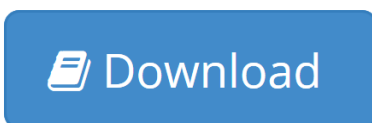


Owing Violet: A Novel (The Fowler Sisters Book 1)

By Monica Murphy



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***New York Times* bestselling author Monica Murphy begins a sexy contemporary romance series that introduces three sisters born to wealth, raised to succeed, ready to love, and destined to make waves.**

I've moved through life doing what's expected of me. I'm the middle daughter, the dutiful daughter. The one who braved a vicious attack and survived. The one who devoted herself to her family's business empire. The one who met an ambitious man and fell in love. We were going to run Fleur Cosmetics together, Zachary and I.

Until he got a promotion and left me in the dust. Maybe it's for the best, between his disloyalty and his wandering eye. But another man was waiting for me. Wanting me. He too has an overwhelming thirst for success, just like Zachary—perhaps even more so. He's also ruthless. And mysterious. I know nothing about Ryder McKay beyond that he makes me feel things I've never felt before.

One stolen moment, a kiss, a touch . . . and I'm hooked. Ryder's like a powerful drug, and I'm an addict who doesn't want to be cured. He tells me his intentions aren't pure, and I believe him. For once, I don't care. I'm willing to risk everything just to be with him. Including my heart. My soul.

My everything.

Praise for *Owing Violet*

"Owing Violet* owned me from the first page to the last. Ryder and Violet's chemistry is off the charts! Read it, own it, love it!"—*New York Times* bestselling author **Katy Evans*

"Scorching hot romance filled with suspense, lies, secrets, and explosive heat. Ryder is pure yummiest, a perfect mix of a dominant dirty-talking alpha and a sweet, protective broken bad boy."—The Rock Stars of Romance****

"There's just something dark and edgy, yet totally irresistible about this novel. I couldn't put it down! . . . It's a romance that offers real emotional development

and a steamy relationship that will leave you begging for more.”—**Peace Love Books**

“*Owning Violet* is exquisitely written. It’s 400 pages of scorching hotness that just sizzles with desire. . . . Monica Murphy is an author to watch out for.”—**Lady A, Literature Junkie Extraordinaire**

“Monica Murphy has a new hit series on her hands!”—**Swoon Worthy Books**

“*Owning Violet* is the first book in the Fowler Sisters series and it is. Is. *Hot*. You’ll need a fan while you read this because Monica Murphy turns up the heat between a good girl and a very, very bad boy.”—**Booklovers for Life**

“[*Owning Violet*] is such a sexy, blush-inducing, ‘OMG, what did he just do?’ read . . . and I totally ate it up. I needed a good gritty, sexually strong book, and Monica Murphy delivered that and *much* more!”—**Up All Night Reading It’s What I Do**

“Sizzling hot . . . Monica Murphy has once again delivered another fantastic book. . . . I can’t wait to read the next book in the Fowler Sisters series.”—**Smut Book Junkie**

From the Trade Paperback edition.

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Editorial Review

Review

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“Monica Murphy has a new hit series on her hands! . . . Chemistry between these two characters literally vibrates off the pages. But there is so much more to their relationship than either of them planned for or ever saw coming. Your heart will be so conflicted about what is right and what feels right. I loved that this story had an edge to it that no book I have read recently has. Which is always what we hope for, the book you want to re-read over and over . . . and *Owning Violet* is that book!”—**Swoon Worthy Books**

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About the Author

Monica Murphy is the *New York Times* bestselling author of *One Week Girlfriend*, *Second Chance Boyfriend*, *Three Broken Promises*, *Four Years Later*, and the eBook novella *Drew + Fable Forever*. A native Californian, she lives in the foothills of Yosemite with her husband and three children.

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Chapter One

Violet

Tonight, my life is going to change.

In preparation for it, I spent all day at the spa. Treated myself to a facial, massage, wax, mani, and pedi. My skin is smooth, my face is clear, my fingers and toes are painted a perfect demure pink. My muscles are relaxed and loose, but my brain .??.

My brain is jumpy. My stomach is a mess of nerves. My outward appearance is the exact opposite of my inside because so much is on the line. Everything I've strived toward these last few years is coming to the final pinnacle tonight.

Finally.

I found a dress to wear for this special moment a few days ago at Barneys, one I knew Zachary would approve of. A navy-blue sheath, it hits just above the knee and skims over my curves, subtly sexy because he doesn't like anything overt. Obvious.

Meaning he hates everything my older sister wears, does, says. He doesn't much approve of the way my blunt baby sister acts, either.

But that's fine. He's going to ask me to marry him tonight. Not Lily or Rose.

Me.

There's nothing obvious about me. I'm the epitome of understated. I would make the perfect politician's wife. Standing behind my man, offering my never-ending support all while wearing the pleasant smile I've mastered over the years. There have been a few slipups in the past. I struggled once. Fought for my life, really, and survived.

My father and grandmother like to pretend none of that ever happened. Zachary doesn't even know about it. It's a moment in time—before I met him—the family prefers to sweep under the rug.

It's so ugly, Violet, Father told me once. Wouldn't you rather forget?

So I try. For the family.

Zachary arrives at my apartment right on time because heaven forbid he's ever late. One of the many qualities I admire about him. He's punctual, thoughtful, efficient, handsome, and smart. So incredibly smart. Some call him conniving. Others call him cutthroat. Rumors swirl that there are other women. I'm not stupid. I have my suspicions. They might have even been confirmed once or twice. But when we're engaged, when we're married .??.

That will change. It has to.

Zachary and I have a perfect relationship. The sort of relationship I'd dreamed of since I was a little girl. One that Lily mocks constantly, but what does she know about love?

Sex and addiction and getting into trouble, she knows plenty. But love? I don't think she's had a real

relationship in her life.

I have. Boyfriends throughout junior high and high school, then my one very serious boyfriend in college. The one I'd originally thought I might marry. The one I gave my virginity to midway through freshman year. I'd been a real holdout, one of the last remaining virgins among my friends.

He dumped me the beginning of our sophomore year. Right after everything .??. happened. The incident, I like to call it. The thing no one likes to talk about. So I don't talk about it either.

After the breakup, I remained single. Tried my best to rise above everything that happened by focusing on finishing school and then on my career, my legacy at Fleur Cosmetics.

I might have quietly fallen apart for a short period of time that not many know about. We kept it secret. Father didn't want any more public humiliations. We lost Mom so long ago and he always said I was the most like her. Delicate but determined. Smart but not always practical.

I lived up to his expectations for a brief, not-so-shining moment. I needed therapy. I needed medication. More than anything, I needed to be numb. Craved being numb. Feeling emotions only hurt, and I was so tired of hurting.

But eventually I knew I needed to learn how to cope on my own.

Father let me return to work after my brief stint away. And when Zachary Lawrence started working for the company two years ago, getting to know him, I was soon interested. And so was he. I could tell. I didn't care if at first he talked to me only because I was the CEO's daughter. I flirted. I wanted his attention.

And I eventually got it. Got him.

I knew dating someone I worked with wasn't the smartest move, but I couldn't help it. Where else can I meet a man of such good quality? Someone I can trust? I have trust issues. No surprise, considering what I've been through.

While my father calls most of the shots, the company really is a family business. Both Rose and I work there. Even my grandmother still comes in and consults, though she's now eighty-five and mostly retired.

She loves Fleur Cosmetics and Fragrance. My grandma is Fleur Cosmetics and Fragrance. She started the brand. It was her face that appeared in the magazine advertisements and billboards for so many years. Dahlia Fowler is a legend in the cosmetics industry.

And despite my weaknesses and my father's once complete lack of faith in me, I desperately want to follow in her footsteps. With Zachary by my side, of course, considering he works in the brand marketing department and has higher aspirations. The two of us could take Fleur to the next level. I know it. He knows it.

Together, we're a force to be reckoned with. And once we're married .??.

"You're lost in thought."

Zachary's deep voice washes over me and I blink, realize that he's watching me. His brows are furrowed and

his mouth is turned down. He looks concerned.

“I’m fine.” I smile, hope lighting within me when I see the worry etched all over his handsome features slowly disappear. His blue eyes twinkle as he reaches across the table and takes my hand, grasping my fingers tightly.

“I have something I want to discuss with you,” he says in that low, reassuring way of his.

My smile grows and I nod, squeezing his fingers. “Now?”

“Yes.” He takes a deep breath and lets go of my hand. Odd. “I’ve known about this for a while and it’s .??. taken everything within me to work up the courage to tell you.”

Oh. How sweet. He’s nervous about proposing. Zachary’s always so confident about everything—I’m surprised. “Go ahead and just say it, Zachary. I’m fairly sure it will all work out in the end.”

“I agree. Your father said the same thing.”

My heart skips a beat. He spoke with Father. This is serious. This is exactly what I’ve been waiting for all this time. I can’t believe it. My fingers are literally trembling in anticipation of the ring he’s about to slip on my finger. I wonder how big it is. I don’t like gaudy jewelry. Neither does Zachary. Understated, refined—that’s more our style. Perhaps he spoke with Grandma and she gave him her engagement ring, though rightfully that should go to Lily since she’s oldest .??.

“??. so he’s asked me to test out the new position in London and see if I’d be a good fit. And I said yes.”

Wait. What? “P-position? In London? What are you talking about?” I clear my throat, proud that I keep my voice level. I didn’t want to make a scene in the middle of one of the most elegant restaurants in all of Manhattan. I could hear my father’s voice now.

Violet, that just wouldn’t do.

“Your father is sending me to the London office, just on a temporary basis. They’ve created a new position there since growth in the UK and Europe has been so strong the last couple of years. I’ll be trying out the new chief brand and marketing director position both in London and Paris. It’s a tremendous opportunity, Violet. One I couldn’t turn down. This promotion could change everything.” The pointed look Zachary gives me says he’s made his choice and there’s no chance I can talk him out of it.

“But .??. Wait a minute.” I shake my head, a huff of fake laughter falling from my lips. He can’t be serious. That’s what he wanted to tell me? About a possible promotion? To London? “What about .??.”

“Us?” he finishes for me with that rueful, charming smile. The one that says he knows he’s a little bit in trouble but somehow he’ll talk himself out of it. As usual. “I won’t be gone for long, only a few months. Hey, I bet you could fly over for a weekend. Come to London or even better, Paris. We can explore the cities together.”

No offer to take me with him to live there—not that I’d go, especially since it’s temporary. But it could turn permanent and he might end up staying. We don’t know.

Would I leave to be with Zachary? Only if he promised that we would be married—and he vowed his complete fidelity. I feel safe here. Everything I know, my family, my friends, my career, is here. In New York. Not London or Paris. And what about the ring? The proposal?

It sounds terrible in my own head, but I expected that. A beautiful diamond solitaire ring accompanied by an offer of marriage, along with Zachary's promise of undying love and faithfulness to me. A girl can tolerate only so much and I know it's stupid, but .??. I love him.

I do.

Disappointment threatens to wash over me, but I hold it at bay. I have to.

"I think I know what you were hoping for," he says softly. "But what sort of marriage could we start if we're on two different continents? It wouldn't be fair to either of us. We're still young, darling, especially you. We have plenty of time."

"We've already been together almost two years .??" My voice drifts and I drop my head, blinking my eyes shut for an agonizingly long moment before I open them again. I refuse to cry. I am twenty-three years old. I refuse to bawl like a little girl.

"And maybe we'll have another year, maybe two years, like this, but I promise, I will marry you." My heart leaps at his words. "I swear. I just—I need this. This promotion is important to me and I'm not the only one your father is considering. I'm a front-runner, but still, there are no guarantees. For you, it's different. This is your family. They'll give you whatever you want," Zachary says, irritation making his voice scratchy. Does he even register the change in tone? "But for me? I have to work at it. Constantly."

I stiffen my spine, offended by his words. They make it sound like I'm some sort of spoiled brat who gets whatever she wants whenever she wants. "I've worked very hard at Fleur since I was in my early teens," I say in protest. "You know this."

He waves a hand, whether dismissing his words or mine, I'm not exactly sure. "You know what I mean. Just .??. let me have this. I'm not a selfish man but I've worked damn hard for this career, Vi." I hate it when he calls me Vi and he knows it. "I'm almost thirty years old. The time for me to do this is now. Before I marry you and we have children and I won't be able to ever leave."

The way he said that makes me think he would feel like he's stuck with the wife and children. In other words, with me and our future children. Why am I letting this bother me? Am I being too sensitive? What he's saying makes sense. He needs to push forward with his career. I understand that. But I need to push forward with my career as well. And my life. My personal life, with marriage and children and .??.

Users Review

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Roy Larson:

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Troy Jones:

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Allen Grimm:

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Robert Polk:

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