

After Death 131

Chapter 131

My gaze fell on Steven, but I didn't hold much hope.

He had always lived in his own fantasies, believing that I was Stephanie Carlson.

Now, knowing that I might have intentionally impersonated Stephanie to deceive him, he would probably go crazier than Michael.

"That woman is lying." Steven walked up to me and tightly gripped my hand. "Stephie was killed because of her. She deliberately lured Stephie out, and I have evidence."

Steven glanced at Zion, and as the recorded conversation played, everything came to light.

I glanced at Steven, puzzled as to why he was still defending me.

If he had only seen me as Stephanie, he should have realized the truth by now.

"It was her who told me to lure Stephie out! You're crazy, and it's likely the two of you conspired to kill Stephie! I didn't anticipate Stephie's death when I persuaded her to leave on the 15th," Yasmin cried, trying to garner sympathy from everyone.

She looked at Michael, choking up. "Michael, you have to believe me. I truly didn't know that Stephie would die when I asked her out."

With no response from Michael, Yasmin continued, "Michael, I assumed she would inform you. I thought nothing would happen to Stephie while everyone was nearby. Jack heard her cries for help but didn't intervene."

They began turning on each other.

I looked at Zion. "Can you prove that the emails she mentioned were meant for me?"

If the emails could indeed be traced back to Stephany, I would need to devise another plan to protect myself. However, if Yasmin failed to provide evidence, then I wouldn't be held responsible.

Zion glanced at Sue. "Have you tracked the IP?"

"The IP address is in Huma, but the email wasn't registered under Stephany's name."

I let out a sigh of relief and smirked at Yasmin. "So, why were you keeping tabs on Stephie?

And who did you report her actions to? Were you perhaps sending updates to the murderer?"

Yasmin's expression changed. She found all of this unbelievable and seemed unwilling to accept it. "It can't be. It was her! She was the one in contact with me!"

She was adamant that I had been in contact with her.

“Where’s the evidence? Besides these emails, do

you have any other evidence?” I tilted my head. “If there’s no other evidence, I can sue you for defamation and misleading the police.” Yasmin hesitated for a moment, pinning all her hopes on Michael. “Michael, you have to believe me. I didn’t lie to you. It’s all a misunderstanding. It’s her. She took advantage of her somewhat similar appearance to Stephanie and deliberately impersonated her to get close to you.

I raised an eyebrow, realizing I had overestimated Yasmin. Her ultimate goal in all this was still to prevent Michael from being interested in me because of my resemblance to Stephanie. Michael

gave me a complex look and said coldly, “Even if the email address wasn’t registered under her name, it doesn’t mean she wasn’t using it. Rachel saw the surveillance footage too. She was targeting Stephanie before her disappearance, and she even sneaked into her house multiple times.”

“Yes! With surveillance footage, she can’t play innocent anymore!” Yasmin seemed

emboldened, knowing that Michael was now on her side.

“I knew where Stephanie’s keys were because we were close friends. She trusted me enough to share her house keys,” I calmly said.

None of this evidence could link me to the murderer.

Rachel looked at me with a penetrating gaze.

After a while, she asked, “Where are Stephanie’s diaries?”

“I met Stephanie through charity work, and we quickly became close friends, so it’s not unusual that I know where her spare keys are,” I explained to Rachel.

Revealing my identity too early would be a mistake, considering I was inhabiting Stephany Larson’s body while claiming to be Stephanie Carlson. Naturally, this would raise suspicion.

“As for Stephanie’s diaries, I honestly haven’t seen them and don’t know where they are. I’m not the only one who could have accessed Stephanie’s house. When you reviewed the surveillance footage, didn’t you see a tall man? I suspect he might have taken them,” I suggested.

Redirecting suspicion onto the murderer and urging the police to investigate further seemed like the most prudent choice for me at that moment.

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It appeared that rushing to confirm my identity was a misstep. I should have kept it secret and then gradually advocated for the investigation.

If I had initially presented myself as Stephanie’s friend, perhaps Rachel and Zion wouldn’t have been so suspicious of me.

I was too careless.

“She’s lying!” Yasmin attempted to protest.

I gave Yasmin a meaningful look. “If you can’t provide any evidence, I’ll take legal action. against you.”

Yasmin seemed hesitant. Her intention hadn’t been to have me arrested but to distance Michael from me. Clearly, she had succeeded.

“The Lincolns have the means for legal representation,” Steven said firmly, gripping my hand tightly. His glare at Yasmin was intense and menacing.

I even sensed that if the ward were empty, Steven might have taken drastic action against

Yasmin.

The veins on the back of his hand bulged. It was as if he was trying to contain his anger.

He held my hand tightly, seemingly trying to offer reassurance.

But pretending to be reassured would have been a lie as I still couldn’t fully trust him.

“I did see a suspicious man entering Stephanie’s house in the surveillance footage,” Rachel said as she looked at Zion.

Zion frowned. “Why didn’t you tell me earlier?”

“I thought Yasmin and Stephany were collaborating against Stephie, but now I’m more inclined to believe Stephany. She’s right. Stephanie wouldn’t have shared her house keys with someone she didn’t trust.”

Rachel’s gaze held a mix of emotions, conveying a silent message, “I’m placing my trust in you, so please don’t disappoint me.”

I smiled at Rachel before addressing Yasmin, “I’ll contact a lawyer to work with the police. Yasmin intentionally led Stephanie to Sunset Alley. It was a planned murder. She desired

Michael and believed Stephanie would take him away because their relationship wasn’t that simple.”

“Stephany!” Michael’s voice boomed with anger.

Was he afraid I would send Yasmin to jail?

“You don’t need to shout at me. I’m not deaf,” I told Michael. “You claimed Stephanie was more like your sister, but she was actually Mrs. Ford’s chosen fiancée for you.

“Because of Stephanie, Mrs. Ford doesn’t accept Yasmin and won’t easily let her into the family. So, Yasmin had to find a way to get rid of Stephanie.

“She wouldn’t dare to commit the murder herself. So, she schemed to eliminate Stephanie. Coming from the same orphanage, she would’ve known why the

serial killer was targeting women like them. She made Stephanie wear her clothes and manipulated the serial killer to do her dirty work.”

I walked toward Yasmin’s bedside and stared at her. “My assumption is correct, isn’t it, Ms. Bailey?”

“Stop spouting nonsense!” Yasmin’s voice wavered as fear crept in.

She desperately gripped Michael’s wrist and tried to defend herself. “Michael, you have to believe me. She’s slandering me. You know me better than anyone. I risked my life to save you. How could I ever commit murder?”

She wanted to convey that she was a kind-hearted person who would never consider such a thing.

Michael stared at Yasmin and slowly withdrew his hand.

I smirked sarcastically, observing Michael’s sudden lack of trust in Yasmin. It was rather fickle of him.

Since nobody believed her, Yasmin made a decision. “Officer Landon! I’m willing to cooperate with the police to lure out the murderer. I believe once the killer is caught, the truth will come to light. Then, you’ll see who’s lying!”

Chapter 133

Yasmin glared at me menacingly, as if warning me that if I didn’t let her off easy, she wouldn’t make things easy for me either. She was determined to take me down with her.

She seemed overly confident about the accusations against me, and that confidence of hers made me feel uneasy.

I never imagined there were so many secrets to Stephany.

I knew deep down that there was some kind of deal between Stephany and the murderer. Unfortunately, I found myself reincarnated into Stephany’s body.

“Well then, please refrain from leaving Huma anytime soon and cooperate with our police investigation and inquiries promptly,” Zion said.

Then, he asked me, “You were close with Stephanie Carlson, right? Do you know about the incident where she was nearly assaulted?”

I knew Zion was testing me.

I shot Michael a cold look and replied, “Stephie told me about it. That night, Jack messaged her, saying Michael had drunk too much at the Nocturnal Club. It was pouring rain, and Stephie was really worried about Michael. I even advised her that it wasn’t safe to go out in such heavy rain.”

Michael tensed up. He lowered his head and clenched his fists. “Stop it…”

But I persisted.

“Stephanie went out in the rain and took a cab to the Nocturnal Club, only to discover that Michael wasn’t really drunk. He and his friends had bet on how quickly Stephanie would show up.”

That night, they all laughed at me, mocking me by calling me Michael’s lapdog

And foolishly, I believed Michael was truly drunk. I was worried it wasn’t safe for him to go home alone in such heavy rain.

In that torrential downpour, I overcame my fear to see him, only to be shamelessly humiliated in return.

“Please stop it,” Michael’s body shook as he pleaded with me to stop.

“Stephie was terrified of thunderstorms because her parents died in a car accident on a rainy day!” Despite his pleas, I couldn’t bring myself to stop.

“she was so scared that she cried when she called me. But she went anyway because she was

afraid something might happen to you. And what did you do? You let Benson assault her! You stood by as your friends mocked her, tore her clothes, and tried to-”

“Shut up!” Michael shouted frantically like a madman.

Perhaps I went too far with the details.

He wanted to silence me, but instead, Steven stepped forward and gave him a punch.

Enraged, Steven glared fiercely at Michael, as if he were ready to tear him apart at any moment.

I chuckled, feeling a strange mix of satisfaction and sorrow.

I hated myself for my past weakness, cowardice, and ignorance. And I hated Michael for everything he had done to me.

“Please, stop,” Michael pleaded, covering his ears helplessly as he fell to the ground. It was a stark contrast to his usual arrogance and superiority. He appeared meek and submissive, pleading with me not to continue.

I stared at him and cruelly continued, “Michael, have you forgotten? You threw those people out, but what about Stephie? You disregarded her pleas and protests. You assaulted her in front of everyone at the Nocturnal Club. And then, you just walked away and left her there without any clothes!”

I knelt in front of Michael, pulled his hands apart, and yelled, “You claimed a woman on the street is worth 800 dollars, but she wasn’t even worth that! After you left, the club waiter grabbed Stephie and asked how much she was worth!”

In a sorrowful tone, I added, "She stumbled out of the Nocturnal Club, disheveled, and was dragged into an alley by those drunken men! If someone hadn't saved her, she would've died that night!"

"Stephany!" Michael snapped as he pushed me away.

Steven reached out and pulled me into his tight embrace.

His eyes were bloodshot, as if he were on the brink of losing his mind.

Steven,

I gripped Steven's hand tightly. take me home."

Steven held me tightly, his voice trembling with anger as he said, "Michael... I'm going to kill you."

At the doorway, Zion silently looked at me with a complex expression.

Yasmin sat on the bed in shock. For a moment, she appeared unsure of how to console Michael. Rachel's eyes were red with tears.

Chapter 134

Rachel didn't know what Stephanie had truly gone through.

Steven lifted me, struggling to control his emotions.

Being mentally ill, it was a hundred times harder for him to contain his feelings than for an ordinary person.

"Let's go home," he whispered softly, carrying me out of the hospital ward.

Rachel rushed forward, slapping Michael hard across the face. She shouted, "You bastard, give me Stephie back! Give her back to me!"

I buried my face in Steven's chest and cried. At that moment, I didn't care if Steven was acting or not. I just wanted someone to lean on, that was all.

"Steven, let's take the subway back, okay?" I rested my head on his shoulder and croaked.

Steven held me close as we walked. He gently replied, "Alright."

I smiled. His acting was impeccable. How could his emotions be so stable? Was he really mentally ill?

"Steve, I'm not Stephanie Carlson..." I wanted to see how he would react.

I didn't want to be Stephanie anymore. It was too painful.

Steven paused for a moment and looked down at me. "Okay..."

Since he knew I wasn't Stephanie, I wondered why he wasn't getting angry.

"Didn't you say you'd kill me if I wasn't Stephanie?" I asked in a muffled voice.

He didn't answer.

He carried me in his arms as we entered the elevator, and I didn't bother to walk on my own.

He continued to defend me even after realizing I wasn't Stephanie. Was it because he knew I was carrying his child?

To me, it was all the same.

I didn't expose him and quietly leaned on his shoulder.

"Why do you want to take the subway?" he whispered softly as we entered the subway station.

I didn't explain because he had been carrying me the whole way, and people around us were staring and gossiping.

But Steven remained true to himself. He didn't concern himself with others' perceptions.

Despite his past struggles with mental illness and wearing clothes that didn't fit properly, he paid no mind to what others thought of him.

Perhaps it wasn't rush hour, so the subway wasn't crowded. I left his embrace and leaned against a nearby pole.

Maybe I had gotten too worked up earlier, and I was feeling a bit lightheaded.

Like magic, Steven pulled out a lollipop from his pocket and placed it in my mouth before searching for a seat.

Finally, he spotted three vacant seats next to a middle-aged man. But the man was sitting comfortably with his legs crossed, occupying all three seats.

A young girl approached him. "Sir, you're taking up three seats by yourself. Can you give us one?"

She gestured toward me. "Look, this woman can barely stand."

The man snorted. "I sat here first, so these are my seats! Mind your own business. And you, you're dressed so indecently. I guess you aren't any good either."

Without saying a word, Steven led me over and swiftly punched the man on the forehead. Instantly, the man collapsed to the ground.

Taken aback by Steven's brutality, I sat down nervously.

Steven then gentlemanly gestured to another seat for the young girl to take.

She sat down, admiring him and his appearance. "Are you a model? You're so handsome..."

Meanwhile, the man lay sprawled on the ground, pretending to be injured. "Call 911! My heart hurts! He attacked me, you all saw it! I'm calling the police!"

Chapter 135

The man continued to wail on the ground as if he wouldn't be satisfied until he extorted a hefty sum from Steven.

The girl sitting beside me cautiously approached and discreetly filmed the shameless man before nervously asking me, "Miss, is he your boyfriend? He seems so cool."

I looked up at Steven, who was glaring at the man.

He was probably already thinking about how to deal with this guy and put an end to this nuisance.

Taking a deep breath, I forced a smile. "Yeah, that's just his personality."

"I'm warning you, this won't stop until you pay up. Are you in cahoots with this disgraceful woman to attack people in broad daylight?" The man continued his tirade. Since no one was paying him any mind, he redirected his accusations toward the girl beside me.

In truth, the girl's attire was quite normal. She was wearing a floral sundress that accentuated her well-proportioned figure. She gave off a sunny, youthful vibe.

But the man persisted in criticizing her attire.

"You're the indecent one," the girl retorted in tears.

Steven's glare sent shivers down the man's spine.

I guessed if the man knew Steven was mentally ill, he would be trembling in fear.

Indeed, the man seemed genuinely scared. He hesitantly inched away from Steven on the ground. "What are you looking at?"

He didn't dare provoke Steven, who towered over him, so he directed his aggression toward me.

I sighed, reaching out to tug at Steven's sleeve. I wasn't afraid of the man extorting us, was afraid Steven might lose control.

I didn't understand the world of the mentally ill. They were too unpredictable.

"I'm telling you, you have to pay up, or this won't end!" the man continued to scream.

but I

"He's trying to blame you guys. I bet he'll call the police. When they arrive, I'll testify for you," the girl offered to help us avoid trouble with the man.

I remained silent and held onto Steven tightly.

"You're all a bunch of crooks. I bet you two are prostitutes too!" The man persisted in his accusations.

With a loud thud, Steven stepped forward and kicked the man against the subway door.

The man's greasy face bore the imprint of Steven's shoe, and blood began to trickle from his nose.

"He assaulted me! Help! Assault!" the man started to cry out, attempting to attract more attention.

Steven walked over, grabbed his collar, and punched him in the eye.

He crouched there with an impassive expression, as if he were engaged in something intriguing.

He grabbed the man's collar and effortlessly delivered another punch, swelling both of the man's eyes.

The man let out a cry as he looked fearfully at Steven. Despite being a middle-aged man with considerable strength, he was completely overpowered by Steven.

Although Steven appeared slender and tall, he possessed an unexpected amount of strength.

"Steven..." I nervously stood up, attempting to intervene.

Meanwhile, the girl beside me admirably covered her mouth. "Oh my god, he's so crazy! I love it."

I couldn't comprehend the girl's comment in this situation.

Steven glanced back at me.

The man attempted to launch a surprise attack on Steven.

Instinctively, I tried to help him, but the man's strike missed. Steven caught it instead.

He truly was quite mad.

With everyone watching, he grasped the man's wrist and exerted a firm pressure.

There was a crack, followed by a bloodcurdling scream.

The man's phone fell from his pocket as he writhed in pain on the ground.

I facepalmed. This was really bad.

"I hereby declare that I'm done idolizing celebrities. I'm going after him. He's so handsome!" The girl excitedly filmed Steven.

Chapter 136

I surveyed the scene and realized that a crowd had gathered around us, the incident on their phones.

Is. with

many recording

This was concerning.

“Steve, you went too far,” I said. Then, I angrily approached and grabbed his arm. “This is a public setting. He was just occupying seats. Did you really need to be so brutal?”

Suddenly, I remembered the day I first woke up in Stephanie’s body, when he almost strangled me just because he couldn’t find his bracelet.

Steven was mentally ill and prone to harming others.

“Apologize to this gentleman!” I feared Steven might get into trouble and end up forcibly confined to a psychiatric hospital, so I had to make him apologize first.

Steven lowered his head slightly, looking somewhat aggrieved. He picked up the man’s phone in silence.

“And return his phone!” I couldn’t fathom what was going through his mind.

The complexities of interacting with someone afflicted by mental illness began to weigh heavily on my mind.

“Sir, I’ll take you to the hospital at the next stop.” I wanted to calm the man down first.

The man held his wrist in pain, but he stopped yelling and didn’t dare ask for his phone back.

I sighed, realizing a trip to the police station was inevitable.

“Miss, please don’t scold him. He did nothing wrong. This man harassed us first, and this man here acted bravely,” the girl next to me earnestly defended Steven. “But...”

...” I wanted to say Steven was mentally ill, but saying it aloud would hurt his pride. I had to change my approach. “Even so, he shouldn’t have been so rough.”

Steven remained silent.

As the train pulled into the station, the police arrived..

“No, I won’t press charges. Just give me my phone and let me go,” the man suddenly changed his mind about involving the police and just wanted his phone back so that he could leave.

I looked at the man suspiciously and then glanced at Steven, who had been following me with a resigned expression.

Instead of returning the phone to the man, Steven handed it over to the police. “He was taking

photos,” he said.

The police hesitated for a moment before instructing the man to unlock his phone.

But the man refused.

Suddenly, it became clear to me why he was monopolizing three seats and why he seemed so fixated on the girl’s attire.

He was taking upskirt photos of the girl. Fearing someone might catch him in the act, he occupied three seats all by himself.

The police forcefully made the man unlock his phone and open the photo gallery. There were over a thousand pictures, all of them secretly taken photos of women on the subway—upskirt shots, chest shots, and more.

The girl in the sundress looked at the photos with horror, screamed, and kicked the man while clutching her skirt. “Police! He’s a pervert! I’ll sue him!”

I looked at Steven, feeling guilty. I had misunderstood him.

Steven didn’t say anything and kept his head down.

We all went to the police station. The girl kept talking to Steven with admiration, but he remained silent throughout.

“I admit to taking indecent photos, which was wrong, but he assaulted me. I’m going to sue him because he broke my wrist.” At the police station, the man toughened up. Since he couldn’t escape the charge of secretly taking photos, he wouldn’t let Steven off easily.

“My husband stepped in to stop the man’s misconduct, especially because the man provoked him first,” I stood in front of Steven, defending him.

Steven’s eyes lit up as he looked at me.

He was happy that I stood up for him.

“I’m Steven’s assistant,” Ewan arrived with the best lawyer in Huma.

I sighed with relief. I knew that with their arrival, Steven would be fine.

To my surprise, Ewan gave the police a red document, which turned out to be Steven’s mental disability certificate.

The sleazy man, who had been making a fuss, suddenly fell silent. His expression turned to fear.

Chapter 137

“You’re lucky you weren’t beaten to death. You must have a death wish to dare to provoke a mentally ill person with aggressive tendencies,” the officer reprimanded the man sternly. The man seemed visibly terrified and stopped shouting.

Ewan looked at Steven and respectfully said, “Mr. Lincoln, it’s time to

Steven reached for my hand, whispering, “Stephie, let’s go home.” However, I couldn’t understand why I felt inexplicably annoyed.

go home.”

At the door, the girl’s family arrived to pick her up, and their well-off appearance put me at ease.

“Goodbye, Miss, Mister. Until next time.” The girl waved. The man who came to pick her up looked authoritative and respectable.

“Thank you both for this,” the man said politely.

“You’re welcome,” I replied with a polite smile.

Steven looked at him warily and shielded me behind him.

The man glanced at Steven with a smile. “Well, I won’t disturb you any longer.” But Steven still seemed protective even when everyone was gone.

Sighing, I ushered him into the car.

On the way back, Steven fell asleep against the window.

I found myself gazing at Steven, feeling a bit lost in thought. His quiet demeanor was truly mesmerizing.

“Mrs. Lincoln, I apologize for the fright. Mr. Lincoln rarely has episodes unless provoked,” Ewan explained.

I stayed quiet until we got home. After giving Steven cold medicine and helping him sleep, I finally breathed a sigh of relief.

“Ewan, how long have you known Steven?” I asked as we left the room.

“I’ve known him since he was 14 years old. That was the year the Lincoln family found him,” Ewan replied.

“And back then...” I was curious about what Steven was like as a teenager.

“He was exceptional,” Ewan remarked with a hint of nostalgia. “But being too exceptional is a

curse in high society.”

Ewan had a point.

After a moment of contemplation, I gently asked, “When was he diagnosed with his condition?”

“At 19 years old, he went through a traumatic experience,” Ewan mentioned, leading me to a small attic room filled with Steve’s memorabilia—including photos, certificates, and trophies.

Astonished, I stood frozen in the room filled with his awards and certificates.

These were collected by Mr. Andy. He loved Mr. Lincoln dearly when he was alive, but his affection was tempered,” Ewan explained. He pointed out each item. “This one’s from when Mr. Lincoln joined the advanced classes.”

Looking at the young man in the photos, I suddenly felt a headache coming on.

It all felt so familiar.

The young man in the photos had a radiant smile. At that time, Steve was truly pure and flawless.

Holding his trophy, he definitely stood out in the crowd.

“A double degree?” Glancing at Steven’s certificate, I was momentarily surprised, but then it all fell into place.

He entered university at just 14 years old, so it wasn’t surprising that he had finished both degrees by the age of 20 years old.

Despite his young age, Steven excelled in multiple subjects with a perfect 4.0 CGPA, inevitably sparking jealousy among his peers.

“What’s this?” In the far corner, I spotted a group photo taken at the orphanage.

“This is a photo taken when Mr. Lincoln was admitted to the advanced classes. It was a

farewell from the orphanage,” Ewan explained proudly.

The pride on his face suggested that he regarded Steven as his own child.

As I carefully examined the photo, I could still discern some familiar faces despite the changes that came with age.

In the corner of the last row, I spotted Stephany’s classmate, Howard Zachman, whom I had met at the class reunion.

It appeared that Howard hadn’t been adopted before Steven astonished the entire city of Huma with his brilliance.

“Was it only after Steven’s brilliance made waves during the Genius Showdown that the Lincoln family found him?” I asked as I suspected there to be a conspiracy behind all this.

“Not quite,” Ewan confessed truthfully.

“The Lincoln family knew about Mr. Lincoln all along. But it wasn’t until Mr. Lincoln Senior gave his approval that anyone dared to bring him back. Only after

Mr. Lincoln's brilliance caught the city's attention did Mr. Lincoln Senior allow us to officially recognize him as part of the family."

Chapter 138

I scoffed, realizing that even within esteemed families, self-interest was paramount. Sadly, that was just human nature.

"They're still keeping these old clothes?" I noticed Steven's ill-fitting and faded outfit from his homeless days still hanging on the rack.

After bringing him home and cleaning him up, I found it odd that the Lincolns hadn't thrown away his dirty clothes.

"These clothes are cherished by Mr. Lincoln and are off-limits to anyone," Ewan intervened, preventing me from touching them.

I was curious why Steven treasured these worn-out and oversized clothes.

"Have you seen this boy before?" My thoughts returned to the photo. I pointed to a timid-looking boy standing behind Steven.

"That's Simeon Kent. He was another genius boy at the Double Stars Welfare Home who shook the city of Huma back then," Ewan sighed as he looked at the photo.

After a short silence, he continued, "Sadly, he died in the fire at the orphanage that year. Mr. Lincoln would've died too, but he miraculously survived."

I was shocked. "Was the fire accidental?"

"It was arson," Ewan stated firmly.

"Did they catch the killer?" I asked urgently.

"The killer was never found. The investigation technology wasn't as advanced back then, and there were no surveillance cameras in the area where the fire started. Everyone denied setting it, so..." Ewan shook his head.

I sensed he was keeping back some details, but I chose not to push for more. After all, Ewan wasn't present at the scene.

As I looked at Howard in the photo, I couldn't shake the feeling that he knew more about the fire.

But what puzzled me was why the serial killer was targeting people from the orphanage.

It appeared that no one in that photo was safe from him now.

"Can I take this photo with me?" I asked.

“These are all preserved by Mr. Andy Lincoln. If you need it, I’ll have a new copy printed for

you,” Ewan offered.

I nodded.

All the girls in red dresses in the photo had passed away, except for Yasmin.

The killer was targeting the remaining ones.

“Is that the orphanage director?” I pointed to the middle-aged woman seated in the center.

“She and her husband ran the orphanage,” Ewan confirmed.

An inexplicable chill crept in when I saw the couple in the photo.

Despite their charitable smiles, I couldn’t shake off the unsettling feeling.

“Are they still alive?” I asked curiously.

“They are, but their daughter passed away not long ago,” Evan said.

I looked up at Ewan in shock. Their daughter was dead.

It seemed that this gruesome series of murders was driven by vengeance.

All these people must have something in common, something they did to provoke the killer.

“Stephie... Stephie!”

Suddenly, panicked shouts from Steven echoed from outside the door. It sounded like he was having a nightmare as his voice was filled with desperation and anguish.

My heart clenched with pain, and I dashed outside to find Steven anxiously standing by the window.

Bloodstains marked the floor where his wounds had reopened. His pale, beautiful face was streaked with blood. Like a frightened child, he hid his bloodied hands behind his back when he saw me.

Ewan’s expression changed, and he rushed out in a panic. “Doctor! Get a doctor!”

Clearly, the Lincolns had kept too much from me about Steven’s condition. It was evident that his current state was far from normal.

Chapter 139

“What... have you done?” I asked. My heart ached when I saw Steven so disoriented while covered in blood. I tried to walk over to him.

His skin was a lifeless pale white that starkly contrasted with the dark red of the blood.

I felt suffocated as an inexplicable panic washed over me.

“Please, don’t come near me,” Steven pleaded, seemingly afraid of me seeing him in this state.

He frantically called out for Stephie as if he were afraid of losing her.

“Please don’t look at me...” Suddenly, he dashed back into the room like a madman and locked

himself in.

I knocked on the door, but he wouldn’t open it.

There were still remnants of his bloody footprints on the floor.

Since my rebirth, I hadn’t fully grasped the severity of Steven’s condition. I knew he had a mental illness, was considered unstable, and might even be capable of murder.

As far as I could recall, he appeared quite stable as long as he wasn’t provoked.

Hence, I hadn’t paid much attention to his condition.

When I saw him covered in blood, it frightened me.

Ewan had experienced numerous such episodes. He promptly summoned the family doctor and barged into the room.

I wanted to follow, but Ewan stopped me.

“You’d better stay outside. Mr. Lincoln may not want you to see him like this.”

He di

He didn’t want me to witness him in a disoriented state during his episodes.

“What’s going on?” I anxiously asked Ewan.

Ewan remained silent for a moment and softly said, “It’s terrifying when Mr. Lincoln loses control. He feels the urge to harm others, but... he’s never actually hurt anyone. He only inflicts pain on himself.”

Steven was too kind. He didn’t want to harm anyone, so he would hurt himself to maintain his sanity.

I stood frozen, watching as Ewan entered the room. The doctor administered a tranquilizer to Steven, and his agonizing cries echoed through the door.

What kind of torment did he have to endure to turn from a genius to what he was now?

Even from outside, I could feel his pain and helplessness.

Almost unconsciously, I found myself wanting to reach out and embrace him.

When I snapped back to reality, I was bewildered by my own emotions.

Tears had unknowingly streamed down my face.

After administering the tranquilizer, Steven finally quieted down and drifted off to sleep.

Ewan finally let out a sigh of relief.

As he emerged from the room, he looked at me and fell silent.

“Does this happen often?” I asked softly.

“Yes, it’s quite common, especially if he’s triggered,” Ewan replied.

I paused for a moment, wondering if I had triggered him when I said I wasn’t Stephanie.

“Mr. Lincoln is too kind–hearted. Otherwise, he wouldn’t resort to harming himself to cope,” Ewan said with a heavy heart. “We usually remove anything that could harm him from the

but he managed to cut himself with shards after knocking over a glass of water.”

room,

I paused, feeling guilty. “I’m sorry, I didn’t know. The glass was mine. I brought it into the room to give him some cold medicine.”

I hadn’t expected Steven to harm himself. I had brought over the glass to let him have some cold medicine and left it there afterward.

Chapter 140

Ewan fell silent. He checked the time and asked, “Would you like to learn more about Mr. Lincoln? After all, you’re now his wife.

Ewan wanted to provide me with more insights into Steven.

I looked up in tears. “Okay.”

Ewan remained silent as he led me to the abandoned orphanage.

“When Mr. Lincoln was 19 years old, Mr. Lincoln Senior intended for him to pursue his Ph.D. abroad. But that day, a fire broke out at the orphanage. Someone deliberately locked him and Simeon in a room, trapping them inside. If we hadn’t arrived in time, Mr. Lincoln would have perished as well.

The orphanage instilled a deep fear in me because I died here.

Fortunately, Ewan took me to the east wing of the orphanage.

“Maybe the culprit just wanted to frighten Steven and Simeon, but things spiraled out of control with the fire. The whole dormitory burned down. 19 kids perished that year, except for Steven and Simeon, who were older. The others were just seven or eight years old.”

I knew Steven and Simeon had returned to the orphanage for some annual event, where children around their age who hadn’t been adopted would gather for a ceremony.

Those who perished were the younger ones who hadn't found a home.

"They were choking on the thick smoke when we found them trapped in the burning room," Ewan said as he pushed open the now charred and creaking door.

at the doorway

I stood stiffly trembling with fear for reasons I couldn't understand.

The room was desolate, with only a bed frame blackened by smoke against the scorched walls.

Even after all these years, the claw marks from the children's struggle in the fire were still visible.

I covered my mouth in fear as I shakily crouched on the ground, overwhelmed by a nauseating sensation in my stomach.

It was hard to imagine the pain and despair Steven and Simeon endured while trapped in this room.

I could almost hear their screams of agony and feel their despair as their bodies were scorched by the flames and they were engulfed by the suffocating smoke. The marks on the wall seemed to narrate their desperation at that moment.

"Why didn't you find them sooner?" I choked out, my heart sinking into despair.

"On that day, the Lincoln family faced a massive tragedy. Along with the orphanage fire, Mr. Andy, his wife, and children died in a car accident. Mr. Lincoln Senior was devastated, and the entire family was engulfed in sorrow. They forgot that Mr. Lincoln was still at the orphanage."

Ewan's voice croaked, and tears started streaming down his face.

"After Mr. Lincoln woke up, he went insane. He hurried back to the orphanage and refused to listen to anyone who tried to persuade him to leave. He insisted on waiting for someone there, saying he had been asked to do so. Despite his injuries worsening, he waited patiently."

Ewan wiped his tears and continued, "It was simply a post-trauma response. With patience and family support, he could have gotten better. But Mr. Andy's death led to Mr. Lincoln Senior being influenced by Mr. James, resulting in Mr. Lincoln being forcibly admitted to an asylum."

I was shocked to hear that Steven had been forcibly confined to an asylum.

"How long was he kept there?" I sobbed uncontrollably, questioning the reason behind my grief.

"For a year and six months..."

Those were the true hellish months for Steven.

He attempted to escape numerous times, only to be recaptured and subjected to abuse, electric shocks, and forced medication.

I couldn't bear to imagine those brutal experiences.

"I'm sorry for bringing you here without permission," Ewan said, feeling guilty as he noticed my discomfort.

"What did he go through in the asylum? Could you take me to visit him? I'm eager to understand him better."

"I gazed up at Ewan and inquired.