

## After Death 151

### Chapter 151

Michael's expression darkened immediately. Then, he angrily glared at Steven and cried, "Don't go too far, Steven Lincoln!"

Obviously, Michael wouldn't kill himself.

"I seem to remember you saying that you'd be buried with Stephanie Carlson if she died, Michael," I said, suddenly remembering what Michael had sworn to do in the past.

He had said that Stephanie wasn't dead and that she was purposely causing suspense to achieve her own ulterior motives. He even swore to join Stephanie in her grave if she really was dead.

"Isn't this the perfect opportunity to do that? You get to join Stephanie in her grave and save the love of your life." I looked up at Yasmin hanging there and continued with a smile, "Look, she's going to die anytime now.

"It doesn't matter which rope snaps first because she'll still end up hanging to her death anyhow. What's more, you don't have much time left."

"Stephany Larson!" Michael angrily exclaimed.

Yet, he was still at someone else's mercy.

Being threatened like this must feel terrible for him, huh?

I looked at Michael and observed how pissed off he was.

I found it amusing the more I reflected on our past.

Michael used to be the best at threatening others, yet now he was upset after being threatened himself? He was just being given a taste of his own .taicine isall

As the saying went, you should treat others like how they treated you. But I guess this was something Michael couldn't accept, huh?

an anyway.

"I don't need to beg him. He's not going to save You guys should just hurry up and figure out how to get her down," Michael said.

Of course, he wasn't going to go kill himself. After all, someone as selfish as him wouldn't sacrifice himself.

Halfway through watching everything unfold, Zion cleared his throat.

He didn't want things to escalate now. Besides, they'd found Yasmin and stopped the killer's plan from going through, and this was the first step in provoking the killer.

Zion then stepped out and tried advising Steven, “Please help us out, Steve. We can’t just let someone die like this. The killer will probably refrain from killing his next target if Yasmin survives. The killer’s desire to win is very strong.”

Steve silently looked at me.

He didn’t want to help them.

“Help me...” Yasmin hoarsely called out from where she was on the roof, already dehydrated. “I’m scared, Michael.”

Michael glanced at Yasmin before frantically turning to Zion. “Are you guys just going to stand here and wait?”

“What else can we do? Fly up there to save her?” Zion had already done his best to convince Steven. The only person who could save Yasmin now was him.

“The fire rescue department will take at least 10 minutes to arrive. An air cushion would also be useless because Yasmin still has a rope around her neck. If she falls, she’ll still hang to death. And regardless, the fire rescue team will still need to wait for the helicopter, understand?” Zion turned to Michael with a furrowed brow.

Then, he said to Steven, “Steve, you said you’d lost to the killer once before and couldn’t save Stephanie in time. Can we prevent such a tragedy from happening again?”

Apparently, Zion was really good at convincing people.

I could see that Steven’s resolve had been slightly shaken as he shot me a look. But I knew that he would still refuse to save Yasmin if I didn’t agree to it.

Zion saw this too. So, he turned to look at me and said, “Stephany, if Yasmin lives, the killer might just temporarily stop his killing. Moreover, you said it yourself—we can’t let anyone else die.”

I knew that stopping more victims from being killed was a police officer’s duty.

I looked up at Yasmin, hoping that she would just die right there on the roof.

“Stephany... Help me.” Even Yasmin herself was begging me now.

I coldly stared up at her.

I wanted her to suffer even if she did end up being rescued.

“Stephany!” Michael frantically cried.

“If you love her so much, then tell the killer you’ll swap places with her,” I lazily said.

“Yasmin saved my life in the past...” Michael finally seemed to have caved in and was begging me now.

“How does Yasmin saving you have anything to do with me?” I rolled my eyes.

“The rope’s going to snap!” Phil gasped. They hadn’t dared to simply shift the rope for fear of a weight imbalance.

I furrowed my brows and looked at Steve.

Save her then...

If Yasmin didn’t die, the killer would continue to focus on her, and everyone else with serial numbers after her would temporarily be safe.

Steven knew what I was thinking too.

But then, he pulled me into his arms and held me from behind, saying, “I can save Yasmin, Michael... But you have to get on your knees.”

Steven wanted Michael to kneel down, yet he made me stand in front of him.

It was clear that he wanted Michael to kneel before me.

I was stunned.

I glanced at Steven as an indescribable emotion surfaced within me.

Chapter 152

“Steven Lincoln!” Michael angrily exclaimed as he balled his hands into fists, prepared to

attack Steven.

“Hurry up! We’re running out of time!” Phil anxiously cried.

The rope

would snap at any moment.

However, Steven still looked at Michael, resolute.

Finally, Michael gritted his teeth and nodded. “Alright, Steven. You better not regret this.

Just because Michael was taking this jab at his pride now didn’t mean that he wouldn’t get revenge on Steven for it in the future. He was bound to make Steven regret his decision.

Honestly, I was somewhat worried.

This brief moment of glee... It would surely cause Steven a lot of trouble, wouldn’t it?

But I couldn’t care about that right now. We would deal with whatever happens in the future when it happens.

In the end, Michael got on his knees before me with anger boiling in his eyes. It was clear how much he didn’t want to do this.

Huh...

My body was slightly tense, and I couldn’t tell what emotion I was feeling right now.

When I hated Michael in the past, I couldn't wait for him to get on his knees in front of me. I wanted him to beg for mercy from me and say that he'd regretted all his actions.

But all of a sudden, I felt like someone like him kneeling because of me would mess up my reincarnation.

“Steve!” Phil cried.

There was a small notch of rope left before it would snap.

Immediately, Steven let  
go of me and hurried over.

Then, right before the rope snapped, he grabbed one of the ropes among the tangled mess of other ropes.

No one else, not even I could tell why Steven had grabbed onto that rope in particular. But when the rope above snapped and Yasmin's body slightly fell, she was caught just in time by the rope Steven was holding onto.

Steven then stared flatly at Yasmin before purposely loosening his grip. And just like a wooden puppet, Yasmin's body slipped yet again as her face flushed red with pain.

I took a deep breath.

Steven... was torturing Yasmin.

He watched as Yasmin suffered and slowly suffocated, unable to even plea for mercy.

Then, Steven smiled... But it was a terrifying smile.

Meanwhile, I silently looked away.

Zion then massaged his temple before going over to Steven. “That's enough,” he said.

However, Steven replied without budging, “Yasmin will hold out until the helicopter's here.”

Yasmin wouldn't die, but she had to suffer the pain of getting asphyxiated.

Zion and Phil trusted Steven's sense of time. If he said Yasmin wouldn't die, then she wouldn't die. But she couldn't escape her suffering either.

Meanwhile, Michael had silently stood up and was coldly gazing at Steven and me.

I knew he wouldn't let us off easy  
now.

Soon, the medics and helicopter arrived.

Yasmin was successfully rescued, but she'd fainted and nearly died because of the lack of oxygen.

Steven watched coldly as Yasmin was rescued, his eyes filled with hatred.

He was the one who hoped the most for Yasmin's death, but in the end, he'd still saved her because of me. Even the police wouldn't have had a way to save Yasmin if Steven hadn't stepped in.

"The killer lost this time... And he won't like it. This will surely piss him off." Steven looked at his surroundings, certain that the killer was watching everything that was going on right now.

The police wouldn't be able to catch him though.

"You better watch out," Michael warned and shoved Steven.

"I'd advise you to stay by Yasmin's side all day and all night, Michael. The killer won't stop until she's dead, and no one will be able to save her if he tries to kill her a second time," I said, going up to hug Steven and shooting Michael a warning look.

Michael then snorted and left with the doctors.

Suddenly, Steve leaned against me and whined, "Stephie... He pushed me."

## Chapter 153

Steven was complaining like a child would to his friends.

I took a deep breath and instinctively comforted him. "Ignore Michael. He's crazy."

At that, Steven seemed to lighten up and tightly hugged me.

"Let's go," Zion said to us after examining the crime scene and making sure there were no suspicious people lingering around.

"We've already checked the surveillance footage, Zion. All we saw was a figure who carried Yasmin in while she was unconscious. The figure was broad and tall, and they wore a raincoat and a cap. But we could see that he was pretty muscular."

Phil had looked through all the local surveillance footage and could only recover this piece of useful footage.

The killer must've neglected this aspect of his plan because the footage was from a camera installed by a local family on the second floor of their home.

Those who didn't know about this camera wouldn't have noticed it either.

I peeked at the footage and sure enough, there was only a figure on the screen. But strangely... I felt like this man was different from the one with the burn injuries on his face.

"I feel like..." I couldn't really pinpoint what was off.

The man who had spoken to me in my home had been like a ghost. Though he was tall, he was still skinny and slightly hunched-over. He wouldn't appear so muscular even if he was wearing a raincoat.

I didn't think that he would've even had the strength to lift Yasmin up.

"Are you

able to identify him?" Zion turned to me.

I shook my head. "The camera footage only captured the back, so it's not very clear."

After that, Phil and some other officers stayed behind to further investigate while we left for the hospital with Zion.

By the time we got there, Rachel had already woken up, though she was still feeling the aftereffects of shock.

Good thing she was usually pretty bold.

"How did you end up getting abducted there?" Zion asked, giving her some fruit that he'd brought over.

"I missed Stephie last night after leaving, so I went to her place to look around and..." Rachel instinctively glanced at me before looking away.

Rachel probably believed me and wanted to see if the killer was truly residing in my home.

"I was just trying my luck. I didn't expect to actually meet the guy. I was knocked unconscious the moment I stepped through the door," Rachel said, getting somewhat agitated.

Zion consoled her, saying, "Don't be afraid. You're alright now. Don't take any actions on your own from now on."

Rachel nodded. "The man... was pretty strong. He should be around six feet in height and pretty muscular. I tried grabbing his arm while struggling against him, but his bicep was so big that I couldn't even hold on to it."

I shook my head, stunned. "No. They're not the same person... This isn't right."

The man I saw at home had a face marred with burn scars. And though he was tall, he was ... gaunt. Not at all muscular or strong.

"Could it be possible that... there's more than one killer?" I nervously looked at Zion. "Possibly two or more?"

Both Zion and Rachel grew silent.

We hadn't discovered anything so far even though the killer had already killed so many people.

"They're definitely not the same person," Zion said after a long period of silence. "When we were investigating Mildred Silva's cause of death, we found another piece of footage

“It was of a smaller-looking figure in a raincoat on the street where Mildred went missing. The figure seemed to be either a woman or a scrawny man.”

I instinctively looked at Steven. He was simply standing there, staying silent without reacting much to anything.

There was more than one killer all acting together in an organized manner. So, there must be someone at the lead giving them instructions...

“Yasmin is now free from danger, which means that the killer has failed. And based on their personality, they’ll likely find another opportunity to kill her.” Zion looked at his phone. “I hope the killer doesn’t hurt anyone else before killing her. That way, we’ll have time to investigate.”

“Since Ms. Rachel is safe now, we should get going,” I said. I wanted to bring Steven back home. He was still sick, after all.

Zion nodded. “I’ll have Phil send you guys back.”

I shook my head. “No need. We can take the train.”

Rachel nervously looked at me, her mouth opening in hesitation as if to say something.

Then, I turned around and gestured for Steven to leave with me. However, he raised his hand and said, “Hold my hand, Stephie.”

I turned back and held his wrist, exasperated. “Come on,

“Hold on tight and don’t let go,” Steven whispered.

let’s go home.”

However, I didn’t hear him clearly the first time, so I looked back at him and asked, “What did you say?”

But in response, Steve merely smiled at me without saying anything.

Chapter 154

“Stephle...” Rachel suddenly called out from the hospital bed.

I stopped but didn’t turn back.

It was better for me to remain as Stephany Larson right now.

Steven held my hand the whole way during the train ride back home as I leaned on his shoulder, deep in thought.

He didn’t question me about why we were using the train and not a car. But I guessed that someone as smart as him would’ve been able to figure out why.

I was afraid of being inside cars whenever it rained. Being on a train surrounded by more people just made me feel safer.

When we got off the train, Ewan and the driver were already waiting for us by the train

station entrance.

Steven furrowed his brows and glanced at me. "Let's run away, Stephie."

I was surprised. "Run away? To where... "

But before I could finish my sentence, Steve had already grabbed me by the wrist and ran off into the crowd.

Ewan wanted to run after us, but in the end, he lost us among the crowd.

I ran along with Steve for a long while and only stopped when I began panting heavily. Why are you running?" I asked.

In contrast to me, Steve was neither red in the face nor panting. In fact, he seemed entirely fine.

He sure could run, huh...

"Don't wanna go back," Steven answered. He didn't want to return to the Lincoln residence, probably feeling it to be more like a cage than a home.

"Ewan must've already installed a tracker in both of our phones," I said in exasperation.

After all, I was pregnant with the Lincoln family's flesh and blood, and Steven was one of the family's sons. They couldn't lose either of us, which meant that Ewan was bound to

find us too.

However, Steven didn't reply. Instead, he took both our phones and seemed to tamper something on them before returning mine to me.

"One day away is fine," he said.

I wasn't sure what had gotten into Steven today, or why he wanted to run away, so I decided to simply agree for now. After all, I wouldn't know where to find him if he ran off by himself anyway.

"Where do you want to go now?" I asked.

"I want to sleep with you, Stephie," Steven said seriously.

I froze for a moment before looking up and realizing that Steven had stopped in front of a high-class five-star hotel.

I grumbled, "Why stay in a hotel when you have a perfectly fine home to return to?"

But instead of answering me, Steven simply tightly held onto my hand, refusing to let me

1. go.

Based on what I knew of Steven, there had to be some reason why someone as intelligent as him would refuse to go home. It couldn't have been a spontaneous decision at all.



I wanted to refuse him, but as I looked at how pitiful Steven was, I simply couldn't. So, I turned and led him into the hotel, irritated.

Whenever I looked at Steven, I would think of the orphanage and the asylum.

I had no idea how much suffering Steven had gone through, but I truly hoped that he had nothing to do with the serial murders.

"You want to stay in a high-class hotel? Didn't you use to sleep in junkpiles?" wanted to chuckle as we walked into the grand hotel lobby.

Steven used to sleep in shabby little spaces like the one in the orphanage back when he was living on the streets. Yet, here he was at a hotel while we were away from home.

"No." Steve shook his head seriously. "Stephie deserves only the best."

I was surprised. Steven already said he knew I wasn't Stephanie before...

So, was I now basking in my own glory?

After getting a room, I coaxed Steven to take a shower.

Then, I got a call from Ewan.

"Mrs. Lincoln, the president of Ford Group has already been waiting for you and Mr. Lincoln here at home for two hours. He says he wishes to talk to you about a project..." Ewan said, sounding somewhat helpless.

The corner of my lips twitched.

Steven must've made us stay out here at a hotel because he knew that Michael would have gone to find us back home.

He really was terrifyingly intelligent sometimes.

Chapter 155

"Michael says he wants to talk about a work project, but he's gone all the way to our doorstep. Are you sure it's just business he wants to discuss? It sounds more like a threat, doesn't it?" I sneered.

"He insists on meeting you tonight and that if he doesn't... he'll call off your partnership and work with Mr. Martin instead," Ewan hesitantly said.

I understood Michael all too well. There was simply no way he would let Steven off the hook after being forced to kneel and lose his pride.

"If Michael wants to wait, then let him wait. Just tell him that Steve and I won't be going home tonight," I said angrily. "If he really doesn't want to leave, release the dogs on him."

Michael was scared of dogs. I'd heard from Aunty Lois that he'd been bitten by a dog when he was a child.

Ewan grew silent. It was clear that he was exasperated now.

After a brief period of silence, he said, “Mrs. Lincoln, this collaboration with the Ford Group is vital. Even if... it isn’t a success, we can’t become enemies with them.”

Ewan knew that this was a tough situation, but the business world was not child’s play.

I silently massaged the bridge of my nose.

I’d studied economics and knew that only benefits stood to last when it came to the business world, while enemies never stayed permanent.

If Michael actually partnered with Martin, my life with Steven would be more difficult in the future.

What’s more, Martin was probably already planning to take action against us too.

Then, Ewan said, “By the way, whether or not you and Mr. Lincoln return tonight, please do be careful. Things have been disquieting lately.

“There’s been some suspicious individuals loitering near the house recently, and I suspect Mr. Martin was the one who sent them. I also don’t think they’ll let you off so easily.”

Ewan had gone to fetch us at the subway entrance today because of this reason as well.

My brows knitted together.

Was Martin finally going to take action against us?

Just then, the sound of flowing water stopped in the bathroom, and Steven opened the door. Then, he simply stood there naked as water flowed down his hair and body.

He really wasn’t shy around me at all....

Instinctively, I covered my forehead and switched off the phone. “Can’t you come out only after you finish getting dressed?”

Yes, Steven’s body really was a sight to behold. But was now the right time for this?

Steven looked at me and flatly said, “It’s legal.”

So, I could see him naked because we were lawfully married?

I took a deep breath, simply unable to understand the mind of a mental health patient.

“Get dressed!” I finally exclaimed.

So, Steven silently put on his clothes, albeit feeling aggrieved at my outburst.

As he did so, I peeked at him and saw the countless scars on his back.



They were... strangely enchanting.

And the reason I described them as “enchanting” was because those scars didn’t ruin Steven’s looks at all. In fact, they were like delicate cracks on porcelain. They simply added a layer of depth to him.

If I only observed Steven’s obedient demeanor alone, he came off as an innocent little angel.

But the scars on his back hinted at a fall from grace. Just like the archangel who rebelled with his flock of countless other angels and fell from grace.

After Steven put on his pants, he still looked aggrieved. It was as if he was asking me whether he’d done enough yet.

I stayed silent, but my fingers couldn’t help but touch the scars on his wrists.

They were the remnants of his self-mutilation.

Then, I spotted a specific scar in the shape of pi.

“Pi?” I asked.

Why did he leave such a symbol on his body?

“Pi. Endless. Never cycling back,” Steven explained.

But for some reason my head started hurting.

Pi. Endless. Never cycling back.

Yet, when Steve was at the asylum, he’d kept insisting on finishing his calculation of it.

What was he really thinking?

“Stephie... Shoulder hurts.” Steven crouched down before me like an obedient puppy.

He was much more talkative today than he usually was.

It was probably because of my sympathy that led to me being more accepting of him as compared to before.

“Did you hurt your shoulder? How did the injury come about?” I anxiously checked Steven’s shoulder.

Did he get hurt today?

Steven replied softly, “Michael Ford pushed me.”

I opened my mouth, but no words came out.

Anger boiled in my stomach when I thought about Michael.

“I’m better than him, Stephie,” Steve said sternly, trying to hard sell himself to me again.

“Mhm, you’re way better than Michael. Let’s beat him up next time we see him,” replied in a serious manner.

Steven seemed so happy with my response that he immediately pushed me down onto the bed.

If he had a tail, it would be excitedly wagging now.

“I have a fever, Stephie.” Steve hugged me tight while rolling around in bed.

I withheld my anger. I knew Steven didn’t actually have a fever, rather...

“I’m warning you, Steven Lincoln—you better go to sleep right now!” I exclaimed.

Even an idiot could tell what he had in mind. It was written on his face plain as day! Could Steven be any more shameless?

Chapter 156

“I really do have a fever, Stephie. It’s really hot. Touch it.” Steven was usually so serious, yet here he was saying such an embarrassing thing.

I thought he wanted me to touch his forehead.

As Steven held me from behind, I felt like my hand was giving out.

I’m warning you, Steven Lincoln...” I gritted out.

Steven then buried his face in my shoulder, feeling aggrieved. But this time, he obediently held me without doing anything else.

So, I switched off the light, thinking that we could finally go to sleep.

However, Steven began grinding against me like some large dog.

I turned around and gave him a slap, the sound of which rang out loudly in the room. Then, I met Steven’s eyes in the dim light.

I saw how tearful and aggrieved he looked, and it made my heart tighten.

Now, I regretted slapping him.

This was just my sympathy playing up again, right?

I used that as an excuse for my feelings.

Instinctively, I caressed Steven’s handsome face. “Be good and go to sleep.”

This time, Steven behaved and stayed quietly still behind me.

The silent atmosphere seemed to heighten my hearing, and I could hear Steven sniffing. It was as if he was crying.

Well, now I couldn't sleep anymore.

What kind of man was he? Why was I in the wrong now?

I gritted my teeth and turned around to face Steven, accepting my fate. "Close your eyes!"

Steven stared at me for some time before obediently shutting his eyes.

I took a deep breath as I blushed.

Then, I carefully reached down to touch him.

Steven's breathing began growing heavier, and I could hear all the sounds he was making so acutely that I wanted to curl up in embarrassment.

What I would give to be swallowed up by the ground right now.

"Don't move," I warned when Steven tried to hug me.

"Stephie..." he called out.

"Be quiet. Keep your eyes shut," I gritted out.

But this time, Steven didn't obey and instead pulled me back into his arms and kissed me.

"Stephie..." he kept on calling out raspily.

Somehow, it was frightfully attractive. It felt like rough strokes teasing my heart, and my breathing began to grow heavier as well.

I knew Steven was losing control. His primal desires were instinctual to him.

But because I was still in the early stages of my pregnancy, I knew he would be able to control himself no matter how difficult this was for him.

I ground my teeth and silently swore to live in separate rooms from Steven from tomorrow onward, or else, I might end up being seduced by him.

"Stephie... Stephie... I've waited for you for so long... Please don't make me wait any longer, okay?" I suddenly heard Steven say.

He said that he'd been waiting for me for a long time.

That night, I had a dream.

The childhood friend in my dreams was no longer Michael.

It was someone else.

But no matter how much I tried running over to him, I couldn't properly see his face.

"Hurry up and come here, Stephie." A boy ran in front of me while flying a kite in the sky.

We were in a field while I happily ran after him.

But all of a sudden, a large fire consumed everything around me, including the boy in front of me.

“No!” I cried, jolting awake as my head pounded in pain.

Another nightmare.

I went to turn on my phone and looked at the time. It was 3 am.

I massaged my temples before reaching out to hold Steven.

However, the spot beside me was empty.

I hurriedly sat up and switched on the light.

Steven’s spot was already cold to the touch, which meant that he must’ve left not long after I fell asleep.

Where could Steven have gone at this late hour?

Chapter 157

My heart lurched as fear suddenly took root within me.

Did Steven take the opportunity to leave when I was sleeping?

Did that mean... he was involved in the serial killings?

I hurriedly got out of bed and got dressed. Then, I left the hotel room and went down to the reception.

“Hi there, did you happen to see when my husband left the hotel?” I asked.

The receptionist shook her head. “Apologies, there too many people earlier...”

were inst

“He’s of mixed blood and pretty good-looking,” I said.

The receptionist replied, “Oh, that handsome man! He must’ve...”

She then took out her phone as she mumbled to herself, “He was so handsome, I couldn’t help but take a photo and share it online.”

She then continued confidently, “He left around midnight.”

The receptionist had shared the photo of Steven at 12:03 am.

I felt anxious.

Steven had left around midnight, which meant that he left soon after I fell asleep. And it was 3 am now, which meant that three hours had passed since.

Steven would have had ample time to commit a crime.

I quickly left the hotel and looked around in a panic.

What would I do if Steven was actually part of the murders?

Then, I ran ahead with no direction in mind for a moment before my phone rang.

It was Zion.

I grew even more panicked.

I didn't know if I was afraid that the police had arrested Steven at a crime scene, or if another murder had happened.

"Hello?" I answered the call after calming myself down.

"Come to the police station at Yellowbrick Road, please." Zion sounded exasperated.

"Police station?" I was taken aback.

"Why didn't you keep Steven in check? You really let him come out at night to beat someone up? Aren't you his guardian?" Zion sullenly asked.

If the local police officers hadn't been familiar with Steven, they would've detained him for the night.

"Beat someone up?" I asked in confusion as I hailed a cab.

"Steve beat Michael up and trashed his car. What's worse, he even got nearly a dozen stray dogs and set them on Michael's bodyguards and injured them," Zion said, nearly gritting his words out. "If Steve wasn't declared insane, he would've been imprisoned already."

I was so confused.

"Steve went to beat Michael up in the middle of the night? And trashed his car too? He even had some dogs bite his men?" I was overwhelmed by all this information.

Did Steven suddenly want me to stay at the hotel last night because he'd planned to beat up Michael?

"But more than one person was injured. And according to Steve, the people who have been lingering around the Lincoln residence have run off.

"They were probably there to spy on you guys and intended to harm you two. So, Steve's actions can technically be counted as self-defense in this case," Zion said, exasperated. ' But Michael and his driver are considered innocent bystanders given that they were simply waiting for you two at the door."

At that, I fell silent.

So, Steven ran off at 3 am, not to kill someone, but to go back home and beat people up.

No wonder he kept on repeating that Michael had shoved him.

Did he hold a grudge?

I cupped my forehead and said in embarrassment, "I'll be there right away. Please look after him for me in the meantime..."

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As Steven's guardian, I was responsible for compensating Michael for the damages to his car, and the medical fees for his bodyguards.

I wasn't too worried about the money since the Lincoln family could afford it. But my concern was that Steven might've pissed Michael off for good now.

"You really are capable, Stephany Larson," Michael gritted out outside the police station. "Keep your mad dog on a leash, will you?"

"What breed of dog are you then? You were barking so madly outside our house at night instead of staying at the hospital with Yasmin." I glared at Michael and peeked at Steven who stood behind the door.

He didn't dare come out to face me.

Then, Michael took a step forward and looked down at me.

Chapter 158

Michael was bleeding at the forehead and had a cut lip, and it was all probably because of Steven.

"Ah... So, it was just an accident! After reviewing the surveillance footage, we saw that someone in the local vicinity had been hurting people, and this upset the young man.

"That was why he grew agitated and injured Mr. Ford who happened to be waiting outside the house," the police officer explained in an effort to mediate the situation.

"Both parties are at fault here," he concluded.

Michael gritted his teeth. "I'm at fault for waiting outside the door?"

"What were you doing waiting outside someone's house in the middle of the night anyway? Wouldn't any normal person mistake you for a bad guy for hanging around the area like that?"

The officer then quickly winked at Michael and said quietly, "Plus, why would a sane man like you be so bothered by the acts of a madman?"

Michael scoffed in response.

The police officer then turned to me. "But you should still pay due compensation.

I looked at Michael's pale and injured face under the streetlamp.

His greatest fear was dogs, and the fact that Steven had brought nearly a dozen of them back home, well...



Michael must've undoubtedly been frightened. Heck, his knees might still be secretly shaking.

"Steven did it on purpose," Michael said as he looked at me. "He's liable to go hysterical at any given point.

"Let's see just how long you'll last by his side. Who knows, he might end up choking you to death in the middle of the night!"

Michael then glanced at the time and saw that it was already 3 am.

"I suggest you come to Ford Group tomorrow to explain yourself," Michael said. He wanted to see me alone. "If you don't, I'll get a lawyer and file an application to force Steven to return to the asylum!"

I furrowed my brows and glared at Michael.

What a huge jackass.

After Michael had gotten what he wanted, he left in his car.

I wasn't sure why Michael insisted on meeting me in person alone, but I knew the reason wouldn't be anything good.

What was he doing waiting for me to show up at Lincoln residence the entire night? Why didn't he stay by his "kind hearted" sweetheart, Yasmin, at the hospital instead?

Between Michael and Steven, Michael was more of a lunatic to me.

"Come outside!" I called angrily to Steven. He was still hiding behind the door after Michael left.

Steven slowly walked out with his head bowed, looking aggrieved.

"What were you doing out here in the middle of the night instead of sleeping?" I yelled at him, all my patience gone.

"There were bad men..." Steve whispered.

So, he had gone back to make Martin's men leave because he was worried that they might hurt me..

Zion leaned against the car door and watched as I scolded Steve. Then, he chuckled and said, "I realize that the kid only listens to you. He always looks like he'll tear anyone else who chastises him to shreds."

I cupped my forehead. "Do you have any idea how dangerous it was for you to go back home alone so late at night?"

Steven glanced at the stray dogs roaming around the dumpsters nearby. "Wasn't alone..."

I was really angry now. "Do dogs count as people?" I exclaimed.

“People sometimes can’t compare to them,” Steven’s expression turned darkly, and the atmosphere suddenly grew cold.

But just when I thought that perhaps I saw wrongly, Steven had already resumed his pitiful demeanor.

“I made a mistake... Stephie.”

“Made a mistake? How?”

“I don’t know...”

I might get a stroke at this point. “Why did you beat Michael Ford up?”

“He deserved it,” Steven said matter-of-factly.

“Ahem. That’s enough now. Don’t talk about this here in the doorway.” Zion opened his car door. “Get in. I’ll drop you guys back home.”

I dragged Steven into the car with me, hands trembling in anger.

But then, I thought about how Steven had gone back home right after leaving the hotel, but he didn’t kill anyone....

Phew.

Just then, Zion’s phone buzzed.

It was a call from Phil. He was keeping watch over Yasmin at the hospital. “Zion, we just caught someone who tried to kill Yasmin here at the hospital!”

## Chapter 159

I looked at Zion in shock and grabbed tightly onto Steven’s hand.

Had they caught the killer?

If they caught this one, then the police would be able to trace and capture the next one!

Steven looked at me when I grabbed his hand.

I took a deep breath and waited for Zion to hang up the call.

After he did, he looked at me and said, “Phil caught someone. I don’t have time to drive you guys back now, so let’s just go to the hospital together.”

Zion then accelerated the car and headed for the hospital.

Our anticipation was high during the car ride.

Who was the killer? Who was the person who killed me?

I really wanted to know.

Meanwhile, Steven stayed silent throughout the ride with his head hung low.

He was probably scared that I might scold him again since he knew he was at fault.

The moment the car was parked, I ran out of the car with Zion.

Steven trailed behind us for a couple steps before stopping. Then, he turned to coldly gaze at a corner nearby the hospital entrance.

But the corner was very dark, and nothing could be seen.

I stopped and turned back to Steven. "Steve?"

Steven met my gaze and walked toward me.

"Hurry," I said before running forward again. I really wanted to see the killer.

But the moment I looked forward, I saw in my periphery that Steven had pointed at that dark corner and then did a throat-slitting gesture.

However, when I turned back to Steven, he'd resumed his innocent demeanor again.

As far as I could recall, I'd developed an idea of what an angel looked like after seeing Steven right before I died.

And now that I was used to seeing his innocent face, I felt like he was hiding too many things under that innocent facade.

When we arrived at the hospital ward, Phil was pinning the killer to the ground while Yasmin was curled up in the corner of the room. She was trembling in fear, and her face was extremely pale.

All these incidents were extremely shocking to Yasmin. After all, she'd been so pampered by Michael, and for so long too.

My guess was that it would be a long time until she'd be able to sleep well again, given that she'd probably be in constant fear for her life from now on.

But this was simply Yasmin's karma..

Steven was right about what he'd said the other day.

Death was not the greatest punishment. Rather, being alive was.

Constantly being in a state of guilt, loneliness, and fear was the cruelest punishment one could inflict onto another.

"Zion, this guy is... underage," Phil said worriedly and handed Zion the intended murder

weapon.

It was a syringe containing what was probably deadly fluids.

"Someone paid me to come here and inject that into her IV. I just did it for the money!" The teen yelled at Zion, "Don't kill me!"

Zion wore a sour expression as he went over to grab the teen by his collar. "You were committing murder! Where are your parents?"

The teen was tall and dressed in a white doctor's coat. He seemed to only be 15 or 16 years old.

“Let me go!” The teen struggled, trying to escape.

“Take him away!” Zion angrily ordered.

If the boy wasn’t the killer, he’d at least been instructed by them.

“Look into who his parents are and where he studies,” Zion said in irritation.

This killer had gone way out of line!

“I don’t have any parents! They died a long time ago! Please don’t arrest me. I still have a baby brother who’s sick! He needs money to treat his illness!

“Please, I beg of you! My brother will die!” the teen cried to Zion, kneeling on the floor. ” Please, I know I was wrong. Please don’t arrest me!”

Zion angrily kicked him. “Whatever reason you did this for, you were still committing murder! Don’t you have basic common sense?”

The teen knelt there on the floor and suddenly lost his composure. “What do all of you know? All you do is look down on us from your moral high ground! Look at us! We’ll die without money!”

After screaming his fill, the teen angrily glared at Yasmin as she trembled in the corner. ” The man even said that she was supposed to be dead in the first place. So, why are all of you protecting the bad guy here?”

Zion stood where he was without replying.

Then, after a long pause, he said, “Take him back to the station.”

Phil grabbed onto the teen, about to take him away.

“Don’t take me away! My brother’s still waiting for me...” the teen sobbed, trying to wrestle free from Phil’s grasp.

But Zion shoved the teen against the wall and growled, “Let me explain something to you, kid—bad guys will always be punished by the law, but not privately punished by you like this.

“Who do you think instructed you to do this in the first place? They’re the bad guys!”

Zion seemed to have lost control as well. After all, he’d barely gotten three hours of sleep every night ever since the first murder was discovered.

The killer had been provoking Zion, the police authorities, and everybody else.

To Zion, the killer deserved to die no matter what his reasons for killing so many people were!

After the teen was taken away, I leaned against the wall, feeling somewhat down.

When Phil dragged the teen past me, our eyes met.

The teen then opened his mouth, as if he was trying to tell me something.

## Chapter 160

I looked at the teen, confused.

Was he trying to talk to me? Was there something he wanted to tell me?

Did he... know me?

“The boy... must’ve been acting on someone else’s instructions,” I said softly.

Zion leaned against the wall and weakly thumped his forehead.

He looked to be in great agony.

As long as the killer remained uncaught, there would be more deaths. And because of this, Zion felt guilty and blamed himself for it.

“I could’ve... I could’ve arrived earlier...” Zion grumbled.

He could’ve found Stephanie earlier.

The doctor had said that if they’d found her even a day earlier, she would’ve had a chance.

at survival.

Then, with a loud slam, Zion punched his fist into the wall, and blood seeped out of his knuckles.

I rushed over to try and stop him, but didn’t know how to console him.

Zion then went to the smoking zone and took out a cigarette.

Meanwhile, Steven and I silently stood in the doorway.

“Cigarette?” Zion offered Steven.

Steven shook his head. “Smoking is bad for your health.”

Zion smiled bitterly. “I’ll smoke a couple more then.”

Steven continued, “Why do manufacturers still produce cigarettes when they know it’s bad for your health? Where is the source of it all?”

Where was the source of the crime?

Zion’s hand around his cigarette froze, and he instantly turned to look at Steven.

Steven had just reminded him that his investigation had taken the wrong direction from

the start.

The police had kept a close watch on the killer and victims all this time, but finding out why the killer was killing in the first place was the key.

Since the killer had been stumped here when he tried to kill Yasmin, then they should be taking the opportunity to trace everything backward, all the way until they found the so- called source of the crime.

By the time we left the hospital, it was 4:30 am.

The sky was brighter than before, but still gloomy.

This was the time of the day that I hated the most—the dark before dawn.

The dead silence that came with it often scared me.

Yasmin had to be sedated to calm down.

I watched on from outside the ward door while she said I was gloating and making fun of her.

Well, I certainly was.

But I still didn't feel satisfied.

After all, this was far from the level of suffering I wanted her to experience.

When we left the hospital, we saw a young boy in the parking lot who looked to be around eight to nine years.

years old.

The boy was scrawny, pale, and seemed to have had a nosebleed.

He messily wiped the blood away.

“Can you please give me my brother back?” the boy cried, begging Zion.

He was clearly the baby brother of the teen from earlier.

“My brother only did it for me,” the boy cried.

Zion wiped away the boy's blood with a tissue.

Just then, a female officer ran over.

She said, “Zion, this is that teen's baby brother. He has leukemia... We just looked into

their info and both the boy and his brother are orphans.

“They've been roaming the streets because no one would adopt them. Their livelihood... basically depended on the teen stealing whatever he could.”

Zion crouched down to look at the boy, his brows furrowed. “Have you and your brother... been stealing things all this while in order to take care of yourselves?”

The little boy shook his head. “My brother won't let me steal things.”

Zion silently hung his head.

He was probably recalling the teen's yell of, "What do all of you know? All you do is just look down on us from your moral high ground!"

Judging how others lived their lives...

"Take care of him," Zion said to the police officer before leaving.

I was about to leave as well when I heard the boy whisper, "Stephie..."

Immediately, I stopped and turned to the boy in shock.

He and his brother actually knew me!