw more, but I kicked her away. The server, burned, stumbled, and her fell off. It was Charlotte.,

Security guards rushed in and subdued her.
She struggled, shouting at me. "Bitch, why are you always so lucky?"

"I curse you to die a horrible death!"

I didn't understand why she hated me so much. She was the one who hurt me, yet she was the one retaliating.

Noah's injury reached Adam. He frantically called for a doctor.

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After examining Noah, the doctor said regretfully, "Mr. Fowler's facial skin is severely burned by

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the sulfuric acid. Luckily, his eyes are unharmed, but..."

Adam and I knew what he meant. Such extensive burns would likely disfigure Noah; it would be difficult to achieve a perfect recovery with current medical technology.

Adam forced himself to accept this. He took a deep breath. "You must try your best, doctor."

His voice was full of suppressed rage. That bitch..."

I knew how much Adam cared about Noah. Their parents had been traveling abroad for a long time, and Adam raised Noah; they were very close. This time, Adam would surely exact cruel revenge on Charlotte.

But it was all her own doing.

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Two days later, Noah woke up. He trembled, touching his face, feeling the thick bandages.

“Bring me a mirror.”

The servants hesitated. Adam had strictly forbidden them from giving Noah a mirror, fearing the sight of his disfigurement would cause him pain.

But the more they refused, the more anxious Noah became. Terrified of becoming a monster, he started to lash out at them.

“Give it to me! I want a mirror!”

He pulled a servant’s hair, causing her to scream in pain. This one-sided assault only stopped when I entered the room.

Seeing me, he said excitedly, “Come on, Sylvia, get me a mirror. I need to see what I look like.”

I didn’t move, sitting silently by the bed. “Noah, let it go, okay?” What I said revealed the truth. He was disfigured.

He clutched his head in agony, weeping silently. He was vain and loved to dress himself up. He couldn’t accept this.

His quiet sobs filled the room. After a while, he asked, “Sylvia, am I very ugly now?”

I didn’t know how to comfort him, especially since he got disfigured because of me.

I shook my head. “No, you’re not ugly. Medical technology is advanced now. Once healed, we’ll get reconstructive surgery.”

your

wounds

“We’ll get through this. Noah, thank you for saving me.” This was sincere. Otherwise, the one with the bandaged head would have been me. Even if the disfigurement wouldn’t have affected me much, it would have made my singing career more difficult. The world was full of the prejudice against appearances.

He stared at me for a long time before managing a weak smile. “Yes, I saved you. You’re okay; that’s what really matters.”

My chest tightened; my eyes trembled. “Noah, I forgive you and Adam. Let’s be family again.” He looked up, his gray eyes suddenly shining. “Really?”

Revenge is a never-ending cycle. I have suffered so much, and he was disfigured saving me. Let’s end our feud here.

I nodded firmly. “Yes.”

Although the disfigurement was a significant blow, my forgiveness was like a thunderbolt to him. He excitedly called Adam, tears welling up. “Adam, Sylvia forgave us!”

“We finally made it!”

Adam’s voice was equally excited on the other end. “That’s wonderful!”

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After that day, my relationship with Noah and Adam improved. I occasionally returned to the Fowler family for dinner, as if time had rewound.

One evening, a bodyguard approached Adam. “Charlotte is dead.”

I pretended not to hear. I knew she was tortured to death. I didn’t ask for details.

Adam wiped his mouth elegantly. “Good riddance. Feed her body to the dogs.”

I remained unmoved, looking at Noah. After three surgeries, he looked better, though he wouldn’t regain his former flawless skin. Still, it was a vast improvement.

After dinner, Adam and Noah offered to take me home, but I refused. My parents and brother had come to pick me up.

“I’m good. My parents are here. See you another time.”

They nodded, not pressing me. They no longer showed aversion to my family, sometimes greeting them proactively. Perhaps this was what they called “love me, love

my dog.”

They treated me like a sister. Though romance wasn’t possible, we’d still be family. As long as I was happy, wasn’t that a win-win situation?

I had imagined my life would end quietly in this private hospital room. But when I coughed blood onto the jade pendant at my throat, it glowed hungrily, swallowing the crimson droplets.

A blinding light engulfed me.

When it faded, I stood in a void of swirling mist. Before me hovered a translucent figure—his features blurred, his presence colder than winter’s breath.

[Descendant of the Lawrence family? Fear not. Your ancestors saved my life. I owe their bloodline a debt.]

I stumbled back, heart hammering. “Who... what are you?”

The spirit raised a hand. A golden orb materialized, pulsing like a miniature sun.

“My cultivation has reached ascension. Before departing this realm, I gift you the Golden Pearl of Reincarnation.”

“With it, you may cycle through lifetimes endlessly—live on, unbound by death.”

The orb shot toward me. Instinctively, I caught it.

Heat seared my palms as the gold split into twin streams, snaking up my arms before merging into my collarbones. A tiny pearl-shaped mark burned into my skin.

When I looked up, the spirit had vanished.

I pressed a trembling finger to the mark.

Darkness swallowed me.

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