

Fractured Affection

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Adam and Noah stayed at the film set after delivering me there. Today's scene required Charlotte to plunge into an icy lake. Hearing that Charlotte refused a stunt double and insisted on doing it herself, Adam frowned in disapproval.

"Use a stunt double," he said. "You'll get sick if you jump in."

Noah echoed his concern. "Yes, Charlotte, why torture yourself in this cold? If you get sick, Adam and I will be heartbroken."

The Fowler family was the biggest investor, so the director didn't dare disobey Adam's orders. Charlotte was Adam's handpicked lead actress, leaving him in a difficult position.

But Charlotte remained firm. "No, I have to do it myself. Anti-fans will call me unprofessional if I fake it."

"Then find someone with a similar silhouette," Noah suggested.

As soon as he said that, everyone's eyes turned to me. Of everyone on set, Charlotte and I were the most similar in build.

Charlotte's manager smiled. "Perfect! Sylvia, you can take Charlotte's place and jump in."

I remained silent, my gaze fixed on Adam and Noah. I knew that only they had the authority to give orders here; no one else could command me.

My gaze burned too intensely. Noah nervously looked away, muttering, "Adam, let Sylvia substitute. Charlotte's still recovering from her cold."

Bitter laughter rose in my throat. They remembered Charlotte's sniffles, but forgot I knelt in snow for three hours yesterday. My joints were still screaming.

But after a moment of silence, Adam looked at me without hesitation and said, "Sylvia, you do it." Those four words felt like a mountain crushing me. I stubbornly lifted my chin, my heart filled with bitterness. "Adam, you know my condition. That water could kill me."

He knew. They both knew leukemia made me vulnerable to hypothermia.

Adam didn't respond; I couldn't tell if he was hesitant. Noah also looked down, lost in thought. Without their approval, nothing could happen. Seeing the stalemate, Charlotte feigned kindness. "Oh, it's okay. If Sylvia refuses, I'll just do it myself. No need to trouble..."

"No."

Before she could finish, Adam and Noah interrupted her in unison.

Adam addressed me again. "Sylvia, I've sheltered you for fifteen

years since your parents' deaths." The moment he said that, my defenses crumbled. The

15-year debt crushed my defiance. Charlotte stood behind Adam, giving me a victor's smirk, as if saying, "You'll never win against

me."

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I squeezed my hand tightly, my nails digging into my flesh to suppress my tears. I took a deep breath. "Okay. But tell me, how many more things do I need to do to repay the Fowler family's kindness?"

my eyes, as if my words were daggers piercing his heart. He casually replied, "Two

Adam avoided my eyes, as if more things."

Getting his answer, I went to the dressing room with a crew member and changed into the costume. The costume clung to my skin like tissue paper as I stood at the pond's edge, its surface glazed with frost. Even the air burned with cold.

With the director's "Action!", someone shoved me into the pond.

The icy water instantly filled my mouth and nose, as if my internal organs were being stored in a freezer. I struggled to lift my head and glanced at the bank. I saw Adam and Noah chatting and laughing with Charlotte. I couldn't hear what they were saying, but Charlotte was beaming.

At that moment, I didn't even feel the cold anymore. My heart had completely frozen.

For 30 seconds, I lay in the water, motionless, like a lifeless doll. Before I could even climb out, I heard Charlotte whine to Adam, "Adam, the camera angle was off! Let's reshoot!"

Adam glanced at my pale face, but ultimately agreed. "...One more take."

The moment he said that, Charlotte skipped over, clasping my numb hands. "I'm sorry, Sylvia. I'm just so passionate about acting, so dedicated to my art. You may have to film a few more takes." Her eyes glinted.

If she truly felt guilty, she wouldn't have sought Adam's approval in the first place. Moreover, she and I were both questers. Once one of us succeeded, the other would be erased. Only one person would survive this game.

I coldly shrugged off her hand and, dragging my trembling body, returned to the dressing room to change clothes.

That simple fall-into-the-water scene was repeated thirty-two times. With each repeated fall, I went from trembling to numb. Even the crew couldn't bear to watch anymore. One whispered, "Director, should we stop? I'm afraid the stunt double can't take it anymore."

The words seemed to jolt Adam and Noah. They quickly rushed to the edge of the pond. Noah reached out to pull me out. "Sylvia, you..."

His words died in his throat when he met my icy gaze.

"Don't." Without hesitation, I pushed his hand away and climbed out of the pond on my own, soaked fabric searing my skin.

Adam was unaccustomed to such coldness from me. He tried to soften his voice. "Sylvia, it's okay. I've called a doctor; you'll be fine ..."

But my gaze was as piercing as ice.