

# Fractured Affection 1

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"Host, are you certain you wish to transfer all the affection points you have earned to Charlotte Aldrin?" the system asked. "Warning: If your affection points reach zero, you will be declared mission failed and face permanent erasure..."

I stared blankly, a hollow feeling settling in my chest. "Yes."

If Adam and Noah cared so much about Charlotte—  
if they'd sacrifice me over and over to protect her—  
then fine. I'd help her complete her mission. Let her stay in this world forever.

The system hesitated, its tone almost pleading. "Host, reconsider. You're only 1% away from success! Adam and Noah grew up with you. They once treated you like a beloved sister. If you persist, your mission might..."

At first, I'd believed the same. Adam and Noah had been my childhood companions and they treated me like their younger sister. Raising their Affection Points seemed effortless—a smile here, a homemade meal there, and their affection points climbed steadily.

Later, I learned how terribly wrong I was.

As long as Charlotte was around, my quest would never succeed. Adam and Noah knew Charlotte **was** a quester and that her failure meant erasure. So on the *day* I mustered courage to confess, they rejected me without hesitation.

"Sorry, Sylvia, we... we can't like you," Adam said.

Noah followed, his voice barely a whisper, "If our affection points for you hit 100%, Charlotte's system will deem her mission failed. We can't let her die."

They knew. They knew my mission required their 100% affection. They knew my meant erasure. Yet they froze their affection points at 99%.

All to keep Charlotte alive.

I said with a bitter laugh, "No more arguments."

failure also

The system let out something resembling a sigh. "Initiating Purge Protocol. In seven days, all traces of your existence will be erased. The affection points you've gained will tran

sfer to Charlotte Aldrin. Your accumulated survival credits qualify you for a new vessel. Confirm?"

I thanked the system. Then, I saw the villa door open. Noah and Adam stood on either side of Charlotte, twin sentinels guarding a precious treasure. When they turned and saw me, their eyes instantly turned cold.

"Sylvia, do you repent?" Adam asked, his voice cold and detached.

Noah sneered, his voice laced with disgust. "Adam, let's just make her kneel outside tonight. Someone this vile will hurt Charlotte again if we're lenient."

It was a freezing winter night in Washington. The winter air bit at -5°C. Thick ice crusted the ground. They were all bundled in warm coats. I, however, was only in a thin spring coat, kneeling in the snow, my limbs numb with cold.

Charlotte pouted, innocence dripping from her voice. "Adam, Noah, let Sylvia stand. She only

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broke my favorite photo; it was an accident..."

Menu

Noah cut her off. "No. If we spare her, she'll harm you again, Charlotte. Your kindness blinds you; that's why you keep getting hurt!"

It was Charlotte who had framed me! But Adam and Noah refused to hear my defense. They'd decided I was jealous of Charlotte. To force me to kneel and repent, they even used the fifteen years of care the Fowler family had given me as leverage.

Numbly, I nodded. I repent. My wicked heart envied Miss Aldrin. I'm sorry; it's all my fault."

Adam looked down at me, his tone cold and distant. "You hurt Charlotte, not me. As long as she forgives you, I'll let you go."

For a moment, I doubted my ears. At three years old, orphaned at my parents' funeral, they'd clasped my tiny hands and vowed: "Sylvia, don't be afraid. We're your family now. We'll take care of you and won't let anyone bully you.\*

Yet, now, they ground that promise into the ice beneath my knees.

Seeing the pain in my eyes, Charlotte smirked triumphantly before feigning sympathy. "Alright, Sylvia has knelt long enough. Let's just forgive her."

However, Adam and Noah remained silent, indicating they wanted more groveling.

I nearly screamed—What unspeakable evil did I commit to deserve this hatred?

I opened my mouth, but the words wouldn't come. The truth didn't matter anymore.

Like a puppet, I banged my head against the snow. "I'm sorry, Miss Aldrin. I was wrong."  
"Seven more days."

When the system gave me a new body, I'd vanish from Adam and Noah's lives.

We'd never meet again, not even in death.