

After Death 261

Chapter 261

I was standing at the door when Rachel burst in.

She paused in her tracks and then looked at me in astonishment. "Stephie..."

I was wearing my old clothes and probably looked too much like "Stephanie."

Even Zion was startled. He cursed, "Michael, are you sick?"

"She's Stephany, not Stephanie! You've gone mad! Stephany, come back with us,"

Zion said, stepping forward to look at me as he cursed under his breath.

T looked at Zion blankly. "Who are you?"

Rachel took a deep breath. "Stephie, it's me. I'm Rachel."

looked at Rachel. "Rach, why are you here? Who is he?"

Rachel approached anxiously and took my hand. She whispered, "Do you remember if you're Stephanie or Stephany?"

I paused in confusion. "Huh? I'm Stephanie."

Meanwhile, Zion cursed again. "D*mn it! Michael, you're insane! What did you do to her?"

Michael stepped forward to protect me. "I told you she won't go with you. It's her choice, and you have no right to interfere."

"Stephie, he's nothing but trash. Don't believe him. I've come to take you away.

Don't you remember? Steve is still waiting for you. He's your husband." Rachel's eyes reddened, and she reached out to me.

"Steve..." I backed off while covering my head in pain.

Steve.

Steven.

"Stephie." Michael held me tightly and warned Rachel. "Rachel, she's unstable. If you don't want her to die, don't mention things that will trigger her!"

Rachel clenched her fists in suppressed rage. She had the urge to devour Michael alive! "You're disgusting. Did Stephanie's previous memory loss have anything to do with you?"

Michael didn't speak. He neither refuted nor admitted.

"Stephie, don't be afraid. Ignore them. Go back and rest." Michael tried to take me back to the room.

Rachel was not willing to give up. "Stephie..."

Zion held Rachel back.

Michael helped me into the room. Before closing the door, I looked back at Rachel and winked at her.

Rachel paused, then nodded cautiously at me.

Did Michael really think Peter was that capable?

Indeed, electroshock therapy could cause temporary memory confusion or even amnesia.

However, something went wrong this time, and Peter's experiment didn't seem very successful.

"Stephie, don't listen to them. Rest well. I'll go talk to them." Michael sat me down on the bed. He squatted before me and spoke in a gentle voice. It was as if he loved me deeply.

I didn't speak. All I did was numbly sit there while watching him stand up and leave.

"The ones who want Stephany dead are the Lincolns. Can anyone from the Lincolns even be trusted? Sending her back there is like sending her to her death.

And Rachel, do you think you can protect her, or can Zion, just a traffic cop, protect her?" Michael warned Zion and Rachel in a low voice.

"Michael, you're nothing but a sc*m!" Rachel wanted to lash out on him.

But Zion held her back. "Given the Lincolns' current situation, no one can be trusted. Stephany is safer here. She seems like she can't handle any stress at the moment."

Rachel breathed heavily. "Michael, you didn't cherish her when she was alive, and now you're doing these things. You're truly despicable."

Michael looked down. "I will make it up to her."

"Make it up to her? Is your idea of making up for it to trap her by your side while she's having mixed memories and also to keep your first love close? You're quite audacious. Aren't you afraid of choking for wanting both?"

Rachel then turned to look at Yasmin, who had returned after having her injuries examined.

Yasmin had a bandage on her forehead. She looked fragile and innocent.

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Her voice was choked, and she whispered softly, "Mike."

Michael was somewhat annoyed. He warned Rachel, "This is my business and it's not your place to interfere. I warn you not to continue triggering her!"

I hid behind the door and listened for a while. Only after it quieted outside did I walk to the window to watch Rachel and Zion leave.

Michael was right about one thing. The Lincolns were unsafe, and for now, it was safer here.

There was a knock on the door.

I hadn't agreed to let the person in, but she entered anyway.

It was Yasmin.

She stood there while asking in a probing tone, "Stephany? You don't really think you're Stephanie now, do you?".

I tilted my head. "What are you talking about ? Who's Stephany ? I'm Stephanie ."

Yasmin's face darkened and she clenched her fists tightly. "Stephany, stop pretending! You're not Stephanie! Peter's hypnotic therapy won't work on you because you're not her! You're just pretending in front of Michael!"

I laughed. "How clever of you!"

Yasmin looked at me in shock. "So you were pretending. You haven't lost your memory at all."

"Right, I'm just playing along with Michael. He wants me to be Stephanie, so I'm letting him have his way." I smiled as I walked up to Yasmin.

Yasmin glared at me. "Stephany, since Steven died, you've set your sights on Michael, right? I won't let you get away with this. I'll protect Michael."

"Are you so devoted? I'd like to see how you protect him. Steven won't die. If he does, I'll make sure all of you die with him." My lips curled up, and I raised my hand to Yasmin's neck.

Steven wouldn't die. He'd come for me.

Yasmin looked at me in terror. She struggled hard, but she was no match for me, I should just strangle her.

I should just break her neck.

"Ah!" The moment Michael entered the door, I released my grip. I slapped myself the way Yasmin used to do, then covered my face while crying and shaking my head. "Mike, what... what is she talking about? I don't understand. Who's Stephany?"

Michael's face instantly darkened. He glared at Yasmin. "Yasmin!"

Yasmin covered her neck and looked at Michael in panic.

"Mike, she's pretending! She's Stephany! She..."

"Shut up!" Michael actually gave Yasmin a slap.

Meanwhile, I watched the scene with a smile on my lips.

So this was how it felt when Yasmin used to act and watch Michael lay his hands on me.

Was this considered karma?

"Michael, did you just hit me?!" Yasmin covered her cheek. She didn't seem to expect Michael to hit her for my sake. Crying, she turned and ran away.

Michael looked back at me in a panic. "Stephie, don't listen to her nonsense. It took me so much effort to get you back."

His voice trembled, then he held me tightly in his arms.

Did he say it took him a lot of effort to get me back?

How laughable.

"Stephie, I won't let you leave me again. I won't be fooled by her anymore. I believe you, Stephie. I only trust you." His voice choked up as if he really wanted to make up for all his past mistakes with me.

Too bad, I found him just a nuisance now.

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As evening approached, Yasmin returned.

She just couldn't be driven away.

I heard Lois returned to Affina to recuperate from her joint pain. However, worried about Michael, she specifically allowed Yasmin to stay at the Fords and instructed her to take good care of Mike. She said that as long as Michael said yes, she would agree to Yasmin marrying into the Fords.

The biggest trouble that once seemed insurmountable was now solved, and Yasmin should have been overjoyed. After all, she was just a step away from her goal.

Hence, she wouldn't leave just because Michael slapped her.

I watched Yasmin coldly from upstairs . It wouldn't be fun if she could be driven away by a mere slap.

During my years at the Fords, she had slandered and framed me countless times.

How would it be fair if I didn't give her a taste of those experiences?

"Mike, I'm sorry. I was too agitated. Stephie deliberately provoked me, so I got a little carried away. Mrs. Ford asked me to take good care of you. You've just been discharged from the hospital , and your injuries are not fully healed yet. I have to come back to take care of you." Yasmin apologized to Michael. She knew how to act coquettishly.

Michael seemed like he was in a rush to leave. He looked at the time and frowned, "

Ms. Ewing can take care of me at home. Every time Stephie sees you, she gets emotionally unstable. You better go back."

"Mike, you know the murderers haven't been caught yet. I will die if I go back."

Yasmin gulped with nervousness.

Michael was silent. He probably still harbored a bit of sentiment for her.

How laughable.

I watched Yasmin and Michael with cold eyes.

"I'm going out for a bit. Don't provoke Stephie." Michael didn't insist on Yasmin leaving and quickly left.

Yasmin glanced in my direction and her eyes were filled with warning and hatred.

I smiled at her, then slowly walked down the stairs.

"Why is there a new maid in the house?" I provoked Yasmin on purpose.

Yasmin looked like she wanted to devour me. She slammed the hot milk on the table. "Drink it."

"I dare not drink anything you give. If something happens to me, Michael might be heartbroken." I propped my chin and watched Yasmin.

Yasmin was so angry she could barely breathe. Still, she was a talented actress. She wouldn't be defeated just because I framed her once.

After calming down, she sat beside me and said, "Stephany, let's chat while there's nothing to do."

"About what?" I smiled at her.

"Let's talk about Stephanie and Steve. Do you know why Stephanie died? I guessed that the murderer would kill her because everyone who offended Steve or treated him poorly died." Yasmin smiled.

I frowned and my fingers stiffened.

"Stephanie deserved to die. Steve loved her so much, yet she forgot him and fell in love with someone else." Yasmin leaned back in her chair.

Playing with a lighter in her hand, Yasmin said, "You know about the fire at the orphanage, right? Someone couldn't stand the gloom the geniuses brought to everyone, so they wanted to lock them up and scare them with fire. But, unexpectedly, the old dormitory's electrical wiring was faulty, and the fire quickly grew out of control."

I suppressed my urge to kill her and listened as she continued.

"Steve didn't die that day. I heard that when the firefighters extinguished the fire and the police rushed in, they saw a body tightly protecting Steve in a corner. Their relationship was really strong.

"Simeon's whole body was charred, but he was still protecting Steve. They say that the wall was full of marks from his pain. Still, he maintained his position and guarded Steve in the corner." Yasmin shook her head in regret.

"In the end, Steve suffered extensive burns on his legs, arms, and back but survived, while Simeon died." Yasmin sighed.

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My body was slowly stiffening, and I was struggling to suppress my rage. My body trembled uncontrollably.

"After that, Steve went mad. He struggled a lot in the hospital. I heard his burns were extremely painful, and there was a risk of infection. It's a wonder how he survived. Stubborn, isn't it? Since he managed to live through that, how could he not go insane?" Yasmin sneered.

"Do you know what Stephanie was doing during his painful time? It seems she was in a coma for a while after a car accident. When she woke up, she had completely forgotten Steve. I'm not exactly sure what Stephanie went through during that time. All I know is that after she woke up, she was in a state of autism for a long time."

Yasmin was full of jealousy when she spoke of Stephanie.

"Her personality became withdrawn and uncommunicative . She seemed fragile and timid, like she had completely changed into someone easily bullied.

"It was only after she recovered and returned to school, integrating into normal life, studying, and preparing for the college entrance exams, that things changed."

Yasmin laughed sarcastically . "During that time, I heard Steve escaped from the hospital. Risking infection , he limped after Stephanie, but she had forgotten him.

She would scream in fear and run away in panic when she saw him."

Yasmin purposely told me these. "I once saw Stephanie screaming and fleeing from Steve at the Fords' gate. Two people who were once in love became strangers.

"T admit I've enjoyed watching Stephanie lose her memory, fall in love with someone else, as well as Michael distrust and torment her. She deserved this punishment. She deserved to die."

I stood up abruptly while breathing heavily.

My eyes darkened as I glared at Yasmin and grabbed her collar. "Don't rush. Even if she deserves to die, you deserve it more."

I snatched the lighter from her hand and asked emotionlessly , "You were the one who started the fire back then, weren't you?"

Yasmin's expression flickered with fear. "It wasn't my business."

"But Simon told Zion before he died that in the arson case that year, he saw a girl in a white dress with a small hairpin throw out a lighter amid cheering. How could you all be so despicable?" My voice trembled, and so did my hand holding Yasmin's collar.

That was human life. "Those were two people!"

T yelled at Yasmin with red eyes.

"It wasn't me! They forced me! It wasn't my choice! They were jealous of me and forced me. If I hadn't thrown the lighter, they would have locked me in too."

Yasmin screamed in terror.

Yasmin seemed to be afraid of her past nightmares too.

Yes, the victims were also abusers, and the abusers were the murderers.

They all deserved to die.

"Do you want to taste the torment of being burned by fire? Do you want to know what it feels like to be consumed by flames and burned alive?" I smiled as I pulled Yasmin's hair.

Yasmin was scared at this point. She looked at me in horror. What do you want to do? Stephany, I warn you not to act recklessly. There are cameras everywhere. The nanny is here too— Ah!"

I dragged her by her hair into the kitchen, then opened a bottle of strong liquor and poured it over her head.

My fingers trembled as I repeatedly lit up the lighter.

"Why? Why can your evil deeds be forgiven, and our retaliation is labeled as mental illness, emotional disorder, being locked up, and experimented on like animals?" I coldly brought the lit lighter close to Yasmin.

I wanted to burn her alive, to let her taste the torment of being burned to death.

That to kill her.

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Michael and Peter walked in from outside.

Yasmin screamed for Michael to save her. "Mike, she's gone crazy! Save me!"

Michael was visibly panicked. "Stephie, put down the lighter."

Peter was also startled. He stepped forward and said, "Stephie, calm down. Put the lighter down. Take a deep breath. You don't want to hurt anyone, right?"

I glanced at Michael and Peter and then scoffed. "Wrong answer. The one I want to hurt isn't just anyone."

The flame of the lighter ignited the alcohol on Yasmin's hair instantly.

Yasmin screamed in terror while trying to pat out the flames on her hair. She fell to the ground, crying and screaming for help.

I stood there coldly watching Yasmin crying and begging for help.

Then I watched as Michael rushed up, wrapped Yasmin in a wet cloth, and she cried in his arms.

Peter frowned deeply as he looked at me for a long time.

"Mike, she's going to kill me! She's going to kill me! Mike, save me! Save me!"

Yasmin was still crying. Her hair was burned and messy, and her face was reddened by the flames. Too bad her face wasn't scarred.

"you're crazy! You're all crazy!" Yasmin yelled at me furiously.

I shook the lighter in my hand and wanted to light it up again, but Peter rushed up and snatched it away.

Peter seemed angry. He seemed to be hypnotizing me. "Stephanie! Is this how you repay your parents? How heartbroken would they be if they saw you acting this way?"

Suddenly, a ringing filled my ears. When Peter touched me, I felt as if I were being pricked with needles. My vision darkened and my consciousness began to blur.

"Stephie? Stephie!"

Before I lost consciousness, I saw Michael, who was holding Yasmin, rush over to try to hold me.

What a joke.

Rachel was right. He really wanted both of us.

He had Yasmin in his arms, but he was still trying to come to me. It was disgusting.

"Mike, it hurts! My face hurts so much!" Yasmin cried and clung to Michael. She didn't want to give him a chance to come near me.

She looked at me defiantly, as if she wanted to devour me.

My consciousness finally slipped away completely.

Darkness enveloped me.

"Stephie..."

"Stephanie..."

In my memories, after the car accident and after I'd lost my parents, I became silent and withdrawn.

I moved from my home to the Ford family's residence.

"Mike, from now on Stephie will live with us. She's preparing for college entrance exams this year so do help her out."

The way Michael looked at me held confusion. I couldn't understand his face.

"Do you really not remember anyone from the orphanage?" I still remember the first question Michael asked me was full of doubt.

"What orphanage?" I looked at him blankly.

He didn't speak but merely turned around and left with a dark expression.

"Mike, do you still mean it when you said you liked me before?"

From that day on, I began to pay close attention to Michael. My eyes were full of him.

I didn't understand why I felt that Michael had said he liked me before.

He frowned at me. "What do you mean?"

"You said it when you were a teenager. You said you liked me. You said you would marry me when I grew up," I said with disappointment.

Back then, I thought I was upset because Michael had forgotten his childhood promise.

But that wasn't it.

Because the person who had made the promise was never Michael.

"Are you sick? We were children then, and how could such words be taken seriously?" Michael cursed and then turned and walked away.

Later, I began to quietly treat him well.

I would make his favorite desserts, his preferred mango pudding.

"Mike, I made mango pudding. Try it..."

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He disgustingly brushed my hand away and looked at me angrily, yet said nothing.

The nanny seemed hesitant to speak.

With reddened eyes and a cautious tone, I asked, "Does he not like it anymore? Has he changed?"

Michael opened his mouth as if to say something, but swallowed his words instead.

"Give it to me."

I happily handed over the mango pudding.

He glanced at me coldly and snorted before walking away.

The nanny whispered, "Ms. Larson, Mr. Ford is allergic to mangoes."

I was surprised. "Impossible. He loves mango pudding."

The nanny hesitated again. "Ms. Larson, Mr. Ford said you should go to school alone and claim you're not from the Ford family, to avoid special treatment. Also, the driver has been sent to pick up Ms. Bailey."

Stunned, I stood there and tears welled up in my eyes.

He clearly said he loved me once. Why did his feelings change after meeting his so-called true love?

I left the house with my backpack.

"Did you tell her?" I didn't get far before overhearing Michael talking to the nanny.

"Mr. Ford, you're really hurting Ms. Stephe's feelings." The nanny sighed.

Michael sounded eager as he asked, "Did she get upset when you mentioned that I sent the driver for Yasmin?"

"Ms. Stephe seemed very sad."

Michael snorted. "She's pretending. I want to see how long she can keep it up.

She's been more venomous than a snake since she was a child. What's with this innocent act now?"

I walked the forty minutes from Ford's villa to my high school.

"Hey, pretty girl. Are you alone today? Do you have any pocket money? We need money for the cybercafe."

There were often delinquents harassing students near the school.

I trembled and backed away from them.

Back then, I thought I was trembling because I was frightened.

But now, I realize it was excitement I was suppressing.

I was suppressing the urge to fight back.

"I don't have money..."

Tears welled up in my eyes as I turned to run, but one of the ruffians blocked my path. He even patted my backside. "You're pretty cute."

"Haha! Do you like her? How about a girlfriend for Clyde?" The other delinquents jeered.

I retreated in fear, but they managed to snatch my backpack.

"This necklace is worth something, right?" They took the money from my bag and the necklace from my neck.

I cried while begging them to give it back. "That's from my mother."

They laughed and raised the items up to tease me, then sped off on their motorbikes.

Crying, I squatted and picked up my books one by one.

Just then, a boy in a baggy hoodie and a cap came over. He didn't say anything and bent down to help me pick up the books.

But when I saw his scarred hands, I sat paralyzed with fear.

He panicked and hid his hands behind his back. Then, he opened his mouth as if wanted to say something, but in the end, he said nothing and ran away.

Frightened, I watched him leave and then quickly grabbed my bag and fled.

At that time, I didn't remember he was Steven.

Thad completely forgotten him.

All I remembered was that he wore gloves and waited for me at the school gate that day.

He was well-covered, and his eyes shook as he looked at me. It turned out he had retrieved all my stolen items and gave them back.

I was too scared to take them.

However, he didn't say anything but stuffed the items into my hand and ran away.

I didn't even know who he was. I thought he was just a forgettable stranger.

I even overlooked the bloodstains on his mouth.

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"Stephie? Stephie..."

My consciousness gradually returned, and I could hear someone calling my name.

It was Michael.

"Mr. Peter, why does she seem off?" Michael asked Peter anxiously.

"Did you give her the medicine I'd prescribed on time?" Peter inquired.

"T made sure she took it on schedule. There was no mistake."

"Memory erasure and restructuring can't be completed in one go. She shouldn't have lost her memory. If she forgets you, be careful. She might just be pretending."

"You must keep giving her psychological and environmental stimulation, and don't stop giving her the medication. Bring her to the hospital on time for the hypnosis and electroshock therapy," Peter instructed seriously.

Michael fell silent for a moment before asking, "Mr. Peter, is this fair to her?"

"Her mother wished for her to live a simple, ordinary life. She is sick and needs treatment," Peter stated firmly.

Michael hesitated. "Is she really Stephanie? Does soul transmigration really exist?"

Peter replied coldly, "That's for you to decide who you want her to be."

After a long pause, Michael finally said, "Stephie. I want Stephie back."

Peter simply responded, "Then, do as I say."

When I opened my eyes, Peter had already left.

Michael was sitting by the bed. He was excited to see me awake. "Stephie."

I looked at him and said, "Michael, I want some mango pudding."

Michael paused, then nodded. "I'll have someone buy it for you right away."

Soon, the nanny brought over the mango pudding.

"Do you want some?" He offered to feed me.

"You first. I remember you love mango pudding." I smiled at him.

But it was Steven who loved mango pudding.

Michael's fingers stiffened. He whispered, "You eat it."

I shook my head. "No, you eat it."

Michael frowned and took a bite of the mango pudding.

"Why did you deceive me? You weren't my lover yet you pretended to be him, leading me to form wrong memories. How could you not trust me and yet humiliate and torture me?" I asked hoarsely.

Michael was taken aback. He looked at me in shock and panicked. "Stephie... do you remember now?"

I watched as his face broke out in red spots after eating the mango pudding.

Since Peter said I shouldn't have lost my memory, I stopped pretending.

"If you don't love me, why deceive me and keep me trapped? Why not tell me the truth?"

Why did he make me treat Steven like that?

Why make him a complete stranger to me?

I was filled with hatred at this point!

Michael panicked and tried to explain. "Stephie, it's not like that. I admit I was selfish. I... I didn't want you to remember him. I wanted you to only see and think of me."

"So why doubt and hurt me after achieving your goal?" I asked.

Even though he had achieved his aim, he still hurt me.

Michael clenched his hands tightly. "I'm sorry. I was just suspicious. I feared you were pretending because you used to..."

He stopped talking and was unwilling to explain further.

I sneered while looking at the pills on the table. "Ha. I remember since I was eighteen, you and Auntie Lois have always made me take these pills. These are from Peter, right?"

Michael looked at me with mixed emotions. "Stephie, you're sick."

I asked him with a laugh. "What sickness do I have?"

"You... Stephie... It's time for your medicine." He hesitated to continue as he found it difficult to utter the word "emotional disorder."

He picked up the medicine from the table, trying to make me take it.

"What if I don't?" I looked at him with disgust.

I still remembered waking up at eighteen, forgetting Steven, and then taking these pills ever since. They seemed to suppress my emotions, making me numb, like an animal trapped in a cage, forcibly dulling all my sharpness.

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"Stephie... you have to take it. I won't let you remember him. You'll stay by my side like a normal girl. I'll protect you, and we'll get married and have our own children.

We'll have a beautiful future.

"Stephie, you're not in pain, are you?" Michael said softly while squatting beside the bed.

He brought the pill to my lips. "Stephie, be good."

"You're disgusting," I spat at him.

"Stephie, Steven isn't dead but severely injured. My men found him before the Lincolns did." Michael's gaze darkened and his voice turned icy.

He was threatening me again.

He had always been threatening me.

My voice trembled. "You think I'll believe you?"

Steven wasn't dead.

"See. He has a strong will to live." He showed me a picture on his phone of Steven, who was bloodied and barely alive.

Michael continued to threaten me.

"I'll take it." I took the pill from his hand and swallowed it.

Michael didn't trust me. He grabbed my face and checked to make sure I actually swallowed the pill before letting go of his hands.

"Stephie, have a good sleep, and when you wake up, everything will be better." He believed that after taking the medication and sleeping, I would forget everything.

"Mr. Ford! Mr. Ford! Ms. Bailey is screaming about suicide!"

The nanny rushed in panic.

I stared at Michael quietly.

Michael glanced at me in hesitation as always, and chose to go to Yasmin.

The same old story. He professed his love for me, yet couldn't let go of his first love.

"Ugh." [ran to the bathroom and vomited, trying to get the pills out of my throat.

But it was too late. I couldn't vomit anything.

Previously, Michael wasn't so vigilant. I would pretend to take the medication but actually hiding it under my tongue. This time, I had to swallow it in front of him.

The medication likely had sedative components. I fell asleep heavily as soon as I hit the bed.

I wondered what I would forget when I woke up.

I wondered if I would still remember Steven the next day.

Steven wasn't dead. He was with Michael.

He was severely injured.

I mustn't forget about this. I had to find a way to tell Rachel and Zion that Steven was with Michael.

"Stephie?"

In a daze, I heard a hoarse voice calling my name.

The window must have been opened. A cool breeze was blowing in. He gently kissed my forehead.

"Stephie, I'm here to take you home."

"Stephie, shall we go home?"

"Don't forget me again. It's painful."

I struggled to open my eyes and clung to his hand.

He seemed surprised. "Stephie, you remember me, don't you?"

"Steven..." I called his name hoarsely.

He hugged me tightly and said while sobbing, "Honey, let's go home."

Suddenly, the door was kicked open. The room's light became blinding.

I panicked, and tried to open my eyes.

"Steven, I've been waiting for you." It was Michael's voice.

So Steven wasn't in his hands. He was using me to lure Steven out.

"I made a deal with Martin. Whether you live or die after I hand you over is none of my concern," Michael's voice was low.

Chapter 269

The Huma Hospital.

The sounds of medical equipment, the smell of alcohol disinfectant, pale lighting, and the deathly silent corridors created a stark atmosphere.

"Take it easy."

Harsh, pitiful screams reverberated through the sterile ward.

The nurse, who was standing by, couldn't even bear to watch.

The man lying on the hospital bed held a tiny photo tightly with his gruesome burned fingers.

"Stephie... Stephie..."

"Your vocal cords are damaged. Even surgery can't fully restore them. You need to avoid speaking as much as possible. Endure it," the doctor, unable to bear the sight, whispered softly.

"Okay."

He buried his head in the pillow and quietly endured the pain as the doctor treated his terrible injuries.

"How could he bear it?"

"Why does such a handsome man have to suffer so much?"

"His survival is a miracle."

As the doctor left the ward, he sighed.

"He has multiple burn injuries, and the pain from the second -degree burns can reach level 10. This will greatly affect his sensory perception. Even if he survives, his perception of pain will become numb." The doctor observed Steven through the window.

He was lying on the bed while barely hanging on by a thread.

"Stephie..."

He slowly loosened his grip and gently wiped the blood-soaked photo.

His eyes were soft.

"Wait for me..."

"I'm sorry..."

It was my fault for making her wait too long.

I hoped she wouldn't blame me.

"Mr. Lincoln Senior has instructed us to keep him in the hospital until his condition improves. Once he's better, bring him back."

"Mr. Lincoln, you can't leave!"

"Beep..."

The hospital alarm went off. The doctors and guards were distracted by the fire alarm.

Steven, wearing a baggy hoodie and cap, limped out of the hospital while enduring the pain in his body.

Blood seeped through his injuries due to the premature movement.

No one knew how much pain he was in.

But he didn't want to make Stephie wait any longer.

"Stephie..."

He didn't know how he managed to leave the hospital or muster the strength to reach Stephanie's building.

However, it was empty there.

"That poor family. Both of the parents died and left only their daughter alive. I heard she was in a coma for a long time and then went to live with relatives after waking up."

Upon hearing what the neighbors said, Steven turned and ran away with red eyes.

His wounds were hurting.

He was at risk of infection.

Still, he couldn't let Stephie face the pain of losing her parents alone.

"Stephie..."

Finally, he saw Stephie at the school gate.

"Ah!" But the way she looked at him was as if looking at a stranger.

"Stephie..." His hoarse voice, unfamiliar even to himself, drove him to near despair.

Stephie didn't recognize him.

"Who are you? Stop following me! Help!" Stephanie thought he was a pervert. She ran away screaming for help.

Steven stood numbly with his outstretched hand frozen in mid-air.

He hid in an alleyway while panting heavily and hitting his own head.

Why... Why had even his voice changed?

Why did he scare Stephie?

Why didn't he die?

"Stephie..."

From that day, Steven would secretly follow Stephie every day.

He would watch her go to school, come home, and carefully followed Michael. He would watch how her eyes were full of only him.

"Stephie, I don't blame you."

He would whisper gently during his unending fevers, soothing her even though she couldn't hear it.
He wouldn't blame her for forgetting him.

Chapter 270

He wouldn't blame her for falling in love with someone else.

Despite his high fever and almost contorted body due to pain, Steven staggered toward the school gate that day.

He had to ensure his girl entered the school.

"This necklace is worth something , right ?" However , a group of ruffians robbed her, They took money from her bag and snatched the necklace from her neck.

Stephanie cried and pleaded for them to return the necklace. "My mom gave me that."

Furious, Steven charged at them, but the thugs escaped on their motorcycles.

He watched her crying while collecting her books from the ground.

"Don't cry, Stephe... Don't cry." He longed to comfort her.

Still, he couldn't bring himself to do it.

Finally, he couldn't resist and hobbled over to help her pick up her books.

However, his gruesomely bloodied hands scared her.

Numbly, he watched his beloved girl run away in terror.

Powerless and panicked, he hid his hands behind his back and wanted to say something. Still, he ran off instead.

That day, he found those thugs.

Despite his fever and unhealed wounds, he managed to fight them and retrieve her necklace and money.

But how was he a match for so many people? He would feel pain too. If he hadn't been desperate enough to grit his teeth and punch as if he wanted to kill the lead punk, how would those people have given him her stuff back?

"Pfft!" Finally , he couldn't hold on and spit out blood. He held the necklace and fainted on the concrete floor filled with blood.

It was cold.

Gazing at the gray sky, he murmured, "Stephie... It's so cold."

Outside the school.

Stephanie left cautiously, Stephanie looked around cautiously after school.

She was afraid the punks would haunt her.

She was trying to avoid them.

But as soon as she got out of school she smelled the strong scent of blood.

She looked up in fear and bumped into Steven's deep eyes.

Perhaps to avoid scaring her, Steven had put on gloves before slipping her the necklace and money. Then, he hurriedly walked off.

Stephanie wanted to say something but didn't in the end.

Stephanie was gone. She was going home.

She had a home to return to, with another man.

She had completely forgotten him and fallen for someone else.

Steven, hiding in the alleyway, struggled to remove his gloves with his teeth while enduring the pain.

How could he wear gloves on his badly burned hands?

Every time he took off his gloves, it was like peeling his own skin.

Still, he didn't want to frighten Stephanie.

"Stephie, let's walk home together."

That day, Stephanie had a friend to walk home with.

"It's been unusually quiet outside school lately. Those thugs are gone. It's strange."

Stephanie stood outside the alley and looked back.

She seemed to be looking for something.

"Stephanie, those thugs who bullied you are gone. Thank goodness."

Stephanie smiled and looked toward the corner.

Steven was hidden there, in the darkness, guarding Stephie.

"Tf you touch her again, I'll kill you," Steven said with a hoarse voice while stepping on a thug under his feet.

The thugs fled but returned with a group to ambush Steven.

Finally, they cornered Steven where Stephanie frequented.

"There's a fight over there. Stephie, let's go. It's scary."

"Stephie! Someone's being killed! Hurry!"

Stephanie's legs numbed. She turned back to look at the alleyway.

All she saw was a dark red pool of blood slowly spreading.

"Let's go, Stephie! Don't gawk!"

In the alleyway.

Steven leaned against the wall with his hands limply falling to his sides. The tiny photo of Stephanie in his palm was soaked in blood.

"Stephie... it's good that you've forgotten me.

"Don't be sad, Stephie.

"Don't look back. Don't remember me."