

Fractured Affection

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I met Adam and Noah's furious gazes without flinching, stating firmly, "I didn't kidnap her. Not once. Not ever."

"Fine," Adam said. "Then your voice is forfeit."

Before I could react, Adam forced my jaw open and poured bitter powder down my throat—codeine-laced vocal paralytic. I'd recognize that chemical burn anywhere.

I struggled violently, begging him not to be so cruel. They knew how much I cherished my voice. But Noah held my hands tightly, and I could only watch helplessly as Adam forced water down my throat. Tears streamed down my face in despair.

Adam released me. My coughs sounded like rusted hinges. I glared at them resentfully. "You'll regret this."

My voice was now a hoarse rasp, worse than a broken bellows.

Just then, a bodyguard rushed in. "Mr. Fowler, we found Miss Aldrin."

I followed them. Even with several hours left, I'd clear my name.

Charlotte was found in an abandoned farmhouse behind the banquet hall. Seeing Adam and Noah, she cried, clutching her half-naked body.

"Adam, Noah, don't look at me. I'm... dirty now."

During the two hours she was kidnapped, someone had taken indecent photos and leaked them online. Domestic platforms censored the scandal, but foreign sites blared headlines: **BREAKING: Rising Star Charlotte Aldrin's Nude Photos Leaked!**

Adam held Charlotte protectively, gently comforting her, while Noah quickly took off his coat to cover her, kneeling beside her to offer comfort.

After a long time, Charlotte finally calmed down. Suddenly, she saw me and charged at me, furious. "Why did you do this to me? It must be you! You hate me and hired someone to ruin me! I worked so hard to get here, and you destroyed it all!"

Adam, emotionally distraught, held Charlotte tightly, Noah kicked me, shouting, "Get down on your knees and beg Charlotte for forgiveness!"

The pain made me wince. It was really ironic. Checking the security footage would prove my innocence, but Adam and Noah only believed what she said.

I took a deep breath, my voice hoarse. "Then call the police. Since you said I did it, let me go to jail."

As I reached for my phone, Noah snatched it away and smashed it on the ground.

"Since when did you become so vicious? If we call the police, the whole world will know. You'd ruin Charlotte's reputation globally!"

Adam stared at me coldly, as if he had made a crucial decision. "Noah, tell the PR department to suppress the trendings. Say the woman in the photos is Sylvia Lawrence."

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His words exploded in my ears. For a moment, I couldn't hear anything. I looked at them in disbelief. "You're going to ruin my reputation? Ruin my life?"

Noah roared, "If it weren't you, nothing would have happened. You deserve worse!"

Menu

"Adults bear consequences." Adam finished coldly, then left with Charlotte. As Noah passed me, he shoved me hard, sending me sprawling onto my broken phone. Charlotte turned back and gave me a triumphant smirk.

I had lost completely. One staged act, and Charlotte was driving me out of the Fowler family, where I had lived for fifteen years.

At that moment, I realized how fragile my relationship with Adam and Noah truly was.

Snow began falling as I limped outside—feathery flakes clinging to my lashes. I remembered mother's voice: "When sadness droves you, Sylvia, count the stars. Tears will float upward."

I tilted

my face skyward. Tears fell anyway, hot against frostbitten cheeks.

I didn't know that a real storm was yet to come.